



**Councilmember Marni von Wilpert**

*City of San Diego • District 5*

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** January 14, 2022

**TO:** Jeff Kavar, Interim Independent Budget Analyst

**FROM:** Councilmember Marni von Wilpert

**SUBJECT:** Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2023

---

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my budget priorities as we begin the process of developing the Fiscal Year 2023 budget. I would like to thank the Interim IBA, Jeff Kavar, for the assistance you and your office will provide during the budget development process. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and years of underfunding our infrastructure assets, the City faces significant challenges in this budget cycle. I am committed to working closely with my Council colleagues, the Mayor, the IBA, city staff, and members of the public to develop a budget that is balanced and addresses the needs of our communities. As we move forward in the development of the FY 2023 budget, one of my main priorities is to ensure that we maintain adequate funding for the core government services provided by our General Fund Departments.

Given the unprecedented and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I request that priority is given to our various COVID-19 Recovery efforts in the FY 2023 budget. We must continue our unprecedented efforts to assist our residents and businesses as we recover from this pandemic. We must work closely with our public health partners, the County, the Office of Race and Equity, and others to provide consistent messaging and equitable recovery services for our residents.

In addition to the priorities mentioned above, I would like to submit the following budget priority requests:

**Public Safety:**

- **Funding and implementation of the Commission on Police Practices (Measure B)**
  - The residents of San Diego have spoken with the passage of Measure B, calling for the creation of the Commission on Police Practices. The FY 2023 budget must prioritize adequate funding and staff time to ensure the implementation of the provisions outlined in Measure B.

- **Fire-Rescue and Police Recruitment and Retention**
  - Ensuring our Police, Firefighters, and Lifeguards have adequate staffing and resources to answer 9-11 calls is essential. We must approve a budget that ensures those who protect and serve us are properly staffed and have the resources they need to keep us safe, including investments to recruit and retain high-quality first responders.
  - This request includes adding additional staff to support our first responders, including civilian administrative staff to help increase operational efficiency and reduce the workload of our first responders.
- **Full funding for Fire-Rescue Air Operations**
  - Given the current state of worsening wildfires driven by climate change in California, the City must remain vigilant in our efforts to reduce the fire dangers that our communities face. The FY 2023 budget must ensure that our Fire-Rescue Department is adequately equipped to respond to fires and emergencies. I request that the necessary funding is provided to the Department to ensure the entire Fire-Rescue Air Operations fleet are fully maintained and operational.
- **Full funding for Brush Management Programs**
  - The FY 2023 budget must continue to fully fund the brush management services our residents rely on for the safety of their communities. Regular brush management is one of the most effective ways of protecting and hardening both private and public structures from wildfire risk.
- **Transportation Department weed abatement funding**
  - Weed abatement is an important maintenance activity that provides both aesthetic and safety benefits. The Transportation Department's weed abatement program goes hand-in-hand with our brush management efforts to reduce the risk of wildfires ignited by vehicles. The weed abatement along streets in high fire risk communities, such as the San Pasqual Valley, or along wildfire evacuation routes are critical to public safety. I request that the Transportation Department's weed abatement contract be fully funded, and priority be given to wildfire evacuation routes and high fire risk streets across the City.
- **Fire-Rescue Fast Response Squad in San Pasqual Valley**
  - Maintaining funding for the Fast Response Squad in the San Pasqual Valley is essential to ensure adequate emergency response times to our most northern community.
  - In October 2017, for example, a fire sparked in San Pasqual Valley and the Fast Response Squad helped stopped it from spreading and contained it to only 12-acres. The San Pasqual Valley FRS must continue to operate on a permanent basis to ensure appropriate Fire-Rescue and wildfire response times throughout northeastern San Diego.
- **Permanent Fire Training Facility**
  - San Diego City lacks a permanent fire training facility. Training is currently conducted at the former Naval Training Facility in and around old buildings, many of which have been condemned. Constant issues with the current facility to include asbestos, lead paint, electrical hazards, water leaks, age and environmental hazards have delayed or prevented training and jeopardized firefighter health unnecessarily. Firefighters need a dedicated and safe location to

conduct training, or they will be unable to provide effective service to the Citizens of San Diego. The FY 2023 budget should include funding to evaluate locations for a permanent fire training facility.

