



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: YOUTH COMMISSION 2021-2022
CITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

DATE: May 11, 2021

Approved

Date: 5/11/2021

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Manager's Budget Addendum is to provide the City Council with the Youth Commission's annual budget priority recommendations for 2021-2022.

Through the Youth Commission program, the City of San José strives to foster greater awareness of municipal government and civic opportunities among youth between 14 and 18 years of age and living in San José. To prepare for this year's recommendations, Youth Commission participants reviewed City Service Area documents and met with their individual City Council Districts' Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) from November 2020 to January 2021. The purpose of the meetings was to identify the respective advisory councils' budget priorities and finalize their collective findings and recommendations during the annual Youth Advisory Council Summit on January 9, 2021. The Youth Commission approved their final budget priority list at the February 22, 2021 Youth Commission meeting.

ANALYSIS

The Youth Commission's 2021-2022 City Budget Priorities memorandum is attached for the City Council's consideration.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Manager's Budget Office and the City Attorney's Office.

/s/ Neil Rufino for

Jon Cicirelli
Director of Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Youth Commission
Aroshi Ghosh

**SUBJECT: YOUTH COMMISSION
2021-2022 CITY BUDGET
PRIORITIES**

DATE: April 15, 2021

INFORMATION

The San José Youth Commission respectfully requests that the City Council and Mayor consider the following budget priorities of San José's youth when making decisions on the final budget for the Fiscal Year 2021- 2022.

OVERVIEW

A quarter of San José's population are young people ages 14 - 20 years. They are the leaders of the next generation and the future of our city. Today's youth are impacted by the decisions made by our City officials, which is why the San José Youth Commission believes it is important that youth voices are considered while defining the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 City Budget.

With the huge impacts that the Coronavirus crisis has had on our city, the Youth Commission understands that many sacrifices must be made and that the 2021-2022 City Budget may now have to be reduced to guard against the impacts of the unforeseen recession. However, the Youth Commission hopes that the City Council will review and keep the youth priorities listed below in mind when allocating funds; and remember that while the existing essential services the City helps fund are vital, there are many other services in the city – namely community centers, libraries, and more – that help youth develop socially, mentally, and emotionally.

From early January 2021 to February 2021, the Youth Commission conducted research through multiple youth townhall forums, a four-hour youth summit, and individual district Youth Advisory Council discussions to gather youth feedback and priorities on the City Budget. Collectively, the youth ranked the departments in order of priority with one being of highest importance.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #1 HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Youth have consistently placed housing as one of their top priorities. Silicon Valley is infamous for its housing crisis, and youth already feel its effects from many angles.

- Due to stressful circumstances such as domestic violence, family abuse, aging out of foster care and/or financial concerns, youth disproportionately experience homelessness. While homelessness is a problem for all, it has the greatest and worst effect on homeless youth, who, at their most impressionable and vulnerable period of life, are forced to live in unstable conditions without support, love, and solid foundations that are essential for them to develop and thrive.
- The impact on low-income housed youth has intensified more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we emerge out of the pandemic, it is of highest priority that these youth are given support and attention. Similarly, COVID-19 has elevated the challenges youth face, particularly those that live in shared housing where multiple families are crammed into a single-family home. At a time when privacy and peace are necessary, these youth have none, and with the recent shelter-in-place order, the city must face the threat of rising domestic abuse rates as youth are ‘sheltered’ inside a home that may not be safe.
- Youth feel the impact of high rents when their instructors, teachers, mentors and community members are abruptly forced to move out of the area due to the high cost of living. Youth have also stated that it is unlikely they will continue to live in San José when they are older due to the high cost of living.

The Youth Commission hopes that the City will continue to investigate ways to incentivize the creation of affordable housing by private businesses and mitigate the displacement of youth that need stability to build a future. We understand that even though the city has been trying to address the housing crisis for years, it continues to persist. Every effort takes time and money and requires the combined mobilization of many departments to have an impact. It seems logical, therefore, to increase the funding in order to increase the efforts. Given the long-term benefits for our future generations, today’s youths are willing to make sacrifices, and understand that some of those may come from lower-priority department funding in order to fix this problem.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the face of rising unemployment and small businesses impacted by the economic shutdown that started in 2020, youth value the core services of Business Development and Real Estate Services that generate revenue, and Regional Workforce Development to improve the City’s economic outlook.

