

# PACT 2006 Mayoral Forum

## Critical Issue: Parks, Community Centers, Youth & Senior Programs

This year, the budget for the City of San Jose is looking better than in the past years. This does not mean it is doing well, but rather that fewer cuts than anticipated will take place. In the past six years, PRNS's budget has been slashed from \$10 million to \$6 million, and nearly half of the 149 full-time positions were cut. PRNS will likely face an additional \$1 million in cuts this year.

San Jose is now in the unenviable position of having modern, impressive new community center facilities, but is unable to staff them at an adequate level. Consequently, centers are closing entirely or operating at a much-reduced schedule and with much fewer staff. New community centers are being built from 2000 bond measure money, and the City has shifted staff to those new facilities. PACT's volunteer leaders have learned from the City that 15 full time equivalents (FTEs) are required to fully-staff one of the City's new community centers, and that 10 FTEs are required for a standard program. ***But here's the rub: each council district is now limited to only 6.7 FTEs, not even enough to provide a decent program at one center.***

This year, the city is trying to establish partnerships with non-profit or for-profit organizations through a facilities re-use strategy. The city hopes non-profits will step-up to run 10 sites in the 2006-07 fiscal year, reportedly saving \$94,000, and take on four more the following year. The strategy is that these organizations would provide the services that the City cannot afford to provide itself. If the re-use strategy does not work – and few organizations seem eager to fill this gap without significant new revenue themselves – what will happen to our centers and the critical services they provide?

Thus arises the need to explore possible revenue streams for PRNS, including:

1. Parcel tax. Parcel taxes require a two-thirds majority to pass, and San Jose voters have demonstrated their willingness to support parcel taxes for services they care about. Measure S, for instance, passed in November 2004, as a re-authorization of a parcel tax to support the City's outstanding public libraries. Measure S levies a tax of \$25 per single family dwelling, with proportional amounts for other types of property, and provides a minimum of \$6.2 million annually in supplemental funding for 10 years. When trust is re-built between City Hall and San Jose residents, there could be an opportunity to get voters to approve a parcel tax in support of parks, community centers, and vital programs.

2. Fees. Without approval by San Jose voters, the City Council can levy fees to cover the cost of specific services. An example of this is the City's \$1.75 per-phone-line "emergency services fee" that was set to expire this year but might be extended by the Council. This fee generates \$10 million to support the 911 center. Other directed fees like this could be adopted to support aspects of PRNS.

In order to move this effort forward, at the PACT Mayoral Forum on May 21, PACT's grassroots volunteer leaders will ask the candidates the following question:

*If elected Mayor, will you find a significant new stream of revenue to support parks, community centers, and youth & senior programs.*