

Mayor Sam Liccardo and City of San José Councilmember
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent 11/10/15

re: Nov. 10, 2015 Agenda Item 5.2: St. James Park

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am writing to express my concerns with the funding proposals for activation and maintenance of St. James Park. As I said at the Parks Commission meeting in September, I love St. James Park, and yes it does need some TLC, but please don't give away half of future parks to pay for this one park's maintenance and activation. And it would be maintained for how long? The new high-rises will mean many more people will live in the area for generations to come, but there won't be sufficient money to buy and develop for them the necessary parkland. Yes, it'd be nice to have concerts and festivals in a well-maintained St. James Park for a number of years – but after that, then what? Yes, put the money into St. James for the needed capital improvements, but the "voluntary" maintenance funds should be used instead, for example, to develop the Coyote Creek Trail which would provide the residents a safe and inviting gateway to Kelley Park – a connection that wouldn't vanish after a decade.

In the Oct. 19th memo posted on the City's website, the map ("Attachment A") is unclear: please confirm that the proposal is for a very specific area, one bounded by Julian, 6th St., Santa Clara, Notre Dame, St. James, and San Pedro. Also, please confirm that the proposal is specifically limited to 2,000 units (1,000 in high-rise building and another 1,000 in mid-rises), and please confirm that this will not be setting a pattern of the City routinely discounting the PDO/PIO parkland in-lieu fees.

The Oct. 19th memo stated that the funds diverted would total \$9.2 Million. The memo of Nov. 6th proposes to keep the 50% discount for the 1,000 high-rise units while doubling the discount from 25% to 50% for the 1,000 mid-rise units. The total of these diverted funds is not given, but I calculate that the total will be over \$12 Million (although I've heard others say the total exceeds \$18 Million – please state explicitly the total being discussed). Either way, some of this money could, for example, be used to convert nearby Rancho Del Pueblo from a money-losing golf course into community-serving soccer fields.

St. James Park does need help with maintenance and operations. Quite a number of San José Parks could benefit from improved maintenance. And they all need maintenance indefinitely and not just for a few-year period. I hope you will lead the City in finding a permanent funding mechanism for park maintenance and operation, perhaps similar to the County's voter-approved Park Charter Fund.

Please, do not give away a lifetime of future parks in exchange for just a few years of enhanced maintenance and activities at just one park!

Thank you,

/signed/

Lawrence Ames