- The work2future group that enacts programs such as San José Works are incredibly valuable to youth in gang-impacted neighborhoods, as well as youth that have dropped out of high school and wish to directly enter the workforce.
- Youth appreciate the City's effort to develop public art. Each of the brightly colored murals or light displays make the city feel more like a connected community. Other small efforts such as allocating one-time funding to repair and upgrade the downtown ice rink are appreciated by youth.
- Real Estate Services and Regional Workforce Development services combined with a focus on arts and cultural development make life in the city vibrant and enjoyable.
- The work done by the Office of Economic Development (OED) to mitigate the effects of unemployment through grants and fundraising is extremely important during this pandemic for small business owners and part-time youth employees that work to provide for their family.

With a population comprising 40% of immigrants, youth are exposed to people from all cultures and are essential to cultivating an environment that is rich with new ideas and experiences. Living in San José, youth can experience an upbringing that stretches far past the bounds of the Bay Area. The Youth Commission believes that it is important to nurture this diversity, and OED's efforts to facilitate cultural development while ensuring economic growth that will benefit youth in years to come.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #3 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Our city is already a leader in sustainability, and youth believe that San José's stance towards climate change, recognizing it as a climate emergency, and enacting aggressive measures to move the city towards a cleaner and greener future are the right approach to take. The Youth Commission encourages the City to continue to see it as today's responsibility to address global environmental issues for the sake of our future.

- Youth from various Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) have been working on creative videos to promote recycling in the city and emerged with several policy proposals on ways to incentivize the use of biodegradable materials in restaurants, decrease the amount of debris in landfills, and reduce food waste.
- Another youth policy recommendation was to require high-rise buildings to utilize green architecture. With the changes that the city will undergo in the following years, particularly with the arrival of Google to San José, youth hope

that the City strongly keeps sustainability of infrastructure in mind when densifying and developing the city.

The youth feel that prioritizing the environment is extremely important as a healthy environment promotes the natural beauty of San José and ensures that the youth have a sustainable future. Although, the City has been working hard to fight the effects of the pandemic, the Youth Commission feels that climate change is a problem that cannot be pushed back or ignored, and that we must continue to preserve our city's environment.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #4 PARKS, RECREATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Very often, in times of recession, cities are in danger of neglecting aspects of life that are considered 'non-essential.' For youth to grow and learn, they must be safe and healthy. Thus, it is important to recognize that the services provided by the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) Department are also essential for all citizens' well-being should not be sacrificed in face of hard economic times. Their services—programs for youth, teen centers, parks and community centers—contribute to the mental, emotional, and physical health of youth in crucial ways.

- The PRNS Department provides an outlet for youth to spend their time productively and develop healthy habits while building relationships with caring adults and developing life skills. The Department facilitates youth-serving programs such as R.O.C.K., After School Education and Safety (ASES) program, San José Recreation Preschool, and Teen Centers. It gives youth opportunities to participate in sports, recreation programs, and arts and crafts activities. These services and programs provide youth the opportunity to create experiences and explore passions and a love for lifelong learning.
- With social isolation, economic turbulence, and the shutdown of schools that resulted from our response to COVID-19, the services previously mentioned will be more important than ever when youth venture out of their homes and try to resume daily life. The homework support provided by PRNS's afterschool programs will help youth that have fallen behind in school and will increase social interaction.
- The maintenance of City parks is essential. The days of social distancing have revealed just how much city residents rely upon parks to maintain their mental and physical health. It is necessary for parks to be cleaned and kept operational for the sake of all residents. Youth believe it is necessary that the department continues its vital role in maintaining a safe and clean atmosphere for all residents to live in.
- Additionally, the PRNS department manages the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force which is vital for San José. The youth rely deeply on the PRNS

department for both its youth gang prevention services and its role in allowing the Youth Commission itself to exist. The Youth Commission plays a vital role in allowing youth to be represented in their local government. Through the Youth Commission, San José youth have learned how to partner with City officials and decision makers to make our city stronger for all.

