

Notes from [Council Nov 10, 2015](#), Agenda item 5.2: St. James Park
Informal notes by L. Ames, 11/11/15.

Three alternatives:

- Staff memo: 50% from high-rises, 25% from mid-rises in defined area bounded by Julian, 6th St., Santa Clara, Notre Dame, St. James, and San Pedro, totaling ~\$9M. [>link<](#)
- Mayor et al's "Blue Memo": 50% from both mid- and high-rises from bounded area, totaling ~\$14M: [>link<](#)
- Downtown Assoc's suggestion: Blue Memo + several adjacent devel'pmts, totaling ~\$19M

Notes:

- My apologies: in my earlier post, I said fees from developments at Diridon would be diverted to St. James: they won't. The district-bounding dotted red line did not appear in the graphic and the boundaries were not defined in the text, so I incorrectly assumed the shaded regions were the boundaries.
- Public comment was taken before the valuations of the different options were given.

Public comment:

- Many spoke on behalf of St. James Park, including several park advocates. Afterwards, they said that this is a unique situation and a unique opportunity: St. James is one of the oldest parks in the City, and right now there are a number of high-density developments in the immediate neighborhood: use a flash of cash to flush out the park and give it a make-over.
- I and a few others spoke against the proposal, concerned about the funding mechanism. (my comments are below.)

Staff & Council discussion:

- Unique and special park, needs lots of help.
- Staff didn't include adjacent developments (Downtown Assoc's idea) because they came in under prior 50%-off promotion. If included here, would only get half of that (25%), and also the money was needed for capital improvements in St. James.
- Several Councilmembers expressed concerns as to whether it was legal to use PDO/PIO funds for maintenance and operation. Discussion of the Quimby Act authorizing fees for capital funding such as land acquisition and major improvements. City Dept'y Attorney made cryptic replies like "that was discussed in this morning's closed session" and "this is voluntary".
- Q: What does "activation" really mean? Throw a couple major events and say on average the park is used? Would it be better to have a daily yoga class?
- CM Rocha and Oliverio pushed back: if the goal is to give St. James \$1.5M a year to maintain and activate, why not just request it from the General Fund? Avoid any legality concerns, and be up front about the priority of the request? A: all money seems to go to Police.
- CM Herrera: What physical changes will there be in, say, 7 years? Will there be something to show for this expenditure? City will need money to buy parkland should it become available, but will support the motion nonetheless.
- CM Peralez: St. James is unique w/ so much development nearby. Need capital for Pavilion to activate the park.
- Mayor: City has \$71M in the Park Fund right now, and only \$63M of that is committed.

Vote: to approve Mayor's Blue Memo: 9 yeas, 2 nays (CM Rocha and Oliverio).

Public comments limited to 1 minute, due to large number of public there to speak on Uber/Lyft/Taxis at the Airport.

LLA's talk:

St. James is a lovely & historic park and it does need some TLC, but please don't give away half of future parks to pay for the maintenance & activation of a single park.

New mid- & high-rise developments will mean many additional residents in the downtown for generations to come, residents who will need parkland.

It'd be great to throw some festivals at St. James, but after they're over, then what?

If the money were instead spent to connect the Coyote Crk. Trail to Kelley Park, it'd provide a connection that would remain for decades.

Just how much money are you proposing to divert for this maintenance and activation?

Some of this money could be used to convert the nearby Rancho Del Pueblo from a money-losing golf course into a community-serving soccer field.

St. James needs help w/ maintenance, as do many in town, now & for years to come: you need to work on a more sustainable funding mechanism.

Please don't give away a lifetime of future parks for just a few years of maintenance and operation.

I also spoke on item 5.1 – Report on Age-Friendly City Initiative

(Topic was heard hours before, immediately following Consent).

Discussion was on the aging of San José's population, and how the City needs to make various accommodations.

My talk:

As one of your retired baby-boomers who's getting older, I find that I'm using the trails more and my car less.

And I recall how my father was even under doctor's orders to walk some number of miles every day.

So, it'd be great if the Los Gatos Creek Trail could be completed thru Midtown and to the Diridon Station transportation hub.

For resident downtown, it'd be great if the Coyote Crk Trail could be extended under I-280 and connected to Kelley Park, so that they could relax watching the koi fish at the Japanese Gardens, or remembering their past at the History Park.

Build the 5-Wounds Trail to help near-eastside residents get to the coming BART Station.

I just hope, after item 5.2 on today's agenda, that there's still some funding available to do these!

Thank you ;-)

~Larry Ames, 11/11/15