



Memorandum

TO: TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 02-26-07

Approved

Date

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

**SUBJECT: UNITED NATIONS' URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORDS
WALKING DISTANCE TO PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this preliminary report regarding walking distances to parks and open spaces as recommended by the United Nations' Urban Environmental Accords.

OUTCOME

Becoming a signatory city to the United Nations' Urban Environmental Accords could involve adoption of a standard requiring public parks and recreational open spaces to be located within half-a-kilometer (approximately 1/3 of a mile) of every resident by 2015. A complete review of the impact associated with this new walking standard will be defined as part of the Greenprint update, which is currently underway for Council consideration in early 2008.

BACKGROUND

The Transportation and Environment Committee is scheduled to receive a separate report on the United Nations' Urban Environmental Accords ("UN Accords") overall. In addition, a specific report and discussion was requested regarding the UN Accords walking distance standard for parks and open spaces. This report is provided as background for this discussion.

The City's General Plan calls for neighborhood and community parks to be within a reasonable walking distance. The City's "Greenprint - A Twenty-Year Strategic Plan for Parks, Community Facilities and Programs" defined underserved areas as neighborhoods within the City that have no access to neighborhood/community serving parkland or recreational school grounds within a 3/4-mile radius of residences without encountering a major barrier. The Greenprint noted 26 underserved areas within the City.

On November 1, 2005, the City Council approved the Mayor's recommendation to become a Signatory City to the UN Accords, a declaration of participating city governments to build ecologically sustainable, economically dynamic, and socially equitable futures for their urban citizens. San José was among the first 100 cities to sign the UN Accords, which encompasses 21 action items in seven different categories. Under the category of Urban Nature, Action Item 10 states:

“Ensure that there is an accessible public park or recreational open space within half-a-kilometer of every city resident by 2015.”

Becoming a signatory city to the UN Accords does not require that the City adopt and implement all of the 21 action items, but establishes recognition levels based on the number of action items implemented.

ANALYSIS

Adoption of the UN Accords performance standard for walking to neighborhood/community parks and/or recreational school grounds and open space would increase park development requirements by 55 percent (from 3/4 mile to 1/3 mile). This standard would result in the designation of approximately 20 +/- additional areas as “underserved” using a 1/3-mile radius around neighborhood/community parks, regional parks, County parks, and K-12 recreational school grounds as noted in Exhibits A thru C. Further analysis of this change to reduce the walking distance standard will be discussed as part of the update to the Greenprint. The Greenprint already calls for the development of 931 new acres of neighborhood/community parklands and/or recreational school grounds by the year 2020. The walking distance standard associated with the Urban Environmental Accords is much more aggressive than the City's current standard of 3/4 mile within a neighborhood park and/or recreational school ground.

If adopted, the City would include these additional areas in its priorities to locate future neighborhood/community-serving park sites. Alternatively, the City would be in a much better position to achieve a walking distance standard of 1/3 mile if recreational school grounds are counted as open space lands.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Alternative #1: Retaining the City's current standard for walking to parks at 3/4 of a mile.

Pros: Limits the need of additional new neighborhood-serving park sites.

Cons: The City would not be able to achieve Action Item 10 under the UN Accords.

Reason for not recommending: On November 1, 2005, the City became a signatory to the Urban Environmental Accords by the United Nations, which included Action Item 10, to provide reasonable accessibility to public parks or recreational open space within half-a-kilometer (approximately 1/3 of a mile) of every residential unit within the urban areas of the City.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

The impact of this action will be discussed as part of the update to the City's Greenprint.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

The impact of this action will be discussed as part of the update to the City's Greenprint.

CEQA

CEQA: 2020 GP EIR, Resolution No. 65459.

