



Memorandum

**TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE**

FROM: Mayor Matt Mahan
Councilmember Omar Torres
Councilmember Dev Davis

**SUBJECT: PRESERVING OUR
PROGRESS - GUADALUPE
RIVER TRAIL**

DATE: January 18, 2024

APPROVED:

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to promptly implement a “no return zone” that prevents re-encampment along the Guadalupe River Trail between 280/87/Woz Way and 87/Julian St using existing resources available through the Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grant and the FY 23-24 Adopted Budget, including:

1. Deploying a rapid-response abatement team comprising the two therapeutic specialists funded in the FY 2023-2024 Adopted Budget, or other appropriate classification, to work in close concert with the BeautifySJ team and the San José Police Department (SJPD) to engage with unsheltered residents and advance abatement operations in a safe and humane way; and
2. Enforcing park rules set forth by the City’s Municipal Code and installing signage with posted park rules as required by law; and
3. Utilizing SJPD’s Guadalupe River Trail Bike Patrol Program; and
4. Coordinating with the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (GRPC) to ensure frequent and robust activation along the river trail, leveraging the \$200,000 in City grant funding to GRPC from the ERF to sustain the revitalization project.

DISCUSSION

A vibrant downtown fosters a sense of community and belonging among residents and a hub where they come together to live, work, and engage. Investing in our Downtown not only enhances the quality of life for residents, but also creates a flywheel effect for economic and cultural development, generating returns to our general fund and fostering prosperity across our entire city. However, we won’t sustain progress revitalizing the downtown if we ignore core infrastructure and amenities like the Guadalupe River Trail. As a main downtown artery and commute route, the Guadalupe River Trail connects neighborhoods and businesses, from

historically underserved communities like Washington Guadalupe to companies like Adobe and Zoom that are integral to our economy.

Last fall, the City implemented a \$2 million grant from the State’s ERF program to move people living along the Guadalupe River Trail between 280/87/Woz Way and 87/Julian Street into housing and restore public access to the trail. Outreach teams helped move many of the residents into interim and permanent housing, including the newly converted Arena Hotel. Subsequently, Caltrans and BeautifySJ teams worked tirelessly for nearly three weeks to close the encampment. These efforts led to an outpouring of support and gratitude from downtown residents and employees who are gradually reclaiming the trail for recreation and commuting. We demonstrated that we can responsibly balance the needs of homeless residents and our duty to maintain clean, welcoming parks and trails for all residents to enjoy.

Pic. 1: Before relocation of unsheltered residents and encampment closure



Pic. 2: After relocation of unsheltered residents and encampment closure



However, we risk backsliding if we don’t quickly deploy existing resources to preserve our progress and prevent the area from becoming re-encamped. We also risk undermining the millions of taxpayer dollars and significant staff time expended to clear one of the largest

encampments in the downtown area, sending a discouraging message to our state legislators and the community who entrust us with their resources.

In fact, the ERF program's primary objectives include *“support[ing] sustained restoration of encampment sites to their intended or original state”*, as described in the [Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#). The Housing Department also referenced this goal in their [October 3, 2022 memo](#), stating the two core outcomes are *“restoring this section of the trail to its intended design and promoting increased use of the walking path through outreach, housing placement, abatement, beautification, and activation; and designing a program model using the ERF State grant framework that could be scaled and used in other impacted areas within the community or adopted by other jurisdictions throughout the state.”*

To fulfill this core objective and preserve our progress revitalizing Guadalupe River Trail, the City Manager should quickly work across departments to immediately implement a “no return zone” between 280/87/Woz and 87/Julian Street using existing resources. While we understand city staff is developing a cross-departmental framework for shared public spaces, we recognize the need to protect the city's investments now. Prioritizing small, focused investments today will help us avoid having to dedicate additional resources and staff time in the future if the area becomes re-encamped, and strike a balance with additional cross-departmental efforts that require longer deliberative processes.