

Meet Us at the River Park

EVENTS & PROGRAMS

- **Historic Orchard Workdays**
1st Saturdays
2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 9-11:30am
- **Heritage Rose Garden Workdays**
Every Saturday, 8:30-11:30am
- **Trail Clean Ups**
3rd Saturdays, 9-11am
- **Nature Trail Tours**
2nd Saturdays, 10:30-11:30am
- **CHIRP**
Every Monday 1-3pm through the
Winter & Spring school seasons
- **Pop-Up Games @ CDM Portico**
December 16, 12-3pm

Donate now to support
the Guadalupe River
Park and help reach our
matched year-end goal
of \$20,000



Scan QR or visit grpg.org

This newsletter is
generously supported by



*The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy provides community leadership for the
development and active use of the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens through
education, advocacy and stewardship.*



FALL/WINTER 2023
NEWSLETTER

THE GUADALUPE GAZETTE



River Park Revelery

Harvest season, cooling weather, and joyful gatherings of gratitude mark the end of another year. From new fruit trees establishing in our Historic Orchard, Rotary PlayGarden expanding, and delivering cherished and new park programs, we have much to celebrate.

We are appreciative of your commitment which enables many positive benefits for our River Park community. We hope to count on your support this year to nourish the vision for the Guadalupe River Park.
- The Conservancy Team

Stewardship Metrics	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023
Number of volunteers	430	696	427
Acres maintained	39	66	99
Volunteer hours	1,590	2,390	1,641
Trash bags filled	37	374	149
Pounds of trash removed	1,110	11,220	4,470
Park features restored	3	6	29

FALL/WINTER 2023

THE GUADALUPE GAZETTE

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Letter from Our Board President



Dear friends, supporters, and advocates of the Guadalupe River Park,

What an amazing year it’s been. As the world came out from under COVID quarantines and resumed public life, the River Park and Gardens has served as an outlet, a play space, and a connection to the wilds and one another.

This year has been filled with a number of highlights for the Park and the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy. Amongst them:

- The opening of the Rotary PlayGarden Expansion.
- The addition of several beautiful murals through our partnership with San Jose Walls.
- The planning of Prototype Park within the Guadalupe Gardens section of the River Park in collaboration with City of San Jose Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services and the San Jose Mineta Airport.
- Restoration and revitalization of our Historic Orchard, and the continued care of the Heritage Rose Garden, in partnership with UC Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County.
- Welcoming supporters to the newly-expanded Rotary PlayGarden at our annual Window on the River Park celebration.
- Reengagement with our school field trip and corporate volunteering communities. We’ve seen over 1,000 youth and 20 companies spend time in the River Park this year.

If this feels like a big year, it’s because it has been. Longstanding conversations with the City of San Jose around our unhoused community have been turned into supportive actions with the help of Mayor Matt Mahan, Councilmember Dev Davis and Councilmember Omar Torres, and the Homelessness Response Team – leading to the placement of dozens of our neighbors into transitional housing.

None of this work happens without the commitment and contributions of passionate people like yourselves. As we approach the traditional season of giving, I invite you to consider how connection to community, culture, nature, and each other enrich your lives. And if you find yourself able to contribute time or money, please think about the impact your investment can make in building the future of the River Park.

Thank you for everything you have done and will do for the River Park,

Andrew Sandler
President of the Board



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River Park Round Up

National Clean Up Day

On September 16 the GRPC and San Jose Downtown Association co-led a trail clean up in Discovery Meadow for National Cleanup Day. More than 40 volunteers, including Councilmember Omar Torres, showed up to help remove 1,350 pounds of trash from the area. We are so thankful for everyone who showed up to help beautify our community!

National Cleanup Day is held every year on the third Saturday in September with the intention to pick up litter and beautify our local communities.



Senior Strolls

We recently introduced Senior Strolls, another great opportunity for folks to meander through the River Park and learn about local ecology. These tours are designed to be inclusive of all physical abilities in order for everyone to have an opportunity to learn about urban nature in San Jose.



