



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Maya Esparza

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: September 6, 2019

Approved

Maya Esparza

Date

9/6/19

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE SAFE PARKING PILOT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept staff's recommendation to discontinue the Safe Parking For Families Pilot Program at Seven Trees Community Center and transition families to a motel voucher program.
2. Direct staff to explore additional ways to provide support for private and non-profit organizations operating Safe Parking Programs through grants or other funding.
3. Direct staff to search for another location in the city for an alternative Safe Parking Program, and return to Council with a thorough community process completed and an alternative site identified in 2-3 months, including Leininger Center in District Seven in the review of city-wide potential sites.
 - a) Explore using the current mode or partnering with another nonprofit or private provider such as Winter Faith Collaborative.
4. Direct the City Manager to develop a coordinated multi-departmental response to issues that arise in neighborhoods and communities with City-sponsored Safe Parking Programs, including, but not limited to, the Police Department, Code Enforcement, Department of Transportation, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services.

BACKGROUND

We thank our Housing Department staff for their hard work and diligence throughout this process as we have navigated the challenges of adding a Safe Parking Program to our City's toolkit to address our housing crisis and support our unhoused residents and families.

When the City began exploring the creation of Safe Parking Programs, our only option was to consider programs operating on City-owned land, as no lawful mechanism for the operation of this type of program on private property existed at that time. On February 26th, 2019, the City Council passed an ordinance allowing for the operation of Safe Parking Programs on private

property. It is our belief that that such programs, operated by private and non-profit organizations, present the best opportunities for long-term success. Organizations like the Winter Faith Collaborative are have proven themselves able to run Safe Parking Programs with greater success and at a lower cost than we have seen from our own programs. The City should support and foster these programs through grants and other available funding opportunities. This will allow us to utilize our limited resources more effectively, partnering with organizations that have the space, staffing, and organizational infrastructure to effectively maintain Safe Parking Programs.

Our support for staff's recommendation to discontinue the Pilot Program at Seven Trees and transition to a motel voucher program is based upon the program results, feedback and discussion with the community, the Franklin-McKinley School District, and the desires of the families themselves.

As discussed by Housing in their supplemental memorandum, the program at Seven Trees has been severely underutilized, with only four to seven families staying there on average per night, out of seventeen available spots. Even utilization of the space by participating families may dip as low as about fifty percent on a given night. Understandably, families themselves have expressed a preference to find indoor locations such as motels as a temporary measure, rather than continuing to sleep in their cars as participants in the program. We believe that transitioning to a motel voucher program for these families is the logical and moral course of action.

The Seven Trees location has presented a number of challenges as well that lead to our support for discontinuing Safe Parking at that location. Many of these challenges arise from its proximity to Los Arboles Elementary School, as shown on the map below. The Franklin-McKinley School District superintendent has had to hold a school meeting over issues at the site. The principal of the school and parents have voiced extreme concern over increased dangers to children walking to school due to illicit behaviors connected to the program. The community has seen a substantial rise in RVs parked along the road adjacent to the parking lot, and with them an increase in reported illicit activity. While we recognize that many of these individuals are not affiliated with the Safe Parking Program, their sudden prevalence shortly after the onset of the program suggests a link to the existence of the program at that location. For the community, these issues have become inextricably linked. At a community meeting in May, both the Franklin-McKinley superintendent and the President of the Franklin-McKinley School Board voiced their opposition to continuation of the program, a position echoed by the other community members in attendance.

Recognizing these challenges, the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee unanimously voted to recommend finding an alternative site in the city to host a Safe Parking Program during the June 13th, 2019 meeting. Should the City wish to continue to explore developing a third location for a Safe Parking Program targeting adults without children, we believe for the reasons stated above that Seven Trees Community Center should not be considered, and that suitable alternative locations throughout the city, such as Leininger Center in Kelley Park, be explored by staff and brought back to Council for consideration. The evaluation process for new sites should also carefully consider site layout. The peculiar location and multiple entrances and exits to and from the parking lot at Seven Trees caused additional challenges for security and site enforcement that should be avoided in future potential site selections.

Both City staff and those in the community have brought to our attention the need for a stronger, interdepartmental approach to addressing concerns in our neighborhoods with Safe Parking Programs on City property. We recognize and appreciate the work of the Police Department,

Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, and the San José Public Library in addressing community concerns at the Seven Trees site, but we believe a more comprehensive approach is needed to adequately address the community needs that arise from such programs. As long as our Housing Department is prioritizing these types of emergency shelter solutions, we must ensure that all relevant departments are given parallel priorities to address the correlated issues affecting the surrounding communities and residents.

The City Manager is best situated to facilitate the many moving parts across departments that must come in to place, and so we ask him to coordinate with Housing, the Police Department, Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, Code Enforcement, Public Works, and Department of Transportation to ensure that these neighborhoods receive a comprehensive response to the issues that arise from Safe Parking Programs.



Map showing proximity of Safe Parking lot (bottom center) to Los Arboles Elementary School

