

February 12, 2016

Honorable Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers  
City of San José  
200 East Santa Clara Street  
San José, CA 95113

re: 2016/17 Budget Proposal

Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

As you prepare the 2016/17 Budget, you will have many interests and concerns to consider in a city of a million residents, and many demands on the annual budget. Public Safety (Police and Fire) and Streets and Traffic are of course among the main concerns of the city and they will place large and high-priority demands on the budget. But there is more to a city than the bare necessities.

In advance of the February Neighborhoods Commission meeting, Commissioners collected suggestions for the budget from numerous sources from their Council Districts. Unfortunately, the agenda was full and our meeting ran long, and so the Commission did not have an opportunity to formally review and discuss any of the recommendations. Accordingly, as a resident of District 6 rather than on behalf of the Commission, I would like to offer the following suggestions for the 2016/17 Budget:

- Continue the Mayor's Gang Task Force: it has proven to be a cost-effective way of keeping our youth from becoming involved in gangs – it is far better to keep them out of gangs in the first place than to pay more to incarcerate them afterwards.
- Continue to keep the libraries open 6 days/week and to keep the Community Centers open: they provide our youth alternatives to the gangs. Increase the funding for youth summer programs, focusing on areas of greatest need.
- Continue and expand the Community Service Officer (CSO) program to cost-effectively augment the sworn police officer contingent. Also, explore whether the CSOs can help reduce the use of illegal fireworks.
- Provide for additional Park Rangers: they help reduce crime and help reduce vandalism and wear-and-tear on our parks, thereby reducing the maintenance costs.
- Help the homeless. Continue the joint effort with the County to find and implement viable solutions, which may range from providing housing for vets and safe places for live-in car-parking to sanctioned encampments with sanitary and security services.
- Tree maintenance. The city's "urban forest" has been severely impacted by the drought and past budget cutbacks. There's a need to remove dead trees from city parks and public lands: they are a fire-danger and falling-limb hazard. Also, develop a program to help property-owners with dead or hazardous street trees, perhaps by helping organize cost-saving measures such as group-buys of maintenance services.
- Historic preservation. San José has a number of neighborhoods of historic interest. The City has a nearly finished "Neighborhoods of Distinction" program to preserve such districts with alternatives (and possibly incentives) to "scrape and replace" that we'd like to see completed and implemented.
- Increase the funding for Code Enforcement, including dealing with Illegal Dumping, to help maintain a safe, healthy, and livable city.

- Fund the development of a Landlord Certification Program. Landlords have a huge impact on families and on entire neighborhoods, and while many landlords are conscious, some profit by neglecting their buildings and ignoring bad tenant behavior. Landlording is a business and should be licensed; landlording is a profession that should be certified to show knowledge of the law and best practices. This could help reduce police and code enforcement costs and also help reduce homelessness.
- Continue the effort to codify the Riparian Setback Ordinance.
- Purchase the remaining eastern half of the railroad right-of-way for a future Three Creeks Trail connection between Tamien Station and Kelley Park, to serve San José's oft-neglected south-central neighborhoods.
- Street maintenance: continue and expand the program to do routine maintenance in a timely manner rather than delaying and having to pay in the future for much more expensive roadway reconstruction. Prioritize not only the arterial street network, but also the streets on the city's bikeway network. (Bicyclists are more impacted by poor pavement quality, even while they cause less wear-and-tear on the pavement.)
- Maintain a "Rainy Day Reserve", and commit funds for the inevitable future economic downturns. Work to develop broad public and staff support for contingency plans to balance City Services in the event of reduced funding and grant resources.
- And keep a little bit of funding for "fun events", especially where city money can leverage other funding for the benefit of many. The 4th of July fireworks and the VivaCalle events last year were great!

I would be pleased to provide more information on any of these suggestions, and hope you can find funding to include them all in your proposed budget. As a resident of District 6, I look forward to participating in the upcoming budget discussions.



Lawrence Ames,  
District 6 Commissioner on the Neighborhoods Commission  
and past chair of the District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG)  
[Larry@L-Ames.com](mailto:Larry@L-Ames.com)

cc: Neighborhoods Commission Staff, vice-chair, and other D6 Commissioner  
District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG)  
Save Our Trails  
SJ Parks Advocates  
SJ Riparian Advocates