



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Julie Edmonds-Mares

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY BUDGET
MEETINGS SUMMARY**

DATE: June 2, 2015

Approved

Mayor A. Maguire

Date

6-2-15

BACKGROUND

Following the release of the City Manager's Proposed 2015-2016 Budget on May 1, the Mayor, City Councilmembers and the City Manager's Office have conducted a series of informational meetings in each of the 10 Council districts during the month of May. The purpose of these community budget meetings was to provide residents with information about the Proposed Budget, seek their input on budget priorities, and to provide an opportunity for them to ask questions of elected officials and City staff. Attendance at the 10 meetings was generally lower compared to previous years, which might be the result of a relatively stable budget with proposed service level enhancements instead of any proposed reductions.

The community meetings were opened by each district's Councilmember, followed by budget presentations by Mayor Liccardo and City staff, and ending with a question and answer period. Meeting attendees also were provided copies of the Budget in Brief that offers a more detailed explanation of the coming year's budget. During the discussion periods, representatives from the City Manager's Office, Police, Fire, Library, Transportation, and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Departments were available to respond to residents' specific questions and suggestions.

ANALYSIS

Though the topics of interest varied from district to district, a number of common themes emerged during the month. These included concerns about road maintenance and traffic safety, immigrant services, public safety, economic development and land use, parks and community center services, code enforcement, homeless issues, and arts funding. Participant feedback is summarized below:

Road Maintenance and Traffic Safety – The urgent need for road repair continues to resonate with residents throughout San José. In addition, residents asked about increased traffic calming around neighborhoods and schools, the proper use of bicycle lanes by bike riders, and the expansion of permit parking for areas affected by new development.

Immigrant Services – Residents and issue advocates called for increased funding for the new City Office on Immigrant Affairs, and some called for a clarification of what types of services this office would provide. Residents asked that the City provide training for immigrants to enhance their participation in civic life. Some comments centered on the relationship between San José police and immigrants, especially in the need for bilingual services and cultural competency.

Public Safety – Public safety remained a top priority for the allocation of City funding. The proposed hiring of more Community Service Officers was positively received, but residents also said this should not be a substitute for hiring more police officers who could respond better to increased burglaries. There was also a concern that some San José Police Academy graduates were leaving for other cities for better paying jobs. Some residents called for the hiring of more bilingual police officers to meet the needs of the immigrant population.

Some residents felt that the San José Fire Department responding to emergency medical situations with large equipment was not cost-effective.

The replacement of existing streetlights with brighter and more cost-effective and energy-efficient LED lights was consistently supported by residents. Residents in neighborhoods that have already received LED streetlights praised the public safety benefits of better lighting.

Neighborhood Watch programs for residents who wanted to volunteer for better community safety remained popular.

Economic Development and Land Use – Residents expressed interest in the City doing more to attract business to San José by streamlining the permit process and upgrading technology to improve the ability of City departments to communicate better with the public and each other.

There was a clear concern from some residents that residential development of lands zoned for employment was counterproductive to increasing revenue generation for the City's long-term financial health.

Parks and Community Centers – Residents asked for consideration of restoring City-operated services to all or part of the community centers that had been designated for reuse by nonprofits and other groups during prior years of budget challenges. Residents also asked for funding for after-school programs for youth.

Code Enforcement – Residents identified several specific neighborhoods that needed increased enforcement activities. There was a consistent series of resident comments on the increase of illegal dumping in neighborhoods, along with a perception that very little was being done by the City to address this problem. They asked questions about what was being done and how residents can find out about the City follow-up actions for illegal dumping.

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Homeless Issues – Residents recognized that City funding for addressing the challenges of homelessness was critical for the community. They asked about whether City staff who respond to the homeless have training in mental health areas; what the plans are for providing affordable housing; what the City was doing to continue to clean up homeless encampments; and whether City funding for the issue of homelessness was being used effectively.

Arts Funding – Residents of the Downtown Core support continued funding for arts activities, including support of incubation of arts groups and individual artists. Comments noted that quality of life can be enhanced by supporting a vibrant arts community that can also aid the downtown economy.

San José residents continue to be engaged in the community budget meetings as active participants. Although residents in each Council district focused at times on issues specific to their areas, citywide themes also emerged that affected all residents. Generally, the comments and advice given to Mayor Liccardo, Councilmembers, and City representatives were thoughtful, and participants demonstrated a clear desire to engage with the City and help work toward solutions to the issues discussed.



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For questions, please contact Ernest Guzman, Executive Analyst, at (408) 535-8171.