

# CITY COUNCIL CAMPAIGNING FOR NOVEMBER TAX INCREASE

By Honorary Mayor Rex Gutierrez

If you live west of Milliken or south of Foothill Boulevard (with the exception of Terra Vista, Victoria, and the Rochester tract), you will be voting on a tax increase in November. Residents will be asked whether or not they want to join one large special tax district to maintain parks, clean the restrooms, eliminate graffiti, and pay for lights in parks, trails and streets. The cost is only \$89. And senior citizens (the ones who vote a lot) will be given a discount to buy their support. The city council is supposed to be officially neutral. But they have paid upwards of \$400,000 of landscape district taxpayer funds to pay political consultants to run this campaign with expensive mailers, signs, and surveys. That's \$400,000 that is supposed to be paying for park maintenance. No wonder they need to raise taxes. All their money is going to pay for the public relations campaign.

Could the current budget pay for cleaning park restrooms? How about volunteers? The city boasts of hundreds of volunteers. And graffiti has been handled famously by a crew of city workers paid for out of the general fund, NOT landscape district fees. And lights? Well, the city has not shown that they can stop wasting electricity. The photos on this page illustrate the great waste that is still going on in parks throughout the city.

Eighty nine dollars is not a lot of money to pay in additional taxes. But it's the principle that matters. This is called a tax for WEST-SIDE neighborhoods. But this district goes all the way east, taking in Victoria Gardens, the Epicenter complex, city yard, city hall, and the Metrolink station. Will those facilities be kept up using West-side neighborhood funds? Why does the tax district take in almost the entire city? And will the fire stations, Metrolink, and other public facilities pay their fair share? They should, if the tax proceeds go toward their upkeep.

And what about the 800-pound gorilla? **THIS TAX MEASURE INCLUDES A PROVISION THAT THE CITY CAN INCREASE THE RATE EVERY YEAR, AT A MAXIMUM OF 3% PER YEAR. THAT MEANS NO MORE HASSLE FOR THE CITY TO HOLD ELECTIONS TO INCREASE THE FEES. IF THIS YEAR'S ELECTION PASSES, THE CITY CAN INCREASE THE RATES CARTE BLANCHE, ANY YEAR IT WANTS- WITHOUT VOTER APPROVAL. THE CITY PROUDLY STATES THAT LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE FEES HAVEN'T BEEN RAISED SINCE 1993. HENCE, THE NEED TO FINALLY GET MORE REVENUE. BUT WHY HAS THE CITY BEEN SO RESTRAINED??? BECAUSE IT COULD NOT RAISE RATES WITHOUT AN ELECTION. THE PEOPLE ARE GIVING UP THAT RESTRAINT IF THEY APPROVE THIS TAX MEASURE AS IT READS TODAY. BE VERY CAREFUL CITIZENS. YOU ARE GIVING A GOVERNMENT ENTITY THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE TAXES AT WILL, WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED- - A VERY BAD PRECEDENT.**

And finally, on principle, it doesn't seem right to pay the city manager and management level employees 5% salary increases while claiming that the city has no more money for landscaping. At \$362,000 per year for the city manager, and over \$200,000 per year for many other executives and fire fighters, it seems like more sacrifices can be made before the citizens are asked to pick up the slack.



Day Creek Park lights shining over two deserted fields at 10 pm on a recent weeknight.



These lights were on at 3 am at a deserted Beryl Park in Alta Loma.