Art is the Wave

On August 25, we partnered with Nirvana Soul and Prime Lens Creative to present Art is the Wave, an open mic and art market hosted in the Rotary PlayGarden. Over 150 community members came to enjoy the performances and support local artists.



Board of Directors Retreat

Our Board of Directors gathered on August 21 for our annual retreat. In addition to welcoming four new members, we discussed upcoming opportunities and challenges the River Park may face, and explore strategies to best position our community leadership.

Friendsgiving

In collaboration with local artist Tachiya Bryant and Prime Lens Creative, Friendsgiving is a celebration of our chosen family, with the theme placing an emphasis on creating space for meaningful connections and community as the holidays approach.

Hosted last November 18 at Children’s Discovery Museum in Discovery Meadow, guests enjoyed performances, artworks, local vendors, and food trucks.



The Return of Environmental Science Field Trips

After much anticipation, field trips are back on at the River Park! Field trips were always one of the most exciting times at the park; large groups of students, some who haven't had a chance to explore regional parks to this degree, coming out into the field and discovering what an urban park has to offer. In addition to being a fascinating way to learn about science hands-on, field trips supplement what teachers are going over in the classroom and help students apply textbook concepts to real life. We interviewed our Program Director, Mel Sarmento, who creates and fosters field trips and other environmental education programs we host in the River Park.

What is the excitement around the return of field trips to the River Park?

A big part of it is just having kids back in the park. It's letting students know that they don't need to go as far as a state park (although state parks are wonderful), or pay an entrance fee, to experience the beauty of nature. When they first come to this place it's just a park, but having them delve deeper and recognize that it's not just a park, it's not just a patch of grass, it's this whole world that they get to explore.

Being the place where they're coming to is really exciting, because then you can let kids know they can keep doing environmental exploration at any park near them! We did provide some support during the pandemic, but nothing beats holding on to a leaf, or finding a rock, or seeing a bee in person. We're trying to create stewards, people who love and enjoy nature, and that's not necessarily going to fit within the confines of a textbook.

"We're trying to create stewards, people who love and enjoy nature, and that's not necessarily going to happen within the confines of a textbook."



Support the River Park with a Matched Gift!

Help support the
**Guadalupe River
Park Conservancy**
this giving season

This year, our Board of Directors will match public donations up to \$20,000. Your generous support enables us to continue serving San Jose as stewards of the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens.

Give the gift of a greener
and cleaner San Jose!



www.grpg.org

Help Us Reach Our Goal Of

\$20,000

Donations go toward supporting park amenities, programs, and events such as

- Field Trips
- Rotary PlayGarden
- Historic Orchard
- Pumpkins in the Park
- Heritage Rose Garden
- Trail Tours
- Camp Guadalupe
- Animal Care
- and more!



Will anything be new or different compared to field trips pre-pandemic?

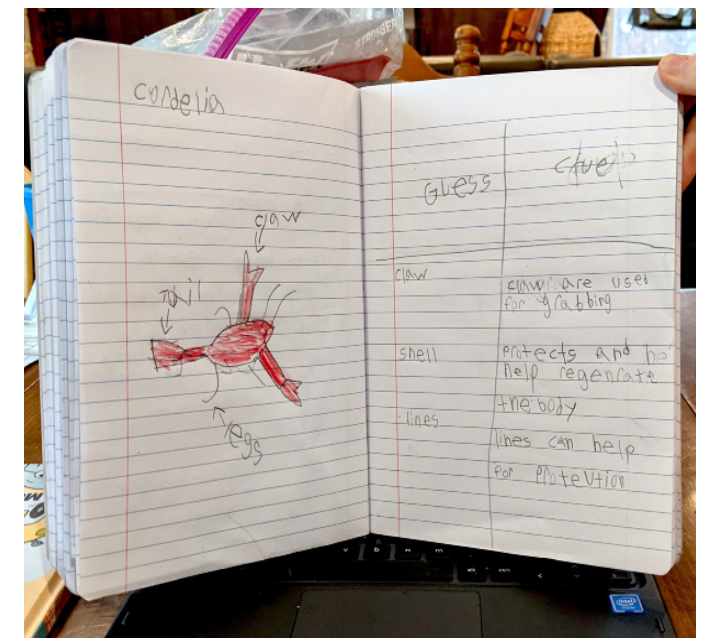
The structure is going to be very similar to what we had before. Of course there's new staff and new experiences, and the park is different now. A new thing that we are offering is our Physics & Nature program, which uses Rotary PlayGarden equipment as a way of teaching physics concepts. Tying that into nature, we would ask them "How does the zipline connect to something that you might see in the park? How does it affect speed and acceleration?"

