



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: August 29, 2017

Approved

Date

8/29/17

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HOMELESS RESPONSE INITIATIVES

RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct staff to return to Council with a plan for piloting safe parking programs and sanctioned encampments.
2. Request that the Housing Department continue to coordinate with the District 3 Office and Destination: Home in planning next steps for the development of a Homeless Task Force.

BACKGROUND

The "2017 City of San José Homeless Census & Survey" confirmed the number of homeless individuals increased by 7% in a span of two years. In addition to an increase in population, we have experienced an increase in the number of unsheltered homeless individuals by 5%; not a significant change, but nonetheless, one our residents, businesses, and partner government entities continue to feel the effects of. The following information offers a citywide snapshot of the services our residents often request:

- Since October 2016, the City has received a total of 3,787 homeless concerns requests (Attachment A).
- Since January 2017, there have been 418 encampment abatements, with each costing an average of \$3,000-\$5,000 per clean-up. On an annual basis the City has spent anywhere near \$1.2 to \$2 million dollars on clean-ups that often re-occur in the same areas (Attachment A).
- The Department of Transportation reported 508 RV/motorhome abatements occurred since January 2017. The amount of motor homes with people living in

them is unknown, but what is confirmed is that the abatement of a motor home with people living in it requires the assistance of police officers.¹

- The City received 1,427 homeless related park concerns.²

The previous information demands action from public leaders who have the ability to address an issue that has no boundaries; an issue that affects homeless individuals who are displaced, and families who are dealing with the impacts of homelessness near their homes.

As the representative of a district with many homeless residents, I have made it a priority to do everything in my capacity to address this issue and help them get housed.

Constituents often communicate with my office, Caltrans, Union Pacific, PATH, and our City hotline, with homeless concerns. Ending homelessness requires both short term and long term solutions. I have often been in favor of a variety of actions that provide assistance for our homeless, which include:

- Supporting organizations such as Groundwerx & Downtown Streets Team, which help provide employment to formerly homeless individuals.
- The placement of PATH (People Assisting The Homeless) at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, which provide homeless individuals with easy access to case manager services & resources.
- The establishment two Overnight Warming Locations in my district for two consecutive years.
- Supporting approved housing developments and those in the pipeline to help provide housing for our homeless residents. Combined the Plaza Hotel, Second Street Studios, Villas on the Park, North San Pedro & 226 Balbach will provide 296 Permanent Supportive Housing units and 48 rapid re-housing units.
- Supporting efforts for the passage of Measure A.

All the energy and political will I have devoted to efforts in ending homelessness have been for the good of my district residents (housed or homeless) and all other stakeholders affected by this issue. As a City, we have been successful in our efforts, most recently decreasing the number of veteran and chronically homeless individuals. As with our successes, I am excited that Measure A is progressing, and that as a City we have a long-term plan to help house our homeless population. In the mean time I believe we need additional interim solutions to help the 3,000+ individuals who are currently unsheltered.

HOUSING TASK FORCE

In the Spring of 2017, the idea of a Homeless Task Force was brought to my attention by our SJPD Central Division Captain. The idea was suggested during a joint public safety meeting in which different law enforcement agencies coordinate with each other to effectively implement downtown enforcement strategies. Collaborative efforts are nothing new to the City of San Jose, and we currently have a nationally recognized program called the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF). With the MGPTF

¹ Data provided by the Department of Transportation, Parking and Control Unit

² Data provided by Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department

we are able to convene a group of diverse stakeholders and more importantly decision makers, to leverage each stakeholder's expertise as part of a coordinated, interagency effort to curb gang-related activity in San Jose.

Upon recognizing the benefits of a broad coalition, my office sought to determine if other decision makers from the County and our own City supported the development of a Homeless Task Force. After receiving initial support of the idea from public officials such as Supervisor Chavez and Mayor Liccardo, I began working on an initial meeting and I made mention of the Homeless Task Force during the August 8th San José City Council meeting. The task force would be based on the MGPTF platform and other homeless task force groups throughout the country.

My Office has continued working on developing next steps and coordinating the first meeting. Currently we are planning a meeting with Destination: Home director Jennifer Loving and our Housing Department. I appreciate that other Council Offices have recently pledged their support for the development of a task force and welcome their input as we plan next steps. I would suspect that with our Housing Department's workload that they would be happy to avoid taking the lead on yet another task, and it was my interest to avoid waiting on the next priority setting process to task this to them.

OTHER INTERIM OPTIONS

During my past conversations with homeless advocates, I have often been asked about the City's decision to not pursue our prior direction for safe parking programs and sanctioned encampments. A clear explanation on why we were no longer pursuing other interim options prompted me at the June 8, 2017 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee and the June 28, 2017 Economic and Community Development Committee to ask that the Homeless Response Initiative reports be referenced to the full Council with additional updates on safe parking and sanctioned encampments.

Now more than ever I believe discussing interim housing options for our homeless residents is a necessity. Citywide our residents continue to request city, county and state services for homeless related concerns. The public, including our schools and businesses are engaged with homeless related topics like AB 2176 (Bridge Housing Communities), Title 20, & St. James Park. I recognize there are going to be difficulties in implementing interim solutions like the idea of a sanctioned encampment. However, all of this attention creates the perfect opportunity for public officials to truly step up. We need to push past any regulatory barriers, because the quality of life for all San José residents (housed or unhoused) is at stake. Bridge Housing Communities may not be the sole solution, but we should not shut the door just yet. Each district has varying degrees of distinctiveness, some more restrictive than others, but that doesn't mean we quit at the first sign of disagreement. As a city, we must respect the significance of each council district, taking their concerns seriously, while demanding action to a problem that is going to require support from all. Representing San José's District 3 I recognize that we share a greater proportion of the issue and I will continue to disproportionately welcome effective solutions in an effort to decrease homelessness. However, I cannot do it on my own. I ask

that our City be creative and bold, and continue to collaborate with our partner entities such as Caltrans, the County of Santa Clara, and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. We have an opportunity to act and cannot continue to prolong solutions.

ATTACHMENT A

Number of Homeless Concerns Requests City-wide	
Per District	Since October 2016 launch
1	94
2	309
3	850
4	280
5	299
6	467
7	638
8	78
9	473
10	299
Total	3,787

* Data provided by Housing Department

Number of Encampments City-wide		
Per District	Total Number of Abatements in 2016	Total Number of abatements from Jan-July 2017
1	20	6
2	15	17
3	166	115
4	22	13
5	38	24
6	65	52
7	220	160
8	9	9
9	15	7
10	16	15
Total	586	418

* Data provided by Housing Department