



City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street Fresno, CA 93721
May 23, 2023

<sent via email>

Letter RE: Fresno Community Priorities for the FY 2024 Annual Budget and Guiding Principles for a Just and Equitable Economic Recovery For All

Dear Mayor Dyer and Fresno City Councilmembers,

The undersigned community-based organizations work hand-in-hand with communities throughout the City of Fresno. We thank you for taking the time to read the following budget letter and welcome the opportunity to discuss our letter in further detail. The priorities and projects identified below were developed alongside resident partners through our ongoing collaboration as well as a series of recent community meetings.

The City of Fresno continues to consistently rank the highest in poor air quality¹ in the state, near last in the Trust for Public Land's park score² nationwide, houses some of the most burdened census tracts in all of California,³ and the existing housing crisis has only worsened making it that much more unaffordable even for those earning salaries that equate to area median incomes.⁴ These data and statistics are not just numbers we cite, but the realities of a majority of the residents and communities you serve and represent. The City of Fresno, Councilmembers and

¹<https://www.lung.org/research/sota/city-rankings/msas/fresno-madera-hanford-ca#pmann>

² <https://www.tpl.org/parkscore>

³ <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-40>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/06/fresno-housing-prices-rent-california>



Mayor Dyer must fundamentally shift the way decisions are made and meaningfully include all Fresno communities being especially intentional in including historically excluded groups.

This list of priorities is in no way comprehensive and we recommend that budget allocation and conversations prioritize community voices through town halls and a participatory public process.

The City of Fresno Budget is a moral document and the City Council and Mayor have the obligation to create a fiscally responsible budget to address the needs of our most vulnerable communities in Fresno. It is imperative that the City of Fresno equitably and equally allocates funding to all departments to ensure that all needs of Fresnoans are met. This means funding and investing in projects, programs, and plans and implementing legislation driven by the people for equitable growth and access getting us closer to one healthy Fresno. We present our comments below and ask that you include these priorities in this upcoming budget:

I. Affordable and Accessible Housing

Housing stability and conditions contribute to a community's well being and influences public safety. By having safe, secure, and affordable housing families are able to stay in their neighborhoods and create close connections with neighbors and have a secure environment. Below are a list of housing policy solutions which can contribute to a safe and secure Fresno for all.

A. \$4 Million for Permanent Funding Commitment for a Fully Funded Comprehensive Eviction Protection Program

We recommend an allocation of \$4 million dollars per year for each budget cycle for a fully funded and improved program. All over Fresno, tenants continue to face illegal eviction proceedings, verbal and physical harassment, and retaliation tactics from property managers and landlords. Tenants facing unlawful detainers, many of whom speak and read languages other



than English and are juggling multiple jobs and responsibilities, must navigate a complicated legal system with little to no assistance, which is hard for any person even with formal higher education and English fluency.

A fully established Eviction Protection Program in the City of Fresno includes:

- A city-wide, multi-language public awareness and targeted outreach campaign,
- Public education workshops and mobile clinics, in multiple languages, on tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities,
- A hotline to support tenants with notices from the landlords (e.g. 3-day notice, notice of rent increase) or other housing-related questions and assistance,
- Legal representation for tenants facing unlawful detainers,
- Real-time/same-day legal advice and representation at the Fresno County courthouse on eviction court days

A continued investment in a comprehensive eviction protection program now will lead to reduced expenditures on the cost of providing public benefits from job loss, costs associated with homelessness, the cost of social services and the lasting impacts of evictions such as marked credit scores and a 7-year eviction record making it difficult finding new housing. Continued funding could come from Local Housing Trust Fund dollars or other funding streams coming to the City of Fresno in order to make this a permanent funded program.

B. Temporary Shelter and Transitional Living for Youth and Community

Fresno has approximately 4,000 unhoused residents and only approximately 1,200 shelter beds. Many residents returning home from incarceration or recovering from substance use disorder also require temporary supportive housing. Still, there are far too few options available,



especially for youth with the closure of the EOC sanctuary. Fresno rents have soared during the pandemic, and people getting back on their feet need free or low-cost options to help bridge the gap between crisis and stability. Youth who have a safe place to go, be sheltered, and get supportive services during challenging times are less susceptible to negative influences, substance use, and engaging in the underground street economy. A temporary shelter and transitional housing would provide youth with much needed shelter and services. This includes job programs, housing assistance, and education access.

