

Father Joe's Villages

This past Tuesday, the City of San Diego narrowly passed an ordinance that has sparked significant controversy. This ordinance specifically prohibits homeless encampments on public property as well as within a two-block radius from shelters, transit areas, and schools. Individuals who violate the ordinance may face citations or arrests, if they refuse an available shelter bed. A strategy was presented by the City to add additional shelter beds.

The most recent Point in Time Count reports a 22% increase in the number of those falling into homelessness, almost 10,300 individuals, half of whom have no shelter. Approximately 2/3 of these individuals are in the City of San Diego. The latest count indicates that over 2,000 are in the downtown area. We see suffering humanity outside our Village doors, and the impact on the community at large. Encampments are not healthy for those who reside therein.

Father Joe's Villages will continue advocating for increased and varied shelter capacity in order to meet the specific needs of individuals in the most effective manner. This includes non-congregate settings, sober living, harm reduction and spaces most appropriate for seniors, people living with disabilities, and those with specialized needs. In view of the shortage of affordable housing, shelters are a necessary stop gap to assist those impacted by homelessness in the immediacy and help them on a path to self-sufficiency. That said, a shelter is not a home.

A number of years ago, we embarked on our Turning the Key initiative in order to introduce critical affordable housing, such as Saint Teresa of Calcutta Villa. We have recently acquired new funding for the Turning the Key initiative to build over 200 units of affordable housing in proximity to Father Joe's Villages' comprehensive services. Once people have a safe, stable place to live, they can be uplifted with a diversity of wrap-around services like medical care, counseling, and other services to help them stay on a healthy productive path.

We are proud of our commitment to help our neighbors move off the streets, and we remain steadfast in our mission to care for our neighbors in need, upholding the values of compassion, respect, empathy, empowerment, and dignity that lie at the heart of Father Joe's Villages.