It seems to be something that would bring a lot of excitement and joy to the kids, I mean who doesn't like being in a playground. But also when we started to pilot these programs, it's been really cool to see the light bulb go off and they understand and make connections to nature.

Why should teachers have their field trips here?

I think it would be helpful for teachers to know that we really do take feedback seriously. The programs we put out are curated over the years from listening to teacher feedback, watching what students are doing, and looking at our evaluations and surveys to help us develop the types of programs that meet the needs of the students. We love that our education staff are Lifelong Learners so

they can model it for students and let them know that yes, they have this pocket of knowledge, but are also learning with the students at the same time. We also have a very diverse team, so it models not only excitement, but enables students to see themselves in this type of field one day. And we embrace the flexibility that comes with parks, so the experience is going to be unique every time.





Community Restores Cherished Mural



In March 2021, local artist Kristina Micotti completed her first mural, titled “Do You Know The Way to San Jose’s Guadalupe River Trail”, along the trail underneath Santa Clara Street as an artist-in-residence with San Jose Walls. At 2,500 sq ft, Micotti created this fun mural depicting wildlife native to the River Park and San Jose, along with other whimsical characters biking, roller blading, walking, and enjoying the trail.

This past August, community members gathered to restore the mural by removing graffiti and freshening up the paint. The restoration, funded by Applied Materials and Microsoft, strengthened community bonds by providing an accessible artistic outlet to encourage the public to give back to the park.



An Inspiration of Resilient Leadership



One of our longest-serving board members and former president, Marguerite Lee, will complete her final board term in 2023. Joining the board in 2015 and serving four two-year terms, and as President of the Board in 2021-2022, Marguerite’s leadership has steered the Conservancy through change, growth, and uncertainty.

Marguerite’s impact on the River Park extends even before her board service, starting through her community work with Cisco Systems. She continues this connection as founder and owner of A Slice of New York, the first brick and mortar worker cooperative in the South Bay.

From cultivating a dynamic board to growing our annual Window on the River Park celebration, Marguerite continues to lead with fearlessness and dedication. Former GRPC Board President, Jodi Starbird and Executive Director, Jason Su, reflect on her board leadership below:

I had the pleasure of serving with Marguerite on the GRPC Board of Directors for many years. Marguerite is one of a select number of volunteers who is always ready to roll up her sleeves to get a job done. She is tenacious and thoughtful, and most importantly, she exudes the fundamental belief that you should treat others as you want to be treated. She’s not showy and doesn’t do anything for attention.

The word that comes to mind when thinking of Marguerite is selfless. When the chips are down, Marguerite wants to find a solution that represents as many differing points of view as possible. She builds consensus in a way that is open, organized, and welcoming.

She believes in the mission of GRPC to her bones and works tirelessly to build the confidence of those around her. I think I can say in all confidence, on behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff, that Marguerite is one-of-a-kind and GRPC has benefitted so much from all of her years of wise counsel and sense of fun. And man, does she put on a great party!

Cheers to you, Marguerite, and Thank You!
- Jodi Starbird



Marguerite’s leadership continues to inspire me and influence the way the Conservancy champions for the River Park and community. She leads with drive and momentum, adeptly bringing people together in the process.

I appreciate her intentionality to ensure that my start as Executive Director was smooth and impactful - even through the breadth of challenges the last few years have brought. It only serves to further demonstrate her exemplary leadership capacity.

She is always willing to help, however it may be. Today she may speak with an elected official. Tomorrow, she may bring some pizzas for the team. Our River Park community is stronger because of her. Thank you!
- Jason Su





Flood Risks Raise the Role of the River Park

This season's weather forecast shows signs of another wet winter. As part of a 14 mile waterway and the confluence of where two watersheds meet in downtown San Jose, we have the opportunity to intimately experience the natural systems of the River Park through winter.