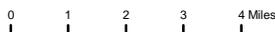
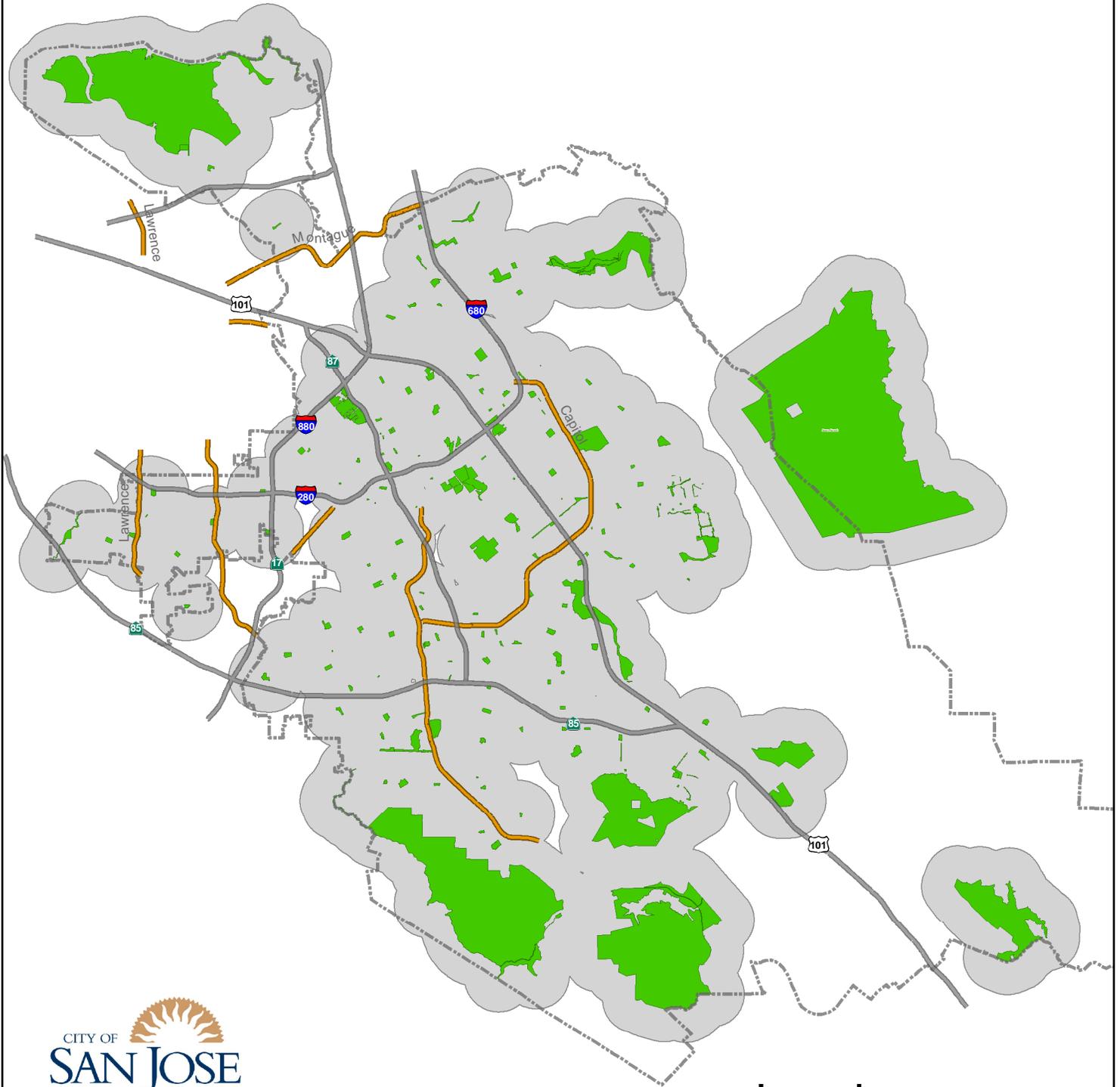
ALBERT BALAGSO
Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

Attachments

For questions please contact Julie Mark, PRNS Acting Assistant Director, at (408) 535-3582.

