



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 2, 2018

Yes on P, No to Fear

FRESNO—Fresno’s public parks need help. The Trust for Public Land has rated Fresno’s parks dead last or near last among the country’s 100 largest cities for the past five years. But congratulations, in 2018 we managed to be only the 94th worse. Obviously, something needs to change. Measure P’s 3/8-cent sales tax would go a long way to restoring our parks, allowing for greater community engagement, outdoor safety and improved property values.

In the last few weeks before the Nov. 6 election, a crop of blue signs has sprouted across Fresno, shouting against Measure P. A close look at the small print on the bottom of the sign shows it was paid for by Fresnoans for a Safer Community.

You might rightly ask what a funding increase to improve park maintenance has to do with decreasing public safety, and the answer is, of course, nothing. Indeed, it is the opposite. Measure P would not mean a single cent reduction in police funding and in fact would result in further funds for park safety.

“Measure P has broad bipartisan support,” says Michael D. Evans, chair of the Fresno County Democratic Party. “Former mayors Alan Autry and Ashley Swearingin are supporting the measure, and it is hard to believe that anyone in our community would oppose improving our parks.”

Despite the overwhelming need and the obvious benefit to our city of having a good parks system, the current mayor, Lee Brand, opposes Measure P. That shows an absence of leadership and sends the wrong message to our community.

Why is Brand opposing Measure P? Because public safety advocates oppose it. And how did that happen? The mayor wanted a ballot measure that would jointly address funding for public safety and parks. However, the two factions were unable to come to an agreement on how that would work.

As a result, the parks proponents went to the voters, gathering more than 30,000 signatures to get their initiative on the ballot. The proponents of a public safety tax did not do that. They were outworked and now, apparently out of spite, are opposing the parks measure.

Moreover, for reasons not fully explained, the city inadvertently left out some important wording from the approved description of Measure P for the voter handbook. That language should include “improving park safety; improving accessibility for persons with disabilities; updating and maintaining playgrounds and restrooms; improving youth and veteran job training; improving after school programs and beautifying roadways.”

“Cities are defined by their quality of life,” notes Evans. “And a good park system is a strong indicator of a city’s livability. For far too long, we have failed to provide adequate parks for residents south of Shaw Avenue. Measure P can remedy that.”

Measure P is needed. Without public spaces to tie our communities together, the city deteriorates. When children don't have safe places to play, they hang out somewhere else and are exposed to less savory influences. If we do not commit funds to maintenance, parks can fall apart leading to injuries. For years, our community has let this problem grow. Now we have the chance to step up and fix it. Vote Yes on Measure P.

People have the power. Vote on Nov. 6.

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