The mitigation of rain and floods is a pivotal role the Guadalupe River Park, along with the other major watersheds and open spaces throughout our region. Key ways they mitigate negative rain and flood impacts include:

Water absorption and buffer

Permeable surfaces, trees, and plants in parks and open spaces enable rains to replenish our groundwater, slow its pace , and lessening the volume of water runoff. Our 250-acre open space supports this important function, made more essential given the highly developed downtown area surrounding it.

Water retention

The slopping landforms along the Guadalupe River Trail and water detention ponds designed throughout the River Park capture rainfall, reducing immediate flood capacity pressures. Holding rainwater for longer periods also allows for more water to be absorbed into the ground over time.

Water redirection

Stretching from Woz Way to Coleman Ave, an integrated system of waterflow channels, culverts, park space, and trails ensure that the river's natural flows are minimally impacted, access is ensured, and, when flooding occurs, excess water is quickly discharged away from the downtown core.

Beyond the natural and designed flood mitigation elements of the River Park, a programmed and well-maintained open space supports stronger community resilience: improving health outcomes by reducing urban heat island and poor air quality effects, raising awareness of natural systems that influence our daily lives, and promoting civic bonds essential for the fabric of our community to weather hardships, environmental or otherwise.

As climactic patterns trend towards a near-term future of increasingly regular extreme weather conditions, our parks and open spaces, will continue to be an important strategy for mitigation, resilience, and recovery.



2005: Construction of the Guadalupe River flood control project.



2023: Rainfall fills the Guadalupe River.

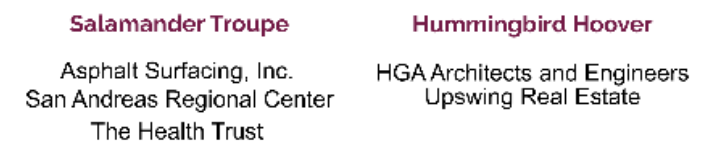
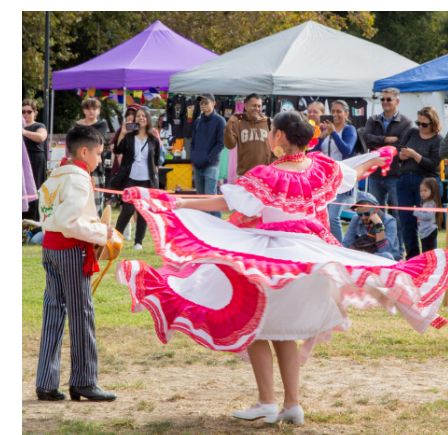


Pumpkins in the Park

Thousands gathered on October 14 for Pumpkins in the Park at Discovery Meadow in downtown San Jose. Attendees enjoyed many familiar and new offerings: live performances, community booths, inflatables, play and art spaces, cornhusk doll-making, food trucks, local creative vendors, and our pumpkin patch.

This annual harvest festival connects families throughout the region to the Guadalupe River Park and raise awareness of our unique natural resource and the health benefits of parks. Through showcasing local artists, performers, and businesses, Pumpkins in the Park also builds community by celebrating our diversity and creativity.

Thank you to those who attended, volunteered, sponsored, and helped promote Pumpkins in the Park. We look forward to hosting this treasured harvest tradition in 2024!



Office of Council District 3*



Strategic Plan Progress Update

Guadalupe River Park Conservancy is thrilled to share the progress made on our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. As we look towards the new year, we aim to further strengthen our position to champion the vision of the Guadalupe River Park, where people can connect to nature and each other at San Jose's front yard.

GOVERNANCE & COLLABORATION

- Board membership represents a breadth of River Park stakeholders: park patrons, public agencies, and corporate partners.
- Serve as lead organization for local and national convenings and expand our relationships with existing and new foundations and River Park partners.
- Actively revising our management agreement with the City of San Jose Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department to better meet the growing demands of the River Park.

