



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Lee Wilcox

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOODS COMMISSION **DATE:** June 11, 2019
BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Approved

Date

6/11/19

REPLACEMENT

BACKGROUND

The official duties of the Neighborhoods Commission include making annual budget priority recommendations to the City Council. (SJMC § 2.08.3430.) To prepare for this year's recommendations, the Commission received a presentation from Office of the City Auditor at their April 10, 2019 meeting to review the City Auditor's Annual Report (2017-2018) on City services in order to help them generate ideas to discuss with residents. They scheduled a special meeting on May 2, 2019 to create most of the content of their recommendations based on the community feedback they have been gathering all year. They received a presentation from the City Manager's Budget Office on the 2019-2020 Proposed Budget at their regular meeting on May 8, 2019, following which they finalized the letter.

ANALYSIS

The Neighborhoods Commission's 2019 Annual Budget Letter is attached for review. The recommendations described in the letter call for additional funding or operational improvements that fall into three categories: neighborhood safety, code enforcement, and transportation.

COORDINATION

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

LEE WILCOX
Chief of Staff, Office of the City Manager

Mayor and City Council
City of San José
200 E Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

May 8, 2019

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Following please find the Neighborhoods Commission's 2019 Annual Budget Letter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood Safety: The Commission recommends:

- Hiring additional full-time employees to answer calls for police instead of relying on overtime.
- Separating 911 emergency calls from the 311 non-emergency calls and developing a 311 non-emergency call response system.
- Using Measure B ¼-Cent Sales Tax revenue as a source of funds to increase the number of detectives in the Burglary Unit from three (3) to four (4).
- Funding SJ Fire and Police Departments with additional budget, staff, and internal support, commensurate with the public concerns on illegal fireworks.
- Allocating discrete resources to staff known "hot-spots" during peak illegal fireworks use on July 4, Lunar New Year, and Tet.

Code Enforcement: The Commission recommends the City dedicate more resources to Code Enforcement, specifically:

- Empower Community Service Officers to issue citations for illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, people living in RVs on residential streets, and graffiti.
- \$60,000 for one (1) Full Time Employee to support community education on illegal dumping.

Transportation: The Commission recommends:

- Communicating the repaving plan and timeline to the community via all means of communication, in addition to websites like the City's "Current Pavement Projects." This will help alleviate the ongoing concern on paving and potholes.
- Providing additional funding to increase the staffing of the Traffic Enforcement Unit to address concerns including speeding, sideshows, pedestrian safety, and school-area traffic issues.
- Add two (2) Traffic Engineers to implement road striping and other methods to discourage bad driving behavior in conjunction with repaving projects.

San José has experienced another year of growth and evolution as one of the nation's leading cities. With growth and evolution come the challenges to deal with the resultant changes and issues that affect the quality of life in San José.

Neighborhood safety, code enforcement, and transportation have been impacted by the continuing growth and evolution of San José. In many cases, the impact issues are ongoing because of lack of resources and/or increases in demands that are not able to be met with existing planning and budgeting. Issues are not adequately addressed resulting in a backlog or increase of problems not dealt with.

Ongoing quality of life issues at the "street level" continue to be unresolved. Commissioners reported very similar concerns from their communities last year. In some communities, residents say they no longer report incidents like burglary and increasing front-porch package theft because Public Safety response is too slow, including slow or non-existent dispatch call answering. Illegal fireworks, especially on the 4th of July, remain a major unresolved issue. Fewer than half of City residents still report San José as a great place to live for overall quality of life.

The continuing growth and development of San José does provide a source of revenue and resources to direct toward addressing and resolving the issues. Many of the issues have been identified and analyzed and recommendations developed for their resolution. Successful implementation of the recommendations will in many cases, require a focused approach with project-based objectives and timelines for completion.

Commissioners solicited budget recommendations from neighborhood/homeowner associations, leadership groups, and community organizations for each of their districts. The Commissioners' engagement with the organizations provided meaningful neighborhood-level information from those affected by neighborhood safety, code enforcement, and transportation issues. The Commission's budget recommendations are based on the inputs received from their communities.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Neighborhood Safety issues were among the highest concerns expressed in community responses.

