



Memorandum

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Councilmember Kansen Chu

SUBJECT: JUNE BUDGET MESSAGE FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010

DATE: June 15, 2009

APPROVED:

DATE:

6/15/09

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Mayor's proposed June budget message with the following amendments:

1. Maintain current level of funding to the Crime Prevention Program, proposed to be eliminated after 2010-2011.
2. Not to explore alternative service delivery models because the Crime Prevention Program is successful in delivering services in its current capacity.

ANALYSIS:

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This is truly the case with regards to the Crime Prevention Program. Our effort to prevent crime is a key reason that the City of San José remains one of the safest big cities in America. Although I am open to constant improvements, I believe that the current system worked very well over the years. The feedback from my constituents of this program has remained very positive and effective.

The Mayor's June Budget Message recommends the elimination of the Crime Prevention Program and the transition to an alternative crime prevention service delivery model as a strategy to deal with the 2010-2011 budget. Eliminating the Crime Prevention Program would have significant negative impacts on a variety of successful community education and crime prevention programs, including Neighborhood Watch, the Safe Alternatives and Violence Education Program (SAVE), Challenges and Choices, as well as gang, drug, and alcohol awareness programs.

The City of San José has taken pride over the years for having the title as one of the safest big cities in the nation. During these tough economic times, we should not be making any cuts to core services. Crime prevention, like police and fire services, play an integral role in making our communities a safer place to live. Programs focused on crime prevention, such as Neighborhood Watch, are critical for the safety of our city. Neighborhood Watch can help empower neighbors and equip them with the information on how to discourage, deter, and prevent crimes in their neighborhoods. Being one of the safest cities in the nation is a result of years of cooperation, communication, and collaboration between the Police Department and our neighborhoods. While the City of San José does not have the

highest officer-to-resident ratio, our City has been able to maintain the level of safety through programs and services that the Crime Prevention Unit offers.

Maintain funding to the Crime Prevention Program will ensure that the Challenges and Choices program and other youth services will continue to be provided. Challenges and Choices provide life skills in addition to gang and violence prevention free of cost for all of San José public and private schools. There is a critical need for the continuance of early intervention programs in order to reduce, combat, and prevent truancy. This 11-week violence awareness program for third, fifth, and seventh grade students and has served the youth of San José for over 15 years. Crime Prevention Specialists who teach the Challenges and Choices Program also conduct all community presentations, such as Neighborhood Watch, Child Safety, Personal Safety, Senior Safety, Homeland Security, Drug Presentation, Gang Prevention, Internet Safety, and Child Passenger Safety.

Truancy is generally considered a major risk factor for dropping out of school and for delinquent behavior, including abuse, gang involvement, and criminal activity; these often lead to more serious problems in adult life. There is a critical need for the continuance of early intervention programs in order to reduce, combat, and prevent truancy.

Whereas the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force focuses their resources on intervention efforts, the Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit focuses on early childhood prevention through programs like as Challenges and Choices Program. Approximately 3,000 students and families, from over 100 schools throughout the City of San José, are served per school year. While the Police Department proposes to offset the elimination with programs through the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, I do not believe that they are equipped to satisfy those needs. Crime Prevention focuses on prevention efforts while the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force focuses more on intervention and suppression. The programming and clientele that the task force serves are not the same as the target audience for crime prevention services.

As we have heard loud and clear from our constituents, public safety, including crime prevention, remains a top priority. In my district alone, 92% of my residents who attended the District 4 community budget meetings have indicated that crime prevention is their priority and is something that should not be cut from the budget. No software program or volunteer could replace the work and knowledge that Crime Prevention Specialists have in keeping our residents prepared and informed. Crime prevention is a community investment and it is the responsibility of the City of San José to find creative ways to continue providing crime prevention services in the City of San José.