PARK STEWARDSHIP & SAFETY

- City coordination and advocacy to direct resources to support walking and biking police patrols, park rangers, maintenance teams, and others.
- New initiatives that combine housing and homeless services, workforce development, park stewardship, and public programming.
- Guadalupe Gardens restoration projects such as Historic Orchard replanting, Heritage Rose Garden improvements. Rotary PlayGarden expansion, and Visitor Center upgrades.

PARK USE & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- Launched new public programs series with monthly nature-tours and new park activation offerings.
- Expanded ways GRPC communicates with the public through increased social media presence, website updates, print newsletter, and press spotlights.
- Guadalupe River Art Walk, started in 2019, enters fourth year. The Initiative continues to spotlight hyperlocal artists from underrepresented communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & EXCELLENCE

- Board member and team demographics identify as 50+% BIPOC and 50+% female/gender nonconforming.
- Developed a new public board recruitment process, and increased membership from 15 to 22.
- Increased our staffing to support public programs, funding and grants management, horticulture, and communications.

Our focus in 2024 will be centered on **1.) fostering communal experiences, 2) reconnecting strengthened neighborhoods, and 3) revitalizing the Guadalupe River.** Upcoming initiatives include:

- Reconnect more of our region's youth to the River Park through environmental education programs.
- Expand on public programs and outreach to reconnect neighborhoods to the River Park.
- Enhance the River Park experience with artworks, plant restoration, safety improvements, and new amenities.

The Guadalupe River Park is poised to play an essential role in the recovery and resilience of our city and region. Thank you for your ongoing support in the championship of the Guadalupe River Park, and we look forward to embarking with you on this exciting vision for 2024!

Social Infrastructure to Combat Loneliness



A number of research papers, news reports, and even a U.S. Surgeon General Advisory this year highlighted the growing concerns from our epidemic of loneliness. While exacerbated by the pandemic, many factors influence social connection, ranging from individual, relational, community, and societal. Loneliness can lead to profoundly negative health outcomes.

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory further expands that the level of robustness of social connection is beyond the individual level, it is necessary to address these issues at societal, policy, development, and cultural levels to support **social infrastructure**. Initiatives that uplift these priorities currently exist, one of which is Reimagining the Civic Commons (RCC).

Launched in 2016, RCC is a national learning network that brings together public space operators and stewards, community advocates, public officials, and thought leaders to share best-practices of investing and maintaining our social infrastructure, and to convene a national collective voice for change. The current cities include Detroit, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Akron, Macon, Lexington, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Miami, San Jose, Camden, and Cincinnati.

The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy is the local host organization for San Jose, with engagement from various City of San Jose Departments, City elected officials, and urbanism and public space operator nonprofits. The goal is to strengthen the quality, support, and voice for social infrastructure in San Jose. Outcomes from the RCC initiative locally include:

Leveraging Partnerships for Greater Community Impact

Increased partnerships to amplify the impact of our public programs, communication, and stewardship initiatives including joint-volunteer work days, cross-promotion of events, and delivering programs at each others events.

Cultivating Civic Commons Champions

Coordinating the San Jose cohort to participate in conference studios and learning journey in other network cities around the country, introducing public officials, elected leaders, and nonprofit partners to their peers.

Measuring Impact & Raising Awareness

Leveraging the impact measurement toolkit to track program outcomes, and uplift San Jose's work onto a national platform by regularly sharing our programs, initiatives, and partnerships.

Our parks, public spaces, and social infrastructure were pivotal to our resilience through the pandemic and following recovery. They will continue to be important as we face future societal and health challenges. Learning from peers and raising awareness of the importance of social infrastructure will ensure our social infrastructure can best support a thriving community.

RCC is funded by The JPB Foundation, Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The William Penn Foundation.

“Lack of social connection poses a significant risk for individual health and longevity. Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk for premature death by 26% and 29% respectively....lacking social connection can increase the risk for premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.”

**Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation:
The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2023**

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Includes the physical assets of a community (such as libraries and parks), programs (such as volunteer organizations and member associations), and local policies (such as public transportation and housing) that support the development of social connection.

U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2023