- **Fire-Rescue and Police Department funding for Mental Health Services**
  - The pandemic, staffing shortages, and mandatory overtime have all taken an enormous toll on our emergency responders and their families. We must ensure there are adequate resources to support the wellness of our first responders, including mental health support.
- **Gun Violence Prevention Initiatives**
  - While San Diego remains one of the safest large metro areas in the United States, violent crime for the region spiked over the last year and was largely attributed to gun-related aggravated assaults. We must budget adequate resources for implementing effective means of proactively intervening to prevent tragic gun-related violence. These efforts include, but are not limited to:
    - Funding for enforcement of the Eliminate Non-serialized, Untraceable Firearms (“ENUF”) ordinance, including support for the San Diego Police Department’s Ghost Gun task force.
    - Funding for a dedicated Deputy City Attorney position in the City Attorney’s Office to help process the increasing volume of Gun Violence Restraining Orders (“GVRO”).
    - Funding for a Victim Services Coordinator (VSC) to support providing a non-law enforcement gun violence intervention staff member at Your Safe Place – a Family Justice Center. This Coordinator will advocate to interact with members of the community who have suffered violence or at high risk for violence, including gun violence.
- **Improvements for Lifeguard Facilities**
  - The locker room and trailers at Lifeguard Headquarters/Boating Safety Unit were installed in 1982, and the guards need more space and improvements. Additionally, the sleeping quarters at the Lifeguard’s Northern Garage in La Jolla, which houses the Lifeguard’s La Jolla overnight response crew, need repairs and upgrades to ensure that the Lifeguard night operation personnel have adequate facilities.

### **Climate Change and the Environment:**

- **Funding for Climate Action Plan 2.0 (CAP 2.0) Implementation**
  - The City’s efforts to implement the Climate Action Plan must continue with appropriate funding levels to achieve our carbon emission reduction and zero waste goals. The FY 2023 budget should prioritize funding for CAP 2.0 implementation, starting with the most cost-effective priorities that will yield the greatest greenhouse gas reductions.
  - The FY 2023 budget should include adequate funding for Sustainability Department personnel to begin implementing CAP 2.0 and planning for the years ahead, including funding for additional grant writers to ensure we are competitive in applying for state and federal funds that come available in FY 2023.

- **Climate Equity Fund**
  - The creation of the Climate Equity Fund was a positive step in addressing the disproportionate risks of climate change faced by our low-income communities and communities of color. The FY 2023 budget should continue to contribute the annual allocation to the Climate Equity Fund. I would also request that the Sustainability Department in partnership with the Office of Government Affairs work to identify and apply for grant opportunities to continue to grow the Climate Equity Fund.
- **Tree Trimming for Shade Trees**
  - Tree trimming of street and park trees is an essential service that impacts public safety and the City's liability. The City needs to prioritize continued full funding of our street and park shade tree maintenance contracts.
- **Public Power Feasibility Study**
  - In FY 2022 the Mayor and City Council prioritized funding from the Gas and Electric Franchise revenues to fund a Public Power Feasibility Study. In FY 2023, the Sustainability Department must have adequate staff and funding to ensure the completion of this important study to better position the City in the future.

**Homelessness Services and Affordable Housing:**

- **Homelessness Housing and Services: Substance Use and Mental Health Treatment Program Funding**
  - In December, the City and County announced the opening of the new Community Harm Reduction Team (C-HRT) facility for unsheltered residents who struggle with substance abuse and often co-occurring mental illness. With the ongoing opioid and fentanyl epidemics, the need for more substance abuse treatment is growing and has been a large gap in services for individuals experiencing homelessness. The City and County must continue to prioritize substance abuse and behavioral health treatment if we are going to effectively assist our unsheltered community.
  - In addition, we must create additional LGBTQ affirming shelter beds and wrap-around services through the San Diego Housing Commission. Of the youth currently experiencing homelessness, 40% identify as part of the LGBTQ community yet in the entire City there not enough shelters specifically serving the LGBTQ community.
  - Senior citizens have become an alarmingly increasing segment of our homeless population, we must create space in current homeless shelters that includes services specific to support senior citizens.
- **Affordable Housing**
  - The lack of affordable housing continues to be a significant challenge for the City. Among other things, we must ensure San Diego is fully leveraging any state and federal funding to support the development of more affordable housing opportunities throughout the City.
  - Senior citizens are increasingly feeling the burden of increased housing costs on a fixed retirement income. We must continue to build permanent affordable housing for our senior citizens.

