



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Vice Mayor Madison Nguyen

SUBJECT: 2013-2014 COUNCIL PRIORITY
POLICIES AND ORDINANCES

DATE: September 6, 2013

Approved

Madison Nguyen

Date

9/6/2013

RECOMMENDATION

City Council to consider amending the current top 10 priority list to include the Rehabilitating Vacant Buildings to Address Homelessness.

BACKGROUND

San Jose is a rapidly growing metropolis, earning us a spot as the nation's 10th largest city. We have earned national recognition time and again for our safety, cleanliness, and innovation. With each success comes a larger degree of responsibility to maintain the status quo and the pitfalls of a quickly growing city have begun to outpace the successes.

In the past two years, the City Council identified high priority ordinances and policy initiatives from a list of pending work items. These priority sessions have helped staff focus limited resources on the initiatives that this council deems a high priority. A new survey, released after the priority setting session, has reported an 18-20% increase in people identified as homeless. Outreach teams counted 4,770 sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families in the City of San Jose and 7,631 total homeless for Santa Clara County.¹ There are approximately 60 homeless encampments located along waterways, freeways, and other open spaces in San Jose.

ANALYSIS

Homelessness in our city is growing at an alarming rate. It has been surveyed that San Jose is one of eight metropolitan areas with the highest rate of homelessness.² City staff is receiving more complaints each day regarding the homeless and homeless encampments. This, coupled with the latest survey denoting the rise in homelessness in less than 2 years, should incite this

¹ 2013 City of San Jose Homeless Point-in-Time Census & Survey Jurisdictional Report produced by Applied Survey Research. This survey is conducted every two years by communities across the United States during the last 10 days of January in order to reassess eligibility for federal programs. The San Jose census was part of the larger Santa Clara County census effort. The count had two primary components: a Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families and enumeration of homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter.

² Florida, Richard. "America's Real Homeless Hotspots", The Atlantic. Published March 14, 2012.

Council to be concerned. It will take a significant investment to provide housing options for residents, in addition to the ongoing enforcement of the cleanup protocols.

More notably, the perception of an unkempt transient sleeping on a park bench is in reality a small percentage. According to the 2013 Survey, the City of San Jose has experienced a 30% increase in homeless families.³ Finally, to paint an even more reality-based picture, of the city's homeless population, at least 20% are former foster care children, 12% are female victims of domestic violence, 25% of respondents are employed, and 65% reported an inability to afford rent.

The City of San Jose should have more options to provide a broader scope of services for our underserved population. A completion of this policy would help to evaluate and allocate resources for next steps and to identify potential collaboration with nonprofit service organizations and/or the County of Santa Clara. At the February 2013 priority study session, this assessment was 50% completed with an expected end date of TBD. Today, it has fallen off the top 10 priority list and appears to have little to no change in progress.

As such, I ask my colleagues to consider amending the current list to include the Rehabilitating Vacant Buildings to Address Homelessness on the Top Ten Items list. Due to the urgency of this issue, we need to develop a more comprehensive plan to eliminate homelessness in our city.

³ It should be noted these numbers include only those families meeting the strict definitions of both families and homelessness used by HUD.

