



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR LICCARDO

FROM: Councilmember Esparza

SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT

DATE: 5/27/2021

Approved *Maya Esparza*

Date 5/27/2021

RECOMMENDATION

That the following recommendation be enacted.

Proposal

Program/Project Title: Japanese Friendship Garden

Amount of City Funding Required: \$823,000

This change is:

One-time Ongoing

Cost Estimate Number (if applicable): 35

Proposal Description, including the reason for the need and anticipated outcomes (Please describe how the proposal will affect services for San José residents, community groups, businesses, etc.):

Following the dark years of World War II, including the forced incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans, the United States and Japan worked to heal the wounds of war not only through traditional diplomacy, but through cultural exchange and citizen diplomacy. Recognizing the strength of citizen diplomacy, in 1956, President Eisenhower launched the Sister Cities Program to strengthen intercultural and international bonds throughout the world. One year later, in 1957, San Jose began its sister city relationship with Okayama, our country’s third sister city relationship to be formalized. In addition to San Jose’s large Japanese American community which had returned and grown after the war, the two cities shared a common, rich heritage as agricultural centers.

For the past 56 years, the Japanese Friendship Garden has stood as a living symbol of San Jose’s rich diversity, as well as our special sister-city relationship with Okayama. The Garden was modeled after Korakuen, a garden in Okayama dating back to 1700, and considered one of the “Three Great Gardens of Japan.” Residents from throughout our city have come to the Garden for generations to celebrate weddings, graduations, and other milestones. As an oasis of quiet tranquility and nature amidst the bustle of Silicon Valley, the Garden is more than a landmark, it’s a place of spiritual

rejuvenation where nature, history, and the special relationship between two cities and two cultures come together and blossom.

However, the Garden has been beset by tragedies and setbacks in recent years, with the death of ninety percent of the koi due to a virus in 2009, and of course the Coyote Creek Flood in 2017. Although much work has been done since the devastating flood, four years later the Garden remains urgently in need of renovations and improvements to restore it to its rightful place as a crown jewel of our community and of our entire city parks system.

We as a city are deeply committed to acknowledging and celebrating the contributions and heritage of our AAPI community. The Japanese Friendship Garden is one of our city's most vibrant and profound embodiments of that heritage, and deserves a priority and respect commiserate with its untold value to our city.

We all know the Garden's iconic bridge as the Moon Bridge, but research into the renovations and history of the bridge not only brought new complications to light, but also its intended original name: Taiko Bridge. Unfortunately, the beloved bridge has significant structural issues due to water damage that will require extensive repairs, resulting in the need for a much larger portion of funds than originally anticipated to address these issues and ensure that the bridge will be safe and accessible for generations to come. Consequently, additional funding is needed for other critical renovation and infrastructure work. This request will fund additional infrastructure and maintenance to provide safety upgrades, improved koi facilities, beautification, and consulting with a Japanese Garden expert.

A portion of the funding will go toward bringing in a renowned Japanese Garden consultant who will develop a comprehensive instructional manual and plan for the long-term care and maintenance of the Garden in accordance with traditional, culturally-informed Japanese techniques and practices. This will ensure that staff is able to effectively and efficiently maintain the Garden in accordance with best practices, and honor the Garden's heritage as an homage to Korakuen.

Additionally, the funding will also support work on facilities including the Tea House storage shed, railing and entrance trellis renovations, a gate replacement, and a branded set of interpretive signs and park signage that will improve guest safety and experience.

Finally, a portion of the funding will be used to repair one of the koi isolation tanks. The koi are the heart of the Japanese Friendship Garden, and we must ensure their well-being as we continue the long term process of recovery from the 2017 Flood.

With the completion of the Tea House renovations, and as we continue our gradual reopening and recovery efforts, we expect that the Garden will again become a critical revenue generator as a popular site for weddings, graduation parties, and other special events. Funding for these improvements will ensure that we are able to continue attracting visitors and encourage revenue generating uses for the Garden. They will also ensure that the Japanese Friendship Garden remains an oasis of tranquility and nature, where residents can go to reflect and find peace and quiet.

Funding Source

Essential Services Reserve:

Other (Please specify program/project/fund): \$823,000 Citywide C&C Tax Fund (including potentially drawing from the Deferred Maintenance Infrastructure Backlog Reserve)

Department or Organization Contact

Please list the contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation:

Name and Title: Yves Zsutty, Division Manager

Department or Organization: PRNS

Phone Number: 408-793-5561

Email: Yves.Zsutty@sanjoseca.gov