- Young professionals are finding it increasingly hard to buy homes in San Diego. Our teachers, nurses, fire, police and rescue personnel often cannot afford to live in the San Diego with the high housing costs. We must work with government affairs to leverage State and Federal first-time homebuyer assistance programs to help young families get a foothold in the housing market.
- **Housing Stability Fund for low-income families and senior citizens**
  - The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the value of providing short-term rental assistance to keep families and senior citizens in their homes and out of the cycle of homelessness. In the FY 2023 budget, I request funding for the Housing Commission to evaluate best practices and programs for rental assistance post-pandemic, to provide short-term rent relief grants, security deposit assistance or other short-term assistance for families and seniors to remain in their homes.

**Infrastructure:**

- **Fully Restore funding for Infrastructure Fund**
  - When the citizens of San Diego voted overwhelmingly in support of Proposition H, establishing the Infrastructure Fund, there was clear direction from our residents that infrastructure investments needed to be prioritized. The Infrastructure Fund has been waived in the past two City budget cycles. The FY 2023 budget must appropriate the full allocation to the Infrastructure Fund and show our residents that we take their direction and our infrastructure needs seriously.
- **Fixing our Streets**
  - Street repair remains the top concern of residents in Council District 5. The FY 2022 budget included funding for a new street condition assessment to ensure current and accurate data is used to guide this essential City service. We must continue to maintain a robust investment in our streets in the FY 2023 budget.
  - The budget must also include adequate funding for the Transportation Department staff to evaluate the ratio of slurry seal/overlay repairs to ensure the City is utilizing its resources effectively.
- **Vision Zero Infrastructure Improvements and Funding**
  - The safety of residents on our roads, bike paths, and sidewalks is paramount. The City must continue to allocate the funding necessary to implement traffic improvements on our most dangerous corridors to reach our Vision Zero goals.
  - We must prioritize resurfacing, overlay, and reconstruction projects on Vision Zero Corridors with high crash areas to ensure complete streets.
- **Sidewalk Program Funding**
  - The walkability of our communities is more important than ever. We must continue to invest in the maintenance of sidewalks citywide. I request that we continue to fund the sidewalk program at pre-pandemic levels at minimum. This investment is essential to reduce injuries to pedestrians, accompanying liability pay-outs, and address the considerable backlog our sidewalk program faces.
- **Traffic Reduction Improvements**
  - We must continue to invest in improving our transportation network and transit system, by, among other things, making traffic signal modifications to improve

traffic flow and by working with our transit partners on right-of-way improvements to make our transit system more efficient.

- **Maintenance of the City's Storm Water System**
  - The Storm Water program continues to threaten our investments in all other infrastructure assets with its growing backlog and significant increase in emergency repairs. The FY 2023 budget must provide adequate funding for Storm Water-related maintenance to reduce the City's use of costly emergency repairs.
- **Expedite the Development of the Mobility Action Plan**
  - Transportation accounts for more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector. The Mobility Action Plan will provide a pathway to deliver a transportation network for future mobility options. The FY 2022 budget included partial funding for the completion of a New Mobility Action Plan. The FY 2023 budget must add the additional funding necessary to the Mobility Department's budget to expedite the completion of the plan.
- **Expanding access to online services - Get It Done**
  - The city has made great strides in improving online access to requests for City services for residents in recent years. It is critical that we continue to expand and improve our Get It Done platform for improved public access, including additional language capabilities, new service request features, and continuing to refine and improve the City's responsiveness to service requests.