Exhibit A

San José Parks 3/4 Mile Walking Distance

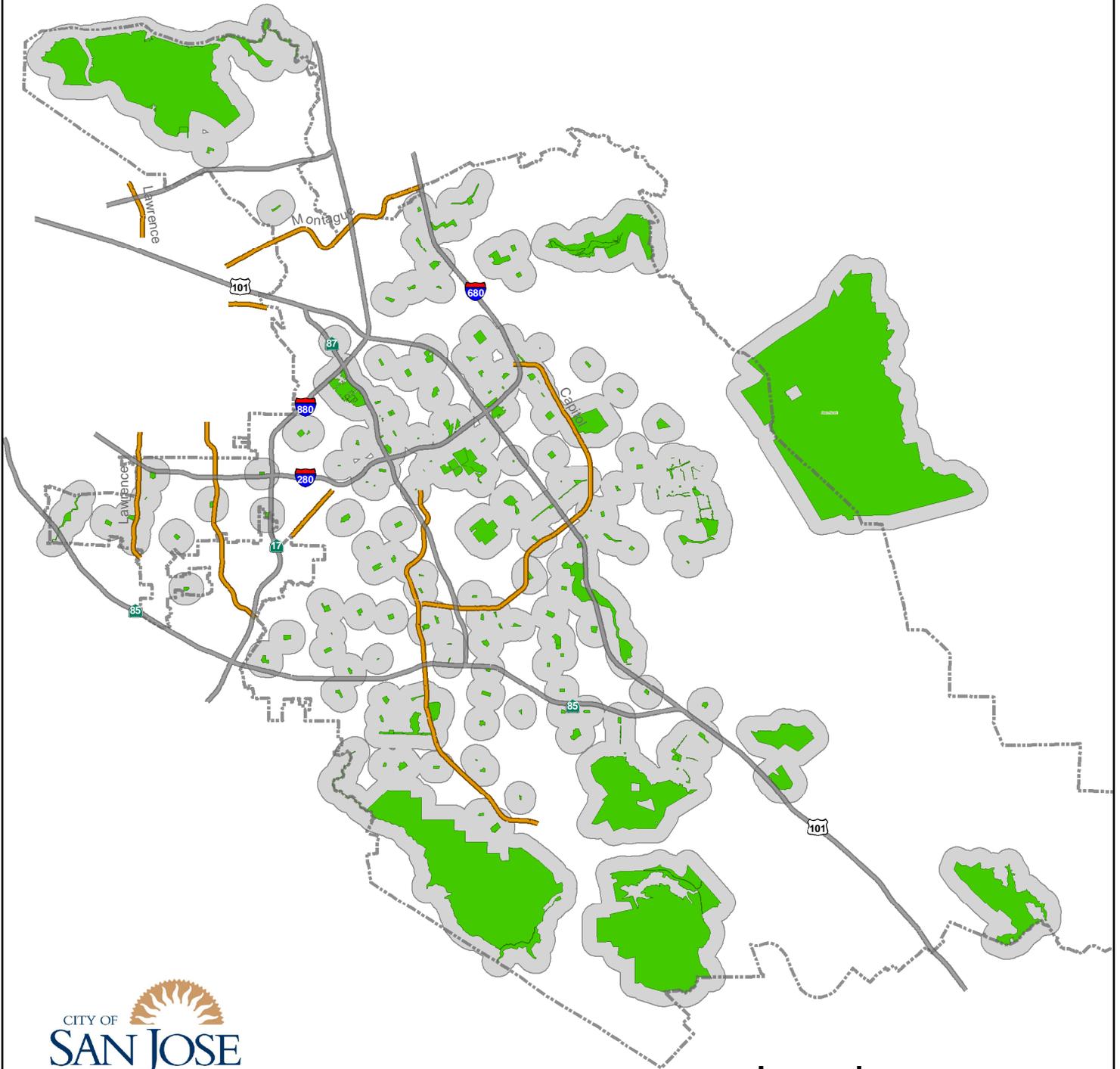


Legend

-  Park
-  3/4 Mi. Walking Distance

Exhibit B

San José Parks 1/3 Mile Walking Distance



0 1 2 3 4 Miles

