



**We create special places. We plant, care, inspire.
We are a voice, a teacher, a steward.**

December 12, 2017

TO: Friends of Parks and Greenways

RE: Ballot Measure to create the San Joaquin Parks Service by establishing a special district funded by a ¼ cent sales tax and other sources; to be authorized by special legislation and a vote of the people.

Introduction: We have revised our previous proposal in response to the positive polling results in Fresno and to address both regional assets and underserved areas. We believe a successful ballot measure must include the following elements:

- Citizen Leadership
- A Vision with action to improve our quality of life
- Fresh, Focused Leadership by a Special District
- Geographic Area that includes major regional assets
- Equitable Funding plan
- Compelling Scope of Services & Allocation of Funds.
- Creditable Implementation and Operations

Citizen Leadership: In this time and political climate, we believe a citizen-led ballot measure is essential to earning voter approval. Let's continue to consult with diverse community members to develop and refine this proposal. Let's continue to research models of effective government agencies. Let's continue to consult with our elected leaders on the details of the measure; ask them to support a citizen led initiative and pledge their assistance if the voters approve it.

Vision: To create the San Joaquin Parks Service, develop a world-class parks system, implement the Fresno Parks Master Plan, promote beautiful, water-wise landscapes throughout our region, and acquire, improve, operate and maintain the assets set forth in the Scope of Services below.

Fresh Focused Leadership by a Special District:

- **Established by Special Legislation subject to voter approval.**
- **Sphere of influence & Initial District Corporate Boundaries:** See Geography below.
- **Board of Directors:** Seven members. Five appointed by the City of Fresno. Two appointed by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. One of the Fresno County seats to be transferred to the City of Clovis, if later annexed. Three of the members appointed by the City of Fresno must live in an underserved area.
- **Independent:** Board members to be residents of the District who are not employed or elected with the City, County or the District, past or present. The Board to be independent and accountable. No Board member may serve as a proxy for the City Council or Board of Supervisors, collectively or individually.
- **Terms:** Board members shall serve 4 year, over-lapping, terms.

- **General Manager:** A professional position; appointed by the Board of Directors.
- **Stewardship:** As the stewards of special places, the San Joaquin Parks Service will adhere to high professional standards in the tradition of the revered National Parks Service.
- **Joint Powers Agreement:** The District is authorized to enter into a JPAs to further the purpose of the District.

Geographic Area:

- **District Sphere of Influence:** Fresno County.
- **District Corporate Boundaries:** City of Fresno, San Joaquin River Parkway – SR 99 to Friant Dam, and the unincorporated areas within the Valley Arboretum. See map.
- **Calwa Park & Recreation District:** Calwa residents to have the option to dissolve and merge with the new District.

Equitable Funding:

- **Sales Tax:** November, 2018, a ballot measure to approve a ¼ cent sales tax; estimated to generate **\$26M** a year.
- **Maintenance of Effort**
 - **City of Fresno:** The City of Fresno shall annually remit to the District an amount equal to their 2017-2018 budget for PARCS, less fees budgeted for that year, adjusted annually by the change in assessed valuation. Secured by an agreement to share properties taxes. **Funds to be dedicated to the purchase, improvement and renovation of parks in underserved neighborhoods for 20 years;** thereafter, the **Allocation for Sales Tax Receipts** shall apply, see below. Estimated to generate **\$20M+** a year.
 - **County:** Fresno County shall annually remit to the District an amount equal to the County 2017-2018 budget for Kearney and Lost Lake Parks, less fees budgeted for that year, adjusted annually by the change in assessed valuation. Secured by an agreement to share property taxes. **Funds to be dedicated to the two parks.** Estimated to generate **\$1M+** a year.
- **Fees:** To benefit the park where collected or the Park Service Area where a development fee is generated; estimated to generate **\$3M+** a year.
- **Grants:** State, Federal, Foundation, Corporate. Estimated to generate **\$1M+**
- **Philanthropy:** Land, Buildings and Exhibits. Estimated to generate **\$1M+**
- **Parcel Tax:** November, 2028, a ballot measure to approve a parcel tax based on 5 cents per sf of the buildings on the parcel, with a cap for commercial properties; estimated to generate **\$26M+**.
- **Result:** By 2028, an investment of \$135+ per capita per year resulting in outstanding park maintenance, more land dedicated to parks, more parks within ½ mile of most residents, an equitable tax impact, and a foundation to build a world class park system by 2050.

