



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Perez

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: April 29, 2022

Approved by:

Date: 04/29/22

**SUBJECT: CITY ROADMAP-ENCAMPMENT MANAGEMENT AND SAFE
RELOCATION POLICY**

RECOMMENDATION

Accept staff recommendation and

1. Direct the City Administration to provide an update during the Homeless Annual Report on efforts of the Encampment Management Collaborative and its coordination between outreach and mental health services, as well as recommended strategies to support increased mental health service delivery to our unhoused population.
2. Expand setback guidelines to include the Children's Discovery Museum.

DISCUSSION

I thank staff for their tireless work in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Shifting away from the City's previous practices, our encampment management strategy is a compassionate approach that increases efforts in case management and outreach, with the pinnacle goal of housing. Encampment abatements now are only considered as a last resort rather than the sole solution.

Mental Health Coordination

Making this shift, we must also understand that there is a correlation between mental health and homelessness, and within the last few years we have seen an increase in programs that are appropriately addressing this connection. As staff continues to triage, we are seeing mental health resources become more accessible to our most vulnerable community, it is also critical that the method in which we provide street outreach on these services are streamlined and coordinated.

Historically, when there are reports of unhoused impacts in a community, the City's first course of action is often deployment of street outreach services by our non-profit partners. I recognize that these organizations have a daunting task of creating meaningful connections

with many of our traumatized unhoused residents, often doing so with low staffing bandwidth. Whether it is offering any available emergency shelter, hygiene kits, or resource literature, ultimately, our shared goal should be to provide a continuum of care that helps the individual improve their wellness and get housed.

Fortunately, initiatives such as Assisted Outpatient Treatment, San José Police Department's collaboration with the County's Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), the City's recent \$1.2 million investment in PATH's Downtown Crisis Response Program, the County's Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) and current development of the Trusted Response Urgent Support Team (TRUST) demonstrates that we are moving towards utilizing methods that practice comprehensive and holistic care, rather than having sole dependence on law enforcement to solve these issues.

While the City is not responsible for mental health services, we do provide basic services to our unhoused population, and in doing so, there should be synergy in both basic and mental health services to our unhoused residents, rather than in silos. As we continue to deploy street outreach and case management, we must ensure that it is bundled or coordinated with mental health services, if available. Afterall, living unhoused, especially for long durations, is a traumatic experience that requires mental health care as early on as possible, and as frequent as needed.

Children's Discovery Museum

In addition, I propose that we include the Children's Discovery Museum within the current setback criteria. The museum serves thousands of families and children, as young as a few months, from across the City. It has been very disheartening to hear that parents are increasingly feeling unsafe just walking through the park area with unchecked blight and debris. Recently, our office learned that there was a deadly assault that resulted in a police and crime scene greeting parents and their children as they entered the museum, a disturbing sight as one can imagine. Therefore, as we work towards finding that appropriate balance between encampment management and abatement, we must also prioritize maintaining spaces that are positive and welcoming for our children.

SOAR Sites

Much of the museum's issues stems from the City identified SOAR site nearby. District 3 currently houses half of all SOAR sites across the City, with the majority of them identified in parks and waterways that are alongside residential neighborhoods. As staff intends to expand the SOAR program to ten additional sites, we must also look beyond maintaining encampments where they are at. Even though I have supported SOAR sites and recognize how this program provides stability to the unhoused, a problem still remains. By allowing encampments to remain where they currently are, they will continue to strain the surrounding environment. Parks remain inaccessible, waterways impacted, and neighborhoods affected. This is why I reintroduced sanctioned encampments under our budget discussion and that analysis is underway. It must be part of the conversation as we work on solving homelessness. They will not only end the disruptive nature of abatements, but by creating designated sites that individuals can move to, we can begin to relieve its impact on our community while improving the living conditions of the unhoused.