

NAMING THE CITY HALL ROTUNDA IN HONOR OF MAYOR JANET GRAY HAYES

Nomination by Terry Christensen

Janet Gray Hayes is renowned as the first woman to be elected mayor of a major American city and the first of many women leaders who made San Jose the Feminist Capital of the United States. She also helped shift San Jose away from sprawling, poorly planned growth to more responsibly managed growth, a battle she and her allies would fight constantly during her time in office. And she did much more:

- At a time when the community—especially the Eastside and the minority community—repeatedly protested police brutality, Janet Gray, in response, was instrumental in hiring Police Chief Joseph McNamara, a reformer who introduced the concept of community policing to San Jose.
- With Susie Wilson, her chief ally on the city council, she pushed the police department to hire its first women officers.
- Later, when women city workers went on strike to demand comparable worth pay (equal salaries for women in jobs with responsibilities similar to employment classifications dominated by men), Hayes, with council allies, supported the women workers in resolving the strike and the issue—setting a precedent that spread to other local governments across the nation.
- She also led a restructuring of Redevelopment Agency funding without which the Arena, the Children's Discovery Museum, the Tech Museum, the Fairmont, the California Theater and other downtown facilities might never have materialized.

But her greatest accomplishment was helping to open up San Jose government and politics to new generations of leaders. Hayes ran for mayor in 1974, challenging a pro-growth conservative backed by the old guard leadership of the 1950s and 1960s. She was supported by neighborhood activists, environmentalists, liberals, and the city's emerging women's groups as well as the minority community (she won the Eastside), which hoped for police reforms.

Once in office, Hayes opened up not only City Hall but also her own home to these groups and mentored a new generation of leaders (I was one!). She appointed the new leaders to commissions and her own staff and endorsed others (many of whom were women) when they ran for office.

Hayes, her council allies and the city manager also nurtured a new generation of city leaders through two new city programs. Projects 75 brought citizens together to plan capital or infrastructure improvements for their neighborhoods, while General Plan 76 gave them a say in long-range land-use planning through the drafting of the city's first true general plan. Both were organized by "planning areas" which paralleled what would become city council districts in 1980. By drawing community members into the decision-making process, Hayes and the council introduced activists to one another and helped build district identities, as well as generating a citywide network of leaders.

These endeavors gave impetus to the movement to elect council members by district rather than at-large. Eastside activists had been agitating for district elections through the 1970s as part of the protests about police-community relations. Now neighborhood groups throughout the city began to support the change along with environmentalists, women's groups and eventually labor unions. Hayes and the council responded by appointing a charter review commission that ultimately recommended the reform. Hayes and her allies voted to put the reform, which she supported, on the 1978 ballot and it passed.

When the new districted council was elected in 1980, a majority were women, including a Latina and an African American, and several were neighborhood leaders. Mayor Hayes welcomed them to the council dais and facilitated the transition to a new and improved form of representation for the citizens of San Jose.

For all her personal and policy achievements, the greatest achievement of Janet Gray Hayes was transforming San Jose politics by opening it up to a new generation of leaders.