Youth understand that it is impossible to provide all the funding that PRNS needs in the face of the recession that will likely follow the COVID-19 pandemic, and youth do not unreasonably expect this of the City. However, youth emphasize the need for creative solutions that will allow these essential services to continue. This might include prioritizing the support of community centers in areas where teens are in the highest-need category, such as in gang-impacted or lower socioeconomic areas.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #5 LIBRARIES

Youth need libraries. Not only for the wealth of books and information, but for the quiet, safe atmosphere, the programs, the WiFi, the access to computers, and the group study centers—the list goes on and on. For young children, access to the library is critical to develop literacy skills. For older teens, access to the internet is more important than ever as classes rely more and more on technology.

San José Public Library (Library or SJPL) youth work is guided by the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy (EDL). This framework ensures all children and families of San José are fully engaged learners with equitable access to a community of learning, enabling them to be agents of their own opportunity. The Library strives to provide every student with the ability to choose a meaningful path upon graduating from high school, whether it be attending a community college or four-year university, launching a small business, or developing valuable, in-demand trade skills. SJPL is currently developing a set of College and Career Readiness standards for all programs that are City-funded, sponsored or endorsed, with other leaders in youth development to be in place by fall 2020. SJPL also offers teens a variety of leadership roles and volunteer experiences.

- The libraries provide youth a critical access point for not only knowledge and information but access to their schoolwork. SJPL's robust physical and digital collections and e-Resources support learners in their information needs.
- The Library offers students access to 1300 reservable PCs, another 200 laptops and 100 tablets for programming, group study rooms, and Wi-Fi at its 25 locations.

- TeenHQ, a space for middle and high school students at the Dr. Martin Luther King Library, offers access to innovative technology like a Recording Studio, a Makerspace, and Gaming Lounge.
- Teens Reach is the Library's youth council empowered to serve their community by volunteering, library advisors, and advocates. With nearly 200 active teens and 1,000 annually, San José youth are helping shape their library's program offerings.
- The SJ Engage program worked with youth throughout the city to spark discussion around civic issues and create community projects including a conversation with a SJSU Council member, a letter writing campaign, a mental health fair and a diversity film festival.
- SJPL also launched the SJ Aspires program. This program allows students to earn up to \$5,000 in scholarship funds for distribution to the vocational school, community college, college, or university of their choice by completing an online curriculum of college and career skills. In 2020, the program expanded to all incoming students for two local high schools.

When allocating the 2021-2022 Budget, youth urge the City to think both carefully and creatively about handling Library funds and of the implications that come from cutting library hours. For instance, if funds must be allocated elsewhere, then libraries could remain open during peak hours—not just on weekdays, but on weekends as well.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #6 FIRE DEPARTMENT

Having firefighters responding to emergencies throughout the 200 square miles of the city and Santa Clara County's additional unincorporated areas is essential and requires a great deal of dedication and sacrifice, especially in the wake of COVID-19, where firefighters bravely perform their work at risk of their own health. During the 2020 wildfire season alone, over 8,100 fires have contributed to the burning of nearly 4.5 million acres of land, making it the largest fire season in California's modern history. Additionally, the San José Fire Department leads the Fire Explorers youth program which allows youth to explore careers in fire safety and protection. Because of this, the youth feel it is imperative that we work to combat these events safely by prioritizing the Fire Department.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #7 PLANNING, BUILDING, AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

The youth feel that the work done by the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement (PBCE) to promote Digital Inclusion as part of the City's Smart Vision goal is extremely important during the pandemic as many youths are currently at home participating in remote learning. In order to

provide a fair and equitable space for all youth in San José, we must prioritize the PBCE's Digital Inclusion goals to ensure that all students have the resources they need to succeed in school.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #8 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Of all the services from the Department of Public Works (DPW), youth most value the service of facilitating development. The youth recognize the work being done by DPW to encourage growth especially through their various grants such as the Ethnic and Minority-Led Small Business Grant. Because of the recent economic shutdown, many small businesses are not able to stay afloat during these tough times and the work done by this DPW can help to mitigate these effects. As this service is focused on protecting the safety and welfare of residents, youth place this DPW accordingly in the midst of a rapidly developing and changing city.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #9 POLICE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Although the Police Auditor's Office is relatively small with only six employees, the youth feel that their job is essential, especially after the recent incidents of police brutality. Their job of auditing complaints and creating policy recommendations to prevent future incidents of police misconduct is extremely important in fostering a safe and healthy place for the youth in San José, especially youth of color. Their role in increasing transparency and mending the relationship between the Police Department and the community is crucial for the youth in San José.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #10 POLICE DEPARTMENT