#### **Additional Priorities:**

- **Continued funding for the Office of Race and Equity.**
  - Ensuring that the City continues the important work towards racial justice and equity in all aspects of the City must remain a priority. The FY 2023 budget must ensure that the Office has the necessary support staff to continue its critical work.
- **Funding to execute City Lease agreements with Farmers in San Pasqual Valley**
  - The farms and agricultural activities in the San Pasqual Valley require long-term lease agreements with the Public Utilities Department to make the necessary investments in their facilities. Fortunately, the FY 2022 budget included funding for the creation of an Agricultural Manager position within the Department of Real Estate and Airport Management (DREAM), with a background in lease negotiations and an understanding of the agricultural industry. With this position in place, DREAM must prioritize long-term leases with the Farmers in San Pasqual Valley.
- **Continued investment in Employee Recruitment and Retention**
  - While we are in a tight budget cycle with the current pandemic, we also rely more than ever on our City workforce to provide core public safety, environmental, and other services to our residents. However, the City's compensation surveys show that many city employees' compensation is well below the median compensation offered by other jurisdictions. Our ability to recruit and retain high-quality City employees is suffering as a result, and our City is consistently losing our qualified employees to other jurisdictions, having a significant impact on government efficiency. To avoid further costly turnover and vacancies, the FY 2023 budget should include continued investment in competitive employee compensation.

- **As-Needed Consulting for Independent Budget Analyst (IBA) to Review Major Real Estate Transactions**
  - The IBA is an incredible asset for the Council and our City. In recent years, the Council has benefitted from the IBA having the ability to bring in outside consultants with specialize expertise. Recommendation 9 from the City Auditor’s report on Major Building Acquisitions acknowledges the necessity for an as-needed consultant to assist the IBA with review of major real estate transactions. I request that the FY 2023 budget include additional funding in the IBA budget to ensure the IBA has the ability to bring in the necessary experts to assist the Council in conducting its own independent review of major real estate transactions.
- **Support for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance and Accessibility**
  - Ensuring our City is accessible for all residents and visitors is essential. It is important that the City take a proactive approach to addressing the deficiencies that exist in our City. I request that the proposed budget include the creation of a dedicated Capital Improvement Project (CIP) focused on implementing City’s ADA Transition Plan, and responding to ADA complaints submitted to the City.
  - I also request additional support staff for the Office of ADA Compliance and Accessibility to support the increasing ADA related needs of our City.
- **Allocate funds to accelerate the City’s current hiring process**
  - The City’s outdated hiring process is too slow to attract many qualified candidates to work for the City. While longer-term change may be necessary, to address the immediate needs in FY 2023, I request the Mayor’s office invest more resources in the City’s hiring process.
- **Funding for the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement**
  - Too often, hard-working San Diegans cannot make ends meet because of wage theft or other labor law violations. And law-abiding businesses are disadvantaged when forced to compete with businesses that break the law and cut corners. To combat these problems, an office of Labor Standards Enforcement was called for in last year’s FY 22 budget. Ideally, funding in FY 2023 would support two Deputy City Attorneys in the City Attorney’s Office and a full-time investigator.
  - This office can also be self-sustaining, as the fines and civil penalties obtained from businesses that break the law can be funneled back to the office to continue the work of future investigations.
- **Prioritize Arts and Culture Funding**
  - I continue to support the goal of fully funding the “Penny for the Arts” in the next four years. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on San Diego’s Arts and Culture community and this funding is essential to ensure world class Arts and Cultural opportunities throughout our City.
- **Library Funding**
  - With declining purchasing power and the high cost of online materials, the Library Department may be forced to reduce access to popular digital databases, online tutoring programs, and eBooks without an increase to the materials budget. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that San Diego residents rely on

online access to libraries more than ever, and we must ensure we continue to support our libraries.

- **Office of Child and Youth Success**

- The FY 2022 budget established the Office of Child and Youth Success to invest in family and youth health, wellness, and safety that will ensure the City is being responsive to the needs of our youth.
- Ideally, the FY 2023 budget will include adequate first year funding to hire the appropriate personnel to begin evaluating programs and opportunities for our residents, including access to much-needed childcare in our City.