

## City of Merced

Mayor, Members of City Counsel and Department Heads:

My name is Joe Carroll. I am chairman of the board of directors for Sierra Saving Grace Homeless Project (SSG). SSG has been a non-profit organization for over 10 years and is dedicated to helping the homeless in Merced County.

SSG and the City of Merced have had a trusting working relationship in helping the homeless in Merced. For the past 6 years SSG has received Community Development Block Grants and Home Loans (CDBG). With the CDBG grants to pay for past due rents or utility bills, SSG has been able to help individuals and families avoid becoming homeless and remain in their place of residence.

The CDBG home loans have allowed SSG to purchase apartments and houses that are an eye sore to the neighborhood. SSG with the help of a contractor we have rehab them to the point that they become habitable and a welcome place for the existing neighborhood. After the units or house is completed SSG move in a client. Our clients in our property include formerly homeless individuals. SSG has a client that was living on the streets for 35 years and is now housed and has been for the last 4 years. Another client was a young pregnant woman who was a victim of domestic violence. She was able to put her life back together and move to Nevada and start a new life. SSG has a family of 5 that were living in a shelter and another family that was living in a car with a mother, daughter, son and 2 small children. SSG found them and moved them into a house and they are all thriving. The daughter began working locally. The stable life that SSG gives these people has made a great impact on our clients. This only accomplished with a great trusting relationship with the City of Merced and SSG. The housing department of Merced knows that SSG will accomplish what we say we will, with all the proper paperwork, and up to the standards that is required by the Housing Department and HUD.

SSG is asking the City Council to continue this trusting working relationship. SSG is developing a project to give stability to the "invisible homeless". The invisible homeless are single women and men who are living in separate residences from their children. The adult maybe living or sleeping at a residence of a friend or family or a car and the children are sleeping elsewhere. They may be sleeping on a couch or on the floor. However, their sleeping arrangements are, they are considered homeless and not seen by the community at large. This unstable

environment creates untold issues with the parents and the school age children. Not knowing if you are going to have a place to sleep that night or have something to eat can cause mental and behavioral problems now and in the future. The agencies that work with women of domestic violence and Merced High School, who work with homeless students are overwhelmed by the numbers of clients that need help. These numbers include 261 displaced families within the High School District and 75 families who have looking for help that to be turned away by an agency working with domestic violence. They were referred to other agencies or put on a waiting list. Will this get to the root cause of the problem, NO, can SSG solve the problem, NO, will this investment end homelessness, NO. What SSG can do is offer a place for some of these families to have an environment that will bring stability to theirs lives. SSG is proving it every day what a home does for our clients. With a stable home these children will grow up to be productive citizens and not taxing burdens to our community

I am asking the City Council to consider allocating funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for this project. The funds will allow SSG to purchase apartment complexes in scattered sites in Merced, rehab them, and move the invisible homeless in.

This project cannot succeed without the approval of the City. The program is sustainable by the fact that most of the clients have some sort of income and can pay a portion toward rent and utilities.

SSG is a non-profit organization and we can apply to the county for tax exemption on the properties we purchase. The only payment that SSG would be the insurance for each property and maintenance, which would be setup by establishing an account and depositing 10% of the collected rents.

Each family will be case managed on a monthly basis or more, if need be, by the agency who referred the family to SSG.

The goal is to move a family in, allow the stability to work for them and then they should be able to move out and find a place of their own. Once a family moves out, we can move another family in and start all over again.

SSG knows how to make this project work and with the help of the City of Merced's trust and funding, SSG can make this work. There is no administrative cost except for a possible new case manager to help with the increase clientele and work load.

SSG understands that the City of Merced will be sending out a survey to help the city leaders in their decision plan and SSG will work to have help from our community.

Thank you! --

Regards,  
Joe Carroll  
Chairman of the Board  
(209)626-5660 office  
(209)769-6932 cell  
[sierrasavinggrace.org](http://sierrasavinggrace.org)  
P.O. Box 1301 Merced, CA. 95341