- Emergency Calls Response Times: Community inputs from district residents throughout the city reported slow, or no, response to 911 calls. Currently, police

call takers and dispatchers accept both 911 emergency and 311 non-emergency calls. The 311 non-emergency calls account for approximately 40 percent of call volume. The City Auditor reported that in order to meet the California requirement for answering emergency call within 15 seconds the SJ Fire and Police Departments rely heavily on overtime for police call takers and dispatchers. The Commission recommends that additional full-time employees be hired for police call takers and dispatchers instead of relying on overtime. The Commission also recommends review and improvement of the compensation package necessary to attract and retain skilled 911 dispatchers. Additionally, the Commission recommends that San José separate the 911 emergency calls from the 311 non-emergency calls and develop a 311 non-emergency call response system. The resulting 911 and 311 call response systems should incorporate the latest technology. Measure B ¼-Cent Sales Tax revenue should be evaluated as a possible source to fund these systems.

- In addition, to respond to the increased property theft, the Commission recommends using the Measure B ¼-Cent Sales Tax revenue as a source of funds to increase the number of detectives in the Burglary Unit from three (3) to four (4).
- **Illegal Fireworks:** The Commission has provided input on this issue over the past several years. The Commission recommends that the SJ Fire and Police Departments have additional budget, staff, and internal support commensurate with the public concerns on this issue. Specifically, the Commission recommends allocating discrete resources to staff known “hot-spots” during peak illegal fireworks use on July 4, Lunar New Year, and Tet. Both departments need additional resources and staffing to address this problem. The SJ Fire and Police Departments have engaged community organizations such as Stop Illegal Fireworks and neighborhood associations to communicate to their neighborhoods the dangers and social impacts of illegal fireworks. The Commission again strongly urges additional staffing and resources for dispatch and data tracking, enforcing laws in real time, raising fines and upgrading year-round online reporting. Finally, the Commission recommends incorporating reporting illegal fireworks into the MySanJose app.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code enforcement issues were also high among the concerns expressed in community responses.

- Illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, people living in RVs on residential streets, and graffiti continue to be ongoing problems. Residents report no response to simple Code Enforcement requests, or responses that take so long that a simple violation increases in scope into a real problem. The code enforcement department does not have budget, staff, and internal support to address code enforcement issues especially in the areas of illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, and graffiti. The Commission recommends that Community Service Officers be used for issuing citations in these areas. This will allow the code enforcement department to concentrate on making certain citation issues be corrected. The Commission recommends that code enforcement funding be provided for budget, staff, and internal support and using Community Service Officers.
- Based on community input, the Commission believes it is important to address homeless encampments and the associated public safety and code enforcement concerns throughout the city.
- The Mayor's March Budget Message addresses the eradication of litter, however we should invest in diverse community education and engagement, especially in neighborhoods with hot spots of illegal dumping. The Commission recommends \$60,000 for one (2) Full Time Employee to support community education on illegal dumping.

TRANSPORTATION

The condition of San José streets remains an issue with communities.

- Residents are anticipating Measure T Bond funds to be implemented to pave streets and, especially, fill potholes. Communicating the plan and timeline to the community via all means of communication, in addition to websites like the City's "Current Pavement Projects," will help alleviate the ongoing concern on this topic.
- Traffic enforcement has suffered as a result of budget reductions. Neighborhoods provided inputs on concerns that included speeding, sideshows, pedestrian safety, and school area traffic issues. In 2008 the Traffic Enforcement Unit was staffed by one (1) lieutenant, seven (7) sergeants and forty-four (44) officers and issued approximately 75,000 citations. Presently, the unit is staffed by one (1) lieutenant, two (2) sergeants, and eight (8) officers and issues

approximately 10,000 citations. The Commission recommends that additional funding be provided to increase the staffing of the Traffic Enforcement Unit.

- The Commission learned that there are low cost ways to discourage bad driving behavior by striping and other methods. The Commission recommends the addition of two (2) Traffic Engineers to implement these types of measures in conjunction with repaving projects.

While improved code and public safety enforcement is highly recommended, the Commission believes a missing piece across the board is increasing funds for multi-lingual, multi-media *education*. Education funds allow the City to address new issues, breathe life into existing programs, empower our neighbors, and accelerate growth as a great American city.

Sincerely,



Gary Cunningham, Chair
San José Neighborhoods Commission