

Discussion on Implementing Services for the Homeless Population

The city of Merced continues to face challenges from the burden of an increasing homeless population throughout the state of California. The city of Merced has been working with Merced County to establish service centers and permanent supportive housing for its homeless population. However, as these entities are built and prepared for service, challenges remain throughout the city. For residents, these challenges include upkeep and maintenance to their neighborhood parks. For businesses, these challenges include vandalism and trespassing on business sites. For tourists and consumers, these challenges include an overall appearance of unsafe or unsanitary areas for shopping and recreating.

There are many elements of managing an increasing homeless population that are beyond the city's control. However, the city council has the ability to give direction to staff regarding the enforcement of city ordinances, setting standards of safety and cleanliness in its public spaces, and working collaboratively with other service providers to give effective help to all homeless individuals seeking it. Therefore, as new services are being brought to this area, it is an appropriate time to discuss how the city of Merced seeks to facilitate the implementation of these services for its homeless population while also directly addressing the continuous challenges residents, businesses, and consumers face from the sprawling presence of its homeless population.

This item seeks to gain input from Council regarding the Council's preference for how it will service its homeless population while managing these challenges. This may include ideas such as prioritizing certain public spaces from further blight or destruction, creating a joint task force of multiple agencies that can handle situations beyond the city's sole control, and developing methods of communication among agencies that work directly with homeless individuals or families.