

June 10, 2019
Submitted electronically

Hon. Mayor Liccardo and City Council
San Jose City Hall
200 E. Santa Clara
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Item 3.3: Mayor's June Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2019-2020

Dear Hon. Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Jones and San Jose City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Mayor's June Budget Message and budget deliberations for FY19-20. SPUR recognizes that the City has many critical needs and investments to be addressed to meet high quality of life standards for all residents.

Given the significant changes underway in our city, we appreciate the city's investment in updating critical citywide policies such as the Design Guidelines, Citywide Access and Mobility Plan and Retail Study.

We are supportive of many of the budget proposals put forth and particularly recommend the following.

- **Reflect the city's recently approved priorities in the budget.**

Recently, the City Council adopted several priority items for FY19-20. We encourage the Council to allocate appropriate resources to these priorities, so that city staff can turn these priorities into actionable policy in a timely manner. We particularly support allocating funds to support the creation of a universal development fee policy, which would provide cost predictability and make fees easier to estimate before a project applicant submits a proposal to the city. The development of a universal fee will allow for a more efficient and consolidated process for developers but also allow for greater transparency between the City and community in understanding how fees are determined, allocated and affect the financials of development projects.

- **Allocate funding to support trail operations and maintenance.**

With 60 miles of trails within San Jose, it is imperative that the City allocate resources to maintain and operate our open green spaces. In order to encourage trail use be it for recreation or commuting, SPUR recommends the City Council establish and adequately fund a long-needed dedicated trail maintenance program to service our city's trails and ensure that they remain clean, safe and welcoming for our residents.

- **Fund two dedicated park rangers to increase safety and security in Guadalupe River Park.**

San Jose is full of many unique assets from San Jose State University to our museums and cultural centers, our community is full of wonderful civic spaces. However, one of our most important public spaces is severely lacking in resources. Guadalupe River Park has the opportunity to be a world-class urban park that is not just of benefit to downtown dwellers but the entire city.

During a community workshop that SPUR hosted in 2018, stakeholders and residents noted that stewardship and maintenance were two of their most concerning issues surrounding the park. And in an online survey conducted by SPUR and the Center for Active Design in January 2018, there was strong public perception that the river park is not safe or welcoming.

Due to the physical design of the park, much of the trail is tucked away from commercial activity and in certain areas quite secluded and has low visibility. We recommend that the City Council authorize funding to support the creation of two full-time park rangers dedicated to monitoring the river park.

- **Encourage public space activations by revising the fee and permit structure to allow for greater flexibility and use.**

The city has invested considerable time and attention to a Public Life Strategy, supported by the Knight Foundation. A city the size of San Jose should have a more vibrant and active public realm. The city should consider how to reduce the fees and permitting burden for parks and streets use by the public. Viva Calle has become one of the city's most anticipated and celebrated public life events. However, the number of community-organized major events has dwindled in the past decade. With the summer season upon us, the city should be teeming with life lived outdoors. We look forward to seeing greater activation, spearheaded by the community, in the coming months and years.

- **Allocate funding to develop a city-wide community engagement strategy and full-time staff position.**

With significant growth and change on the horizon we need to rethink how to work with residents to help design and plan for the future changes. We must collectively work to respond to the fear of displacement and distrust of government in the community. The Mayor, Council and administration have sought to re-establish lines of communication with the community lost with the Great Recession and closure of the Redevelopment Agency, e.g., through the Station Area Advisory Group process. As development intensifies, a trend SPUR supports, funds should be earmarked for broader community engagement. This support would aid in the facilitation of urban villages, Diridon Station Area planning, development of affordable housing, preservation of industrial zones, and more.

- **Dedicate resources to complete an Alum Rock Urban Village outreach and planning effort.**

A decade ago, the city embarked on a process to attract investment to the Alum Rock corridor, with an associated public outreach effort. The result was a form-based code plan, a planning tool that SPUR generally supports to set clear standards and facilitate growth and investment. However, in the years since the Alum Rock plan's approval, the city was hit hard by the Great Recession, the closure of the Redevelopment Agency and a focus on responding to investment in other parts of the city.

Recently, there has been development interest in the Alum Rock area. Given the significant delay since the plan was approved, the advent of the urban villages planning process, and the contextual change around growth in San Jose, SPUR recommends the city dedicate resources toward a complete Alum Rock Urban Village planning process. Recent urban village planning processes have required up to \$500,000. This process, due to the necessity of conducting it in multiple languages, may require more.

Those with a development proposal submitted should be allowed to move forward under the existing rules. However, new proposals should be paused to fully engage the community in defining the services and amenities that they would like to see accompany housing and commercial development along the Alum Rock corridor.

- **Establish an equity framework to address funding gaps in San Jose and provide dedicated funding to support Staff participation in GARE**

SPUR supports the Mayor's proposal set forth in the June budget message to better integrate equity into the City's funding strategy as well as the City Manager's recommendation to allocate dedicated funding for staff to continue the work in Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

The city's work with GARE, a national network of government staff working on strategies to improve racial equity and advance opportunities for all, is timely, necessary and will reap benefits for years to come.

We appreciate the time Staff, Mayor and Council Members have put into developing next fiscal year's budget. We recognize the challenges that budgeting for a city this large, complex and dynamic is in any year. Often, short-term emergencies have dominated the public discourse around the budget. This year, it's important to recognize that we are at a critical juncture in the city's history and take steps to allocate resources in such a way as to shape growth and invest in long-term benefits for the current and future residents of San Jose.

Thank you,

Teresa Alvarado

Teresa Alvarado, San Jose Director