

Mayor Chuck Reed and San Jose City Council

San José City Hall
200 East Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

May (DATE), 2010

Re: Neighborhoods Commission Recommendation: One Year Neighborhood Officer Rotation

Dear Mayor Reed and Members of the City Council,

As you are aware, our San Jose Neighborhoods Commission was seated last July, and charged with supporting our neighborhoods on issues related to community quality of life, as well as to provide recommendations to City Leadership in these areas. On behalf of the Commission, I am writing regarding a significant concern in the area of community policing that has been brought to our group, and to provide our recommendation to our City.

Over a number of months, the Neighborhoods Commission and members of the public who provided public comment both individually and on behalf of their neighborhood organizations, discussed neighborhood safety. We all understand these are difficult times for our public services in this time of budget shortfalls and limited resources..

One specific and timely concern raised is that when neighborhoods begin to develop a working relationship with their assigned officers, often a new group is transferred into the area, and the neighborhood-officer relationship and trust building must start over again – and this cycle repeats itself frequently. Our understanding is that there is a six (6) month officer rotation opportunity under the language of the Collective Bargaining Agreement which is currently being reviewed.

As a part of our review, the Neighborhoods Commission had invited a number of content experts in this area, including the Police Chief, Interim Police Auditor, and Police Officers Association (POA) to provide input to us. At our April meeting, both the Chief and Auditor attended, as well as a number of neighborhood leaders, and we had a very productive session.

The Neighborhood Commission agrees at the current “churn” of frequent police officer rotation does not support operational effectiveness or neighborhood satisfaction. Given the concerns raised to us by respected neighborhood leaders, we do not view the current six (6) month deployment as sufficient for the Officers and Community to build and maintain a relationship, or achieve their desired results. We understand that a one year rotation is currently being discussed by the parties, and recommend this as an improvement to the current state. As community leaders have noted diminished police presence and involvement during neighborhood association/organization and/or school events, it is essential that both neighborhoods and the police are provided enough time to build trust and understanding, so they may work most effectively together, and best leverage this valuable resource.

The Commission will be taking a longer view on how neighborhoods may work most effectively in partnership with the City and Police Department. We plan to continue study of these issues with the intent to provide our thoughts on a number of potential process improvements to promote positive interaction in non-emergent settings between the police and neighborhoods.

We are dedicated to working together to make San Jose the best and safest place for all of our families and neighborhoods.

Sincerely,
Beth Shafran-Mukai
Chair, Neighborhoods Commission