



# Memorandum

**TO:** RULES AND OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE **FROM:** Councilmember Raul Perez

**SUBJECT:** Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan **DATE:** April 11, 2018

**Approved:**

**Date:**

4/11/2018

## RECOMMENDATION

I nominate for the next priority setting the development of a Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, including but not limited to:

1. A review of all the City's public safety protocols in the event of a suicide attempt and make any necessary updates including internal procedures for suicide prevention awareness for city managers and supervisors.
2. Promoting suicide prevention awareness to city residents and employees through existing events and meetings as well as explore how the City could supplement the County's efforts to promote suicide prevention education.
3. Developing a communications approach and plan, including a distribution plan for city employees—especially any crisis response teams—and residents.
4. Directing City Staff to:
  - a. Collaborate with County personnel, to produce an annual review and report about the suicide prevention policy, the work done, and areas for improvement/expansion.
  - b. Coordinate and collaborate with ongoing county, regional and state efforts, like Each Mind Matters. This includes promoting and enrolling city employees in county-provided training programs (many of which are offered free-of-charge).
  - c. Ensure that the development of this policy includes community engagement.

## BACKGROUND

Last September, I nominated for priority setting the development of a Suicide Prevention Plan and while the item did not get prioritized, this somber and important topic deserves another opportunity for consideration.

San José has historically been an advocate for suicide prevention even though mental health services does not fall under the city's purview. In 2011, the City Council approved a resolution proposed by then-Councilmember Kansen Chu supporting the

Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategy Plan. It remains a preventable tragedy that affects thousands of people a year.

### **ANALYSIS**

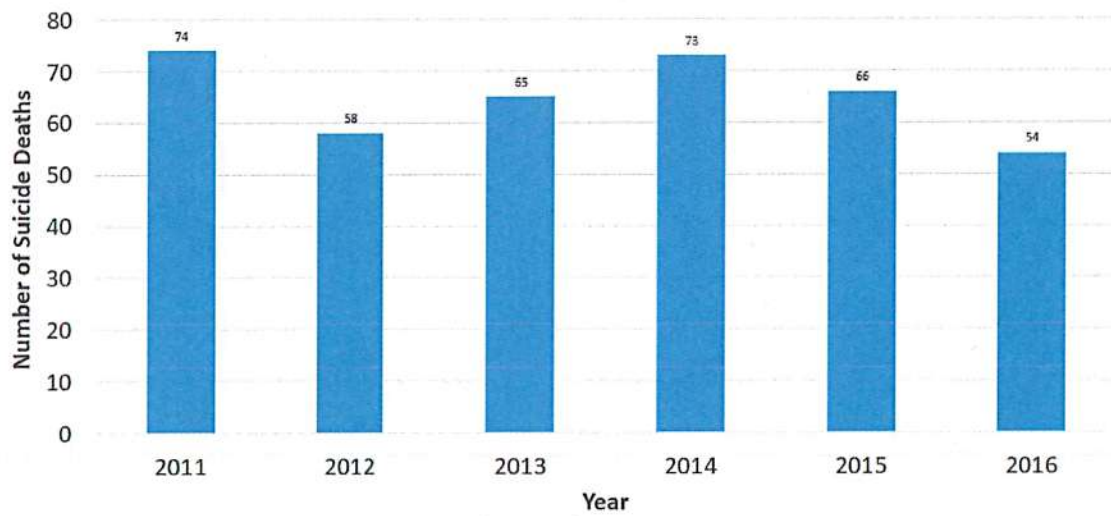
The Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention program has indicated that there have been 390 suicide fatalities in San José between 2011 to 2016 (Figure 1). It is troubling that during this period, the number of fatalities have not dipped below 50. While the city does not have mental health services, there are potential strategies that could be implemented within the city's purview to increase suicide prevention.

For example, the City Council had a robust discussion around firearm safety, ironically on the same evening of the last priority setting. Consequently, the City Council adopted a safe-storage policy to ensure that gun owners lock up their firearms when they're not home. This action was partially to address potential suicide attempts since in 2016 alone, 24% of suicides in San José was done so with a firearm. Another example was after several suicide attempts and fatalities in the Martin Luther King Library's vaulted atrium, the City and San José State University took upon itself to place infrastructure barriers to prevent further attempts. It has been instrumental in preventing suicide fatalities since then.

