

February 25, 2020

Dear Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

This letter is to express SPUR's support for the following six items that have been nominated as part of the priority-setting process:

- **Privately Owned-Public Space (Councilmember Diep)**
- **Equity Task Force (Councilmember Carrasco) and Equity Funding and Analysis (Councilmember Esparza)**
- **Land Banking (Councilmember Carrasco)**
- **Density cap removal for affordable housing (Councilmember Jones)**
- **Local Businesses in New Development (Councilmember Jones)** - *SPUR recommends that a comprehensive study and feasibility analysis be completed prior to any policy change in response to this priority item.*
- **Develop a City-wide Transit First Policy Framework (Councilmember Foley)** - *SPUR recommends that this framework be made in coordination with other transportation planning initiatives such as the city-wide access and mobility study.*

These initiatives further the transition to a more vibrant, inclusive transit-supporting city, showcasing the importance of public life and neighborhood wellbeing. SPUR encourages the City Council to adopt these items as city-wide priorities. We look forward to working with City Staff to further develop these plans and projects.

Additionally, we ask that the City Council consider the following items as additional priority items:

Go Big on Guadalupe River Park

Downtown San Jose is changing rapidly. Over the last five years, the urban core has seen a significant upturn in private acquisition and development of commercial and residential properties. It is important to balance the investment in physical infrastructure with that of open public green spaces, which bring people together, connect urban habitats and provide a healthier quality of life. Guadalupe River Park is a critical physical connector within San Jose and the spine of downtown — and has been long overlooked.

Now is the time to leverage the public and private capital flowing through San Jose to realize the full potential of the river park to not only serve and benefit San Jose residents, but to become a regional hub for social and civic activity. **The decisions we make today for Guadalupe River Park are those that will stand for the next fifty years.** Therefore, we ask that City Council adopt the following items in an effort to better support the success of Guadalupe River Park:

- **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.

- **A fully-staffed and expanded park ranger program:** SPUR fully supports the proposal put forth by the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition, History San Jose and Save our Trails to increase the capacity and staffing of our park ranger program. As an urban public space, Guadalupe River Park sees both the challenges and benefits of being located in a downtown environment. This park should have dedicated full-time rangers with equivalent training in crisis intervention, mental health first aid, citation authority, and access and connections to services that can aid people experiencing homelessness.

Prioritize Public Life

Acknowledging the growth and change on the horizon, we need to rethink how to work with residents to help design and plan for such changes. Currently community engagement efforts are mainly exercised on a project by project basis. While this has helped inform site specific plans, it has not provided residents with a continuous pathway for receiving information, providing input and feeling a part of shaping the change to come.

In SPUR's white paper, *It Takes a Village: Strategies for successful implementation of San Jose's urban village vision*, we found that robust community engagement is absolutely required to facilitate new denser development. Strategy four of the white paper recommends that the City "*implement an equitable and inclusive planning process*" which includes education training for community members and leaders as well as opportunities for residents to stay engaged after a site specific plan is developed.

The City has done an excellent job to find new ways to engage with residents, specifically through the Diridon Station Area Advisory Group process and through urban village planning efforts. **SPUR recommends adding an Office of Public Life with two dedicated staff members to develop and oversee city-wide community engagement efforts as well as coordinate public life activities across departments.** This department would also allow staff to further carry out the strategies and principles put forth in the adopted public life strategy made in partnership with the Knight Foundation and Gehl Architects.

Advance the future planning of Coyote Valley

SPUR is thrilled with the recent City Council action to rezone 937 acres of North Coyote Valley to open space. To advance a new vision for Coyote Valley, SPUR convened staff from many of the various city, county, and special district agencies that have a role in planning the land uses in Coyote Valley to discuss how best to coordinate their respective planning efforts for this area. What became clear from that conversation is the need for a long-term multi-agency planning effort.

For that effort to succeed, we urge you to **support additional staff capacity, either through a temporary consultant or new position, to allow the planning staff to fully develop a vision and joint planning effort with the County.** Additionally, we ask that you make joint planning for the future of Coyote Valley one of the Planning Department's priorities for the coming year. Given the current context - with multiple agency planning efforts aligning -- the topic is extremely timely and San Jose and Santa Clara County have a unique opportunity to take advantage of it by embarking on a joint planning effort for Coyote Valley in 2020.

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We want to thank both the City Council and City Administration for the time and effort it took to develop a comprehensive list of priorities for San Jose. We recognize the challenges that it takes to determine the city-wide priorities for such a large, complex and dynamic city. However, we urge you to use priority setting to put forward bold, innovative ideas that will advance the future of the community at-large. While we have a responsibility to respond to the emerging crises that challenge our city daily, we need to think about the investments and priorities that will help define, shape and enhance our community for the long-term.

Thank you,

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