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Contact:
Helen Duong, (408) 795-1807
helen.duong@sanjoseca.gov
San Jose Redevelopment Agency

Neighborhood Celebrates the Opening of New Park

O'Donnell's Gardens Park is the first priority project for the University Neighborhood

San José --- San Jose University Strong Neighborhood residents will gather tomorrow, **Saturday, April 29 at 10:30 a.m.**, to celebrate the opening of O'Donnell's Gardens Park, the first park for the South University Neighborhood in over 100 years.

San José Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez, San Jose Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Harry Mavrogenes and neighborhood representatives will be among the speakers at the event.

"O'Donnell's Gardens is another great example of San Jose's partnership with our neighborhoods," said Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez, who represents the University Strong Neighborhood on City Council. "I look forward to seeing families and children enjoying this wonderful park. It is a welcome addition to this historic neighborhood."

O'Donnell's Gardens Park is a half-acre park located at South Sixth and East William Streets in Downtown. Building a park was a top priority for the residents of the University Neighborhoods Coalition. The project was part of the Revitalization Plan approved by the San José City Council in October 1998 and a part of the Strong Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) Neighborhood Improvement Plan approved by the San José City Council in June 2002. The plan was created in collaboration between the residents of the University Neighborhoods Coalition, the South University Neighborhood (SUN) Association, the City of San José and the San Jose Redevelopment Agency.

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“For over 30 years, this land stood abandoned with only thistles and cyclone fencing, today it is a beautiful area for families to gather. It is a miracle that the park is no longer a vision but a reality,” said Lisa Jensen, Vice President, University Neighborhoods Coalition. “The completion of this park is a positive sign of the direction our neighborhood is going, thanks to the perseverance and leadership of our Councilmember, Cindy Chavez and the community.”

The park is named after local parks designer and distributor/merchant, William O'Donnell, who served as a San José City Council member in 1860s. During the mid-1800s, he operated O'Donnell's Botanical and Zoological Gardens nearby at Ninth and William Streets, a popular site for community celebrations and attracting visitors. The O'Donnell fruit tree nursery, located on 11th and William Streets, was a major supplier of orchards for the “Valley of Heart's Delight.”

The new park includes a tot lot with a water feature, park lighting, game tables, seating areas, ornamental fencing, and lawns and landscaping.

“The SUN Neighborhood Association would like to recognize our neighbors' generous donations of time, money, and energy in bringing this park into fruition,” said Michael Reandeau, President of the South University Neighborhood (SUN) Association. “We hope that residents and visitors to the new park take pride in up keeping the park.”

The \$689,000 construction project was funded by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency and will be maintained by the City of San José Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department.

“We are delighted that we are able to deliver this project to the community,” said Harry Mavrogenes, executive director of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. “We will continue to work actively with our community leaders to improve our neighborhoods.”

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all who live and work in San José. Governed by the City Council, the Agency facilitates and oversees comprehensive programs for development to revitalize the City's Downtown, neighborhoods, and industrial areas.

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