From the youth perspective, the Police Department is an indispensable department, but believe that higher focus on the previously mentioned departments will have the most positive impact on youth. The Police Department fulfills many essential services in the city, juggling 24-hour calls for service in addition to investigating crimes and regulating laws. The department has been a priority for the City for the past years and the investment has been paying off with the decline of household burglaries.

- As a result of the pandemic, there has been a decrease in crime in San José. Due to recent incidents of police brutality in the country, many youths do not feel comfortable in the presence of police. Specifically, there have been many incidents of police brutality in San José. In July 2020, during the George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests, there was an incident of police brutality in which an officer used excessive force on a DoorDash employee who was not resisting. Former San José Police Auditor LaDoris Cordell described the incident as one of the many incidents of police brutality within San José.

- There has already been a large increase in the Police Department budget in the past three years. With the newly-appointed Police Chief Anthony Mata, the Police Department's priorities may change. Additionally, Police Chief Mata may organize the Police Department budget in such a way that they do not need additional funds.
- Additionally, according to the employee salary records in 2019, many of the top paid City employees are senior officers. It appears that instead of hiring more police officers, the San José Police Department has been funding a select group of senior officers.

Because of these reasons, youth do not feel that they should prioritize the Police Department any higher. Until the Police Department becomes more stable and works to rebuild its relationship with the community, youth have ranked it accordingly.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #11 TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

The past fiscal year, the City spent a sizable portion of the budget on the Transportation Department (Transportation), and along with Measure T's funds, spent effort into paving the many miles of roads. Youth hope that the City researches strategies to advance bike infrastructure so that citizens can feel safe while commuting in more environmentally friendly ways. However, in comparison to the previously mentioned departments, the Transportation Department has fallen further down on the youth priority list. Because of the recent pandemic, there is less need for public transportation as many people are attending work and school remotely. As such, the youth feel it would be more beneficial to prioritize departments such as PRNS and the Library as they are focused on helping youth in the current pandemic.

It is worth mentioning that the Transportation Department would have been placed much higher on the priority list if the City oversaw VTA and BART. Youth have constantly expressed a desire for safer public transportation—many are deterred from using public transportation due to safety concerns. Although, the City does not oversee VTA or BART, youth hope that the City keeps this in mind when designing policy and making decisions regarding public transportation.

YOUTH PRIORITY: #12 FINANCE AND CITY CLERK

Similarly, to the aforementioned department, youth do not strongly feel the effects of the Finance Department or feel that it has the same level of urgency as other departments. Additionally, youth feel that the City Clerk's role of facilitating a democratic process in the City's legislative process is not as high a priority as the other twelve departments. Even though we recognize the

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

April 15, 2021

Subject: San José Youth Commission 2021-2022 City Budget Priorities

Page 10

support it provides for boards and commissions, youth feel other departments directly affect them. Therefore, priority of other departments are higher than those of Finance and City Clerk.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with 2020-2021 San José Youth Commission, the Police Auditor's Office, and Youth Advisory Council members throughout the City and the Library Department.

/s/

Aroshi Ghosh

San José Citywide Youth Commissioner

For questions, please contact Aroshi Ghosh, Citywide Youth Commissioner, at youthcomcw@sanjoseca.gov; or Laura Buzo, PRNS Recreation Superintendent, at laura.buzo@sanjoseca.gov.

Documents Consulted:

Mayor's March Budget Message 2020

Mayor's June Budget Message 2020

2020-2021 Adopted Operating Budget Message

City of San José Annual Report on City Services 2019-20

Climate Smart San José Plan

Envision San José 2040 General Plan

City Employee 2019 Salary Report