Scope of Services:

- **Parks**
 - Community and Neighborhood Parks
 - Regional Parks: Roeding, Sports, Woodward, Kearney, Lost Lake
 - Parks operated by the Calwa Parks & Recreation District, if a merger is approved.
 - Parks operated by the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District
- **Recreation:** Sports programs, Recreation Centers, Arts in the Parks, the Veterans Memorial Auditorium and Historic Places.

- **San Joaquin River Parkway** in Fresno County, excluding State and Federal Properties.
- **Public Safety:** In order to secure the public safety and park assets, install lighting, sensors and video surveillance; and deploy Park Rangers (unarmed) who collaborate with law enforcement agencies.
- **Landscaped Trails, Freeway landscaping, Greenbelts:**
 - Trails along waterways: Planning and incentives for cities to increase the miles of landscaped trails.
 - Trails in rights of way: Planning and incentives for cities to increase the miles of landscaped trails.
 - Trails on railways: Planning and incentives for the railroads, cities and property owners to create landscaped rails-to-trails projects.
 - Freeway Landscaping: Maintenance and improvement of irrigated landscapes within the District.
 - Greenbelts: Acquire and maintain (by purchase, conservation easement or gifts) properties, on the perimeter of the urban areas, to preserve open space for agriculture, wildlife, recreation, health and education purposes.
- **Botanical Gardens & Welcome Centers**
 - Discovery Center & Garden of the Sun
 - Eaton Plaza & Water Tower
 - Fresno Aquarium
 - Forestiere Underground Gardens (subject to public ownership)
 - National Parks Welcome Center
 - River Center landscapes and path to the San Joaquin River
 - Shinzen Friendship Garden
- **Allocation of Sales Tax Receipts:** (detailed expenditure plan to follow)
 - 60% Parks
 - 10% Recreation
 - 10% San Joaquin River Parkway
 - 10% Public Safety
 - 5% Landscaped Trails, Freeway Landscapes, Greenbelts
 - 5% Botanical Gardens & Welcome Centers

Parks District Implementation and Operations:

- **Interim Board of Directors:** Within 60 days of the certification of the election results, the Mayor of Fresno shall appoint an Interim Board of Directors who will select an interim General Manager and commence mobilization activities.
- **Effective Date of Sales Tax and Fees:** April 1, 2019, per standard CDTEFA procedure, the sales tax collections will begin. The interim Board shall adopt the uses fees by April 1, 2019. Park development fees shall continue to be collected by the City and County and remitted to the District. The General Manager shall prepare an interim Park Service Area and development fee schedule for Board approval by July 1, 2019.
- **Working Capital:** The legislation shall provide for the City to remit to the District an advance on the FY 2019-20 Maintenance of Service payment.
- **Transition to 4 years, overlapping terms:** Effective January 1, 2020, four members will be appointed to serve four years - three City, one County, and three members will be appointed to serve two years - two City, one County. The members appointed thereafter will serve a term of 4 years.
- **Staff or Contract:** The District may staff or contract to provide services.

- **Job Security:** City and County employees, who are laid-off as a result of this measure, are guaranteed employment with the District with comparable compensation and union representation for eligible employees. The legislation will enable former city and county employees to retain their pension benefits with the District making the required payments.
- **City of Fresno Parks:** The District shall be responsible for operations, maintenance, improvements and acquisitions for city parks; with the “Equitable Funding” described above and after the transfer of the park assets to the District.
- **County of Fresno Parks:** The District shall be responsible for operations, maintenance, improvements and acquisitions for Lost Lake Park and Kearney Park, with the “Equitable Funding” described above and after the transfer of the park assets.
- **San Joaquin River Parkway:** The District shall be responsible for Operations, Maintenance, Improvements and Public Safety services, upon agreement with the San Joaquin River Conservancy.
- **Landscaped Trails:** The District shall be responsible for maintaining landscaped trails that meet District design standards, upon agreements with the City and County.
- **Landscaped Freeways:** The District shall maintain and improve irrigated landscapes; to include trash pick-up, upon an agreement with Caltrans for cost sharing and operations.
- **Botanical Gardens and Welcome Centers:** The District shall be responsible for helping fund maintenance and educational services furnished by the non-profit organizations which operate the Botanical Gardens and Welcome Centers, upon agreement with each organization. Other than grants and donations, District income may not be used to acquire Botanical Gardens and Welcome Centers properties.

Lee Ayres

Chief Executive Officer