

Dear Community Partner,

Thank you for your continuous advocacy towards our housing efforts these past years. As the District 3 Councilmember, I am humbled by the countless occasions in which we have compassionately worked together to house our homeless neighbors.

As the Councilmember with the most encampments in the City, I have and will continue to place ending homelessness in San José as my utmost priority. I am confident in our efforts to end homelessness, because we live in a city where partnerships are in abundance, offering permanent supportive housing, transitional shelters, mobile showers, street outreach, permitted soup kitchens, all of which necessary to reach our goal. It is in that same partnership spirit that I turn to you to work together on an effort related to St. James Park.

St. James Park is regularly associated as a commune for homelessness individuals. I remain steadfast that St. James Park should be a place for *everyone*, whether you are a working professional, a family, or a person without shelter. I believe that our parks thrive best when they are all inclusive, well maintained, and used in the manner they were designed for. Unfortunately, an activity that has been counterintuitive to both our park maintenance and homeless management efforts is the unpermitted distribution of food.

The neighboring residential communities have been increasingly frustrated with the park being overwhelmed by feedings, preventing an inclusive environment for all to use the park. It is to that end, that this summer the City will be engaging unpermitted groups feeding at St. James Park in an outreach and partnership development effort. This effort will be followed by enforcement of park municipal codes, which non-complying groups will be subjected to.

San José Municipal Code (SJMC) 13.33.090 prohibits the distribution of unpermitted food in park spaces. This ordinance was not designed as a means to deter homeless individuals from parks but rather as a preventative health measure. Although I believe that having food is a human right and the need to provide our homeless neighbors sustenance is a must, I do not think that this is being achieved with the feedings at St. James Park. The feedings are well intentioned, but may not meet health regulations, lack consistency, and accountability if something were to occur to consumers. Feeding our homeless must be done in a manner that is consistent and

combined with the other wrap around services that our homeless neighbors need to get back on their feet. Our office is not discouraging the preparation of food for homeless individuals, in fact, we welcome it - but it should be done in accordance to our public health laws and be accompanied with the other very important wrap around services.

It is to that end that the city will work collaboratively with the great number of organizations who are permitted to manage food distribution centers throughout the city. When paired with the various services such as shelters, mental health services and job training, homeless individuals are better equipped to get back on their feet. I acknowledge the kind hearted intentions of the groups who give their time, talent and treasure in their individual charitable work and invite them to join us in the larger effort to not only manage our homeless crisis, but end it altogether. This can only be achieved if we work *together!*

Just as we have been able to accomplish so much together towards housing our homeless, I hope you will join me once again in addressing this issue head on in a collaborative manner. I invite you to meet with me on Monday, June 26 at 9am at San José City Hall, 18th floor to further discuss this upcoming effort.

Sincerely,



Raul Peralez
Councilmember, District 3
City of San José