

Sunnyvale City Council Summary - Thursday, March 13, 2025

This was a special Sunnyvale City Council meeting held in person and online via Zoom on March 13, 2025, starting at 9:01 AM.

The following council members were present:

- * Mayor Klein
- * Vice Mayor Sell
- * Council Member Cisneros
- * Council Member Mellinger
- * Council Member Srinivasan
- * Council Member Chang
- * Council Member Lay

I. Public Comment on Strategic Priorities Workshop:

- Public comment lasted 30 minutes (3-minute limit per speaker).
- Key concerns included environmental impact of artificial turf, separation of climate action and active transportation plans, library services, and homelessness solutions.
- Speakers suggested sanctioned encampments, rental assistance, and guaranteed basic income.
- Several residents shared personal anecdotes highlighting the urgency of homelessness and displacement.

II. Strategic Priorities Workshop:

- Aimed to set council direction for the next 1-2 years.
- City Manager Kirby and Finance Director Pollen provided updates on accomplishments and financial information.
- Council reviewed existing priorities and considered adjustments, including budget cycle alignment and potentially reducing the number of priorities to five.

III. Strategic Priorities Review and Budget Alignment:

- Council discussed shifting to a bi-annual review of strategic priorities.
- Current budget cycle aligns with the capital budget; staff aims to align it with the operating budget (phased approach).
- The goal is a clear, high-level action plan for substantial progress on priorities.
- Staff reported on progress, including key personnel hiring and infrastructure projects.

IV. Progress on Strategic Priorities:

- Civic Center Modernization: Microgrid operational; building systems stabilization underway; future library plans under review.
- Equity, Access, and Inclusion: Community needs assessment in progress; various initiatives implemented; Council discussed enhancing age-friendly initiatives and leveraging neighborhood associations.
- Supporting the Unhoused Community: New Homeless Services Manager hired; Safe Parking Ordinance passed; ongoing outreach programs.
- Infrastructure for Development & Traffic: Perry Park Ride share launched; progress on Fire Station 2; clean water program underway; bike/pedestrian improvements.
- Accelerating Climate Action: Staffing increased; Game Plan 2028 adopted; initiatives such as electric vehicle fleet replacement underway.

V. Financial Overview and Budgetary Concerns:

- Uncertain financial climate due to federal funding risks, market volatility, and recessionary concerns.
- Slower property tax growth, flat sales tax, and inflationary pressures are significant concerns.
- The city is managing financial risks proactively, leveraging elevated interest rates for stronger investment earnings.
- New facilities and development will increase service demands and costs. Commercial real estate market uncertainty is a concern.

VI. Transportation and Infrastructure Updates:

- Citywide shuttle service grant awarded; aiming for Fall launch with potential Fremont Union High School financial support.
- \$880,000 received for pedestrian safety improvements in Snail and Brawley neighborhoods.
- East Channel trail study underway; quick-build safety improvements completed citywide.
- Buffered bike lanes on Sunnyvale Avenue, Hendy/Dumott Avenue, and Matilda Avenue (public outreach meeting held).
- Almost \$1.85 million awarded for Safe Routes to School improvements in Lakewood.

VII. National Community Survey Data Review:

- The 2025 National Community Survey (December 30, 2024 - February 17, 2025) had 297 weighted resident responses, benchmarked against 500 similar communities.
- Sunnyvale received strong ratings in quality of life, local economy, and safety, exceeding national benchmarks; 90% rated Sunnyvale excellent or good, 80% would recommend it.
- Residents expressed continued concerns about housing affordability, crime/public safety, and homelessness.
- Declines were seen in utilities, inclusivity, governance, community design, and mobility, requiring further investigation.

VIII. Strategic Framework Refinement and New Priorities:

- Council refined existing strategic priorities, focusing on concise, action-oriented phrasing and specific success metrics.
- Discussion included reevaluating library services and potential future funding mechanisms. Concerns were raised about needing more detailed bullet points under each priority.
- New priorities emerged: improved resident communication & engagement, increased city government efficiency and transparency, and streamlining city work to prioritize core services. The importance of addressing racial, ethnic, gender identity, and sexual orientation disparities in homelessness was emphasized.

- A draft of four priorities was proposed and then refined through council discussion, ultimately resulting in five priorities:
- A modern, responsive, transparent, efficient city government.
- An active, engaged, accessible, and welcoming community.
- A sustainable future (advancing climate action, active transportation, and Vision Zero plans).
- A model to support the unhoused community, preventing homelessness, and prioritizing new housing.
- Modern infrastructure.
- Specific actions and metrics within each priority were discussed. Council debated wording and the inclusion of existing plans within broader priorities. Council members discussed streamlining processes, improving communication channels (including leveraging neighborhood associations and social media), clarifying the meaning of "3rd spaces" in community engagement, and balancing aging infrastructure with streamlining core services. Concerns were raised about digital and language accessibility. Councilmembers also discussed incorporating resident volunteerism and community events. The council decided against a formal motion for adoption, opting for a later approval after staff review and refinement.

IX. Council Questions and Discussion of Financial Projections:

- Councilmember Srinivasan questioned strategic priority alignment with election years and requested data on sewer lines, affordable housing permits, and transient occupancy tax room numbers.
- Councilmember Mellinger inquired about airplane noise monitoring resources and highlighted negative GDP growth projections, emphasizing flexible strategies and potential recruitment of laid-off federal government employees.
- Councilmember Cisneros emphasized using consistent metrics to measure progress, recommending regular reports with meaningful data.
- Vice Mayor Sell highlighted the city's financial challenges and the need to maintain core services

despite uncertainties. Concerns were raised about staff capacity to meet ambitious goals and the adequacy of the 10% contingency plan for large capital projects.

X. Murphy Avenue Pedestrian Zone Update:

- Council inquired about the status of the Murphy Avenue pedestrian zone project, currently in the design phase.
- Anticipated completion is late Fall.
- Council discussed the importance of completing this project for a vibrant downtown.

XI. Other Discussions:

- Acknowledgment of city employee efforts during recent storms.
- Discussion on aligning strategic priorities with election cycles.
- Discussion about the need for agile budget management and prioritization to accommodate unforeseen financial challenges.
- Concerns were raised regarding the adequacy of the 10% contingency plan for large capital projects given current inflationary pressures.
- Discussion of potential impacts of a federal government shutdown, particularly on healthcare and human services grant funding. The survey's statistically significant results offer broader community perspectives. Further analysis is needed to determine the influence of national vs. local factors on the survey results.