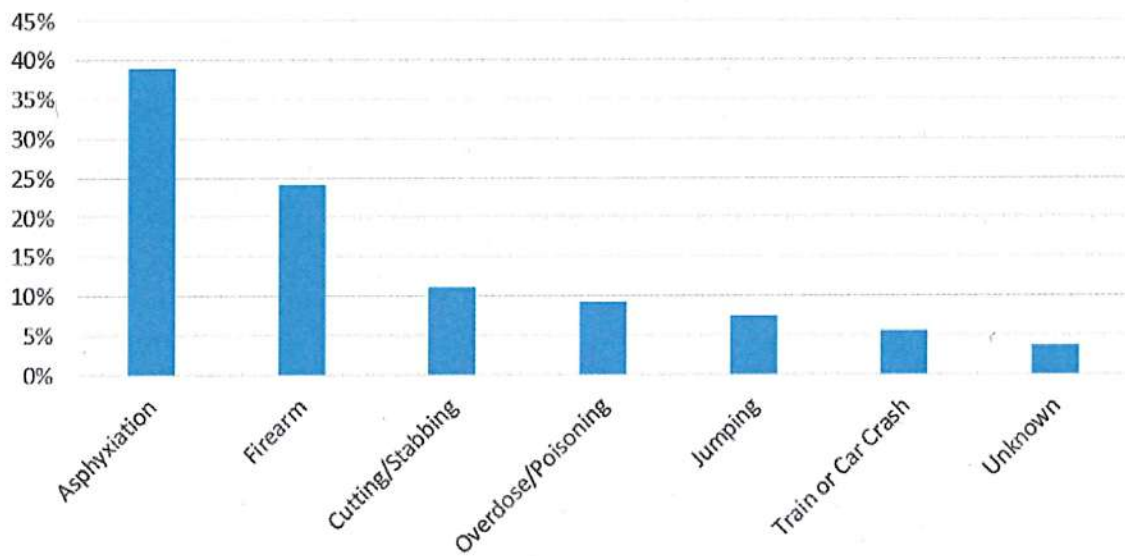
Many neighboring cities such as Palo Alto, Los Gatos and Mountain View have had suicide prevention policies in place as early as 2010. In fact, since the last priority setting session, the City of Morgan Hill adopted a policy to promote best practices for suicide prevention and early intervention (Attachment A).

### **CONCLUSION**

While mental health services may not fall under the jurisdiction of the City, there are still measures we can take to promote and put forth resources to prevent suicides. One suicide fatality is one too many and I hope for the day when we can bring that number down to zero.

*Figure 1 - Number of Suicides in San Jose between 2011-2016*

Source: Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services/County Medical Examiner

*Figure 2 - Percentages of Suicides by Means, San Jose, 2016*

Source: Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services/County Medical Examiner



**ATTACHMENT A****CITY OF MORGAN HILL  
CITY COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES****CP-xx-xx****SUBJECT: SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY****EFFECTIVE DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2018****ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: POLICE DEPARTMENT****BACKGROUND**

Suicide is the leading cause of death by fatal injury in Santa Clara County. These deaths are usually preventable. Within that framework, it is the policy of the City of Morgan Hill to adopt best practices for suicide prevention and early intervention. It is the policy of the City to implement the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, adopted by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on August 24, 2010. To meet these goals, the City will promote mental health care, wellness, and prevention, and will provide support for community members in need, as available.

**PURPOSE**

This policy encourages community collaboration; promotes planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention; and encourages mental health care.

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the City to implement current strategies and best practices as designed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, a national agency promoting the national suicide prevention plan, and the California Suicide Prevention Plan.

City staff will work with Morgan Hill Unified School District employees and residents to gain a better understanding about the causes of suicide and learning appropriate methods for identifying and preventing the loss of life. The policy and procedures will include training in identifying those at risk (gatekeeper training) and how to report suicide threats to the appropriate parental and professional authorities.

City staff will actively collaborate with prevention researchers, specialists in the field, the Morgan Hill Unified School District, and other local and regional authorities, including Santa Clara County government. This policy shall advance current, evidence-based strategies, including but not limited to, public education, community outreach, a continuum of mental health supports, means restriction, mental health screenings, grief support, safe messaging trainings with media, developing suicide crisis response plans, and periodic review of relevant data, amongst other actions.

The City supports initiatives and actions taken by the South County Suicide Prevention Workgroup, or any future similar committee. Collaborative activities will be agreed upon, implemented, and evaluated, as funding and resources are available.

A strong and effective educational program promotes the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of residents and employees/employers including, but not limited to, understanding of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience. Additionally, an easily accessible list of mental health and suicide prevention resources shall be maintained.

The cities and school districts of Gilroy and Morgan Hill shall collaborate with Santa Clara County Behavioral Health and Community Solutions to establish a suicide review committee and crisis intervention plan and procedures, to ensure public safety and appropriate communications in the event that a suicide occurs, or an

attempt is made by an individual in the cities of Gilroy or Morgan Hill.

The City shall ensure that all staff members have been issued a copy of this suicide prevention policy.

Funds to implement this policy shall be provided, to participating agencies when available, and city staff will seek opportunities to supplement funds through private donations, grant applications, and other sources of outside funding. Additional funding will also be sought through partnership with the Morgan Hill Unified School District and other agencies with expertise in this area.

This policy shall be reviewed annually, as part of the South County Suicide Prevention Workgroup, to confirm compliance and to make any necessary revisions.

**This policy shall remain in effect until modified by the City Council.**

**APPROVED:**

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**STEVE TATE, MAYOR**