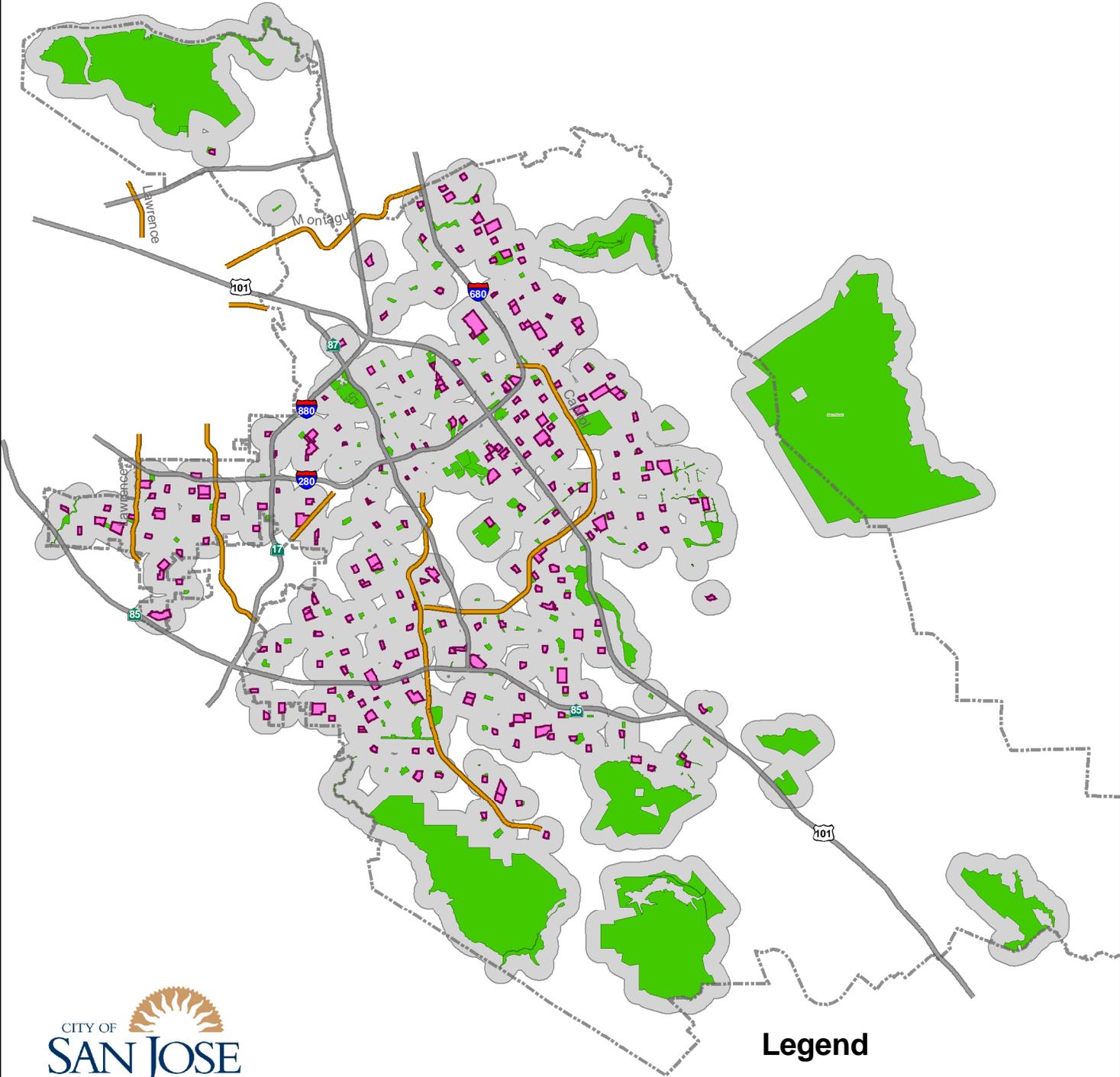
Legend

 Park

 1/3 Mi. Walking Distance

San José Parks / Schools

1/3 Mile Walking Distance



Legend

-  Park
-  School
-  1/3 Mi. Walking Distance



0 1 2 3 4 Miles