C. \$3 million for Housing Improvement and Rehabilitation Projects

A \$3 million dollar initial fund for rehabilitation of older, blighted, and abandoned homes would help the City of Fresno face its housing crisis and climate crisis. As our climate crisis continues to increase extreme heat weather events, we urge the City Council and Mayor Dyer to appropriate funding for lower-income households to conduct weatherization improvements to their home. Additionally, this funding should be used to rehabilitate blighted, abandoned homes and sell to lower-income households as another means to provide affordable homeownership opportunities. This could then be a revolving fund that sells upgraded homes at-cost allowing the program to fund itself. We request the City support and fund these programs and other similar ones prioritized in the Here to Stay Report such as the Land Bank Program, Community Land Trusts, and so on through this revolving fund.

D. Rent Control Ordinance with Just Cause Resolution

The City of Fresno's rental rates rank high within national and state rankings and rents are only getting higher. With an increase of 28% over the last year, the median price for a two-bedroom is approximately \$1,500 according to Rent.com. A family of four would have to make \$60,000 in order to afford this rent, however, US census data shows that Fresno's median household income is \$53,000. And while Fresno rents continue to increase, wages remain stagnant. Fresno is



deemed to have one of the “[hottest](#)” rental markets in the state. Our longtime neighbors and friends are being displaced and losing their homes as these trends continue. Renters are faced with the choice to stay and pay exorbitant rents or leave their homes. Stabilizing rents is critical to the well-being of households and neighborhoods alike.

Residents of all walks of life have been urging this Council and Administration to adopt a comprehensive Rent Stabilization Ordinance that would allow landlords to gain reasonable profits while keeping families housed. This City can lead in the San Joaquin Valley by adopting a resolution that includes ‘Just Cause’ eviction language; a rent control board that allows landlords and tenants to make requests such as higher rental increases; and protects single-family homes excluded by AB 1482. Rent Stabilization can be adopted with little or no cost. In fact, communities with rent control fund administrative costs through a small per unit fee paid by landlords. The City of West Hollywood has incorporated an annual rent registration fee of \$144 per unit to the City for the administration of the Ordinance. They may pass half of this on to the tenants, divided into 12 equal monthly portions, in addition to the Maximum Allowable Rent. Currently, the landlord may charge the tenant \$6 per month. We are recommending that the Council adopt one rent control policy with a suite of interrelated components to ensure that in the immediate and long-term, we keep people housed.

E. \$3 Million for Mobile Home Rehabilitation or Improvements

A \$3 million dollar initial fund for rehabilitation of mobile homes would help the City of Fresno face its housing crisis and protect the last forms of affordable homeownership. We urge the City Council and Mayor Dyer to appropriate funding for lower-income mobile home park owners to conduct improvements to their home. Additionally, this funding should be used to help mobile home park owners complete improvements that have been required by the City to avoid fines, penalties, or evictions from park owners. This could then be a revolving fund that sells



upgraded homes at-cost allowing the program to fund itself. We request the City support and fund these programs to ensure that mobile home owners are able to stay in their homes.

II. Climate Resilient Infrastructure and Park Improvements

The City must invest in climate-resilient infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods that rank the highest on CalEnviroScreen for pollution and poor health outcomes and are most vulnerable to climate change. Existing neighborhoods have not seen improvements for decades on their already deteriorated roads and parks, and lack bike and pedestrian infrastructures like complete sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, and greening. We ask the City Council to support and prioritize community-identified and community-driven projects including the ones listed below, which also align with the Housing Element Program 27.

A. Equitable Land Use Practices and Funding

For decades, South Fresno communities have suffered from long-term divestments and neglect, resulting in a lack of infrastructure. The City must prioritize adopting equitable land use practices that build a healthy, livable environment for residents to thrive. In 2021, the City of Fresno and South Fresno Community Alliance entered into the Northpointe Settlement Agreement to adopt the following mitigation measures to offset the impacts of industrial projects for South-Central Fresno residents. We ask the City Council to appropriate funding to the following projects that were agreed upon in the settlement:

- i. Installation of a crosswalk and pedestrian signage and push buttons at the intersection of East Central Ave and South Orange Avenue



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- ii. Set aside funding for pedestrian safety improvements at the intersection of East Central Avenue and South Cherry Avenue that may be used for one of the following:
 - 1. Remove two of the stop signs and install a High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) at the intersection
 - 2. Place traffic lights with pedestrian signal lights at the intersection
 - 3. Place a HAWK 100 feet from the intersection
- iii. Funding for a study for the development and adoption of a plan that incorporates public feedback to determine pedestrian and bicycle safety needs in the area bounded by Highways 41, 99, and to the Southern border of the City's Sphere of Influence
- iv. Installation of traffic monitors on East Central Ave between Highways 41 and South Orange Ave to monitor and enforce compliance with traffic regulations in the area
 - 1. Hiring of a traffic officer to monitor surrounding the North Pointe business park
- v. Installation of traffic control signs on East Central Avenue, East North Ave, and South Cherry Avenue to direct truck traffic to roadways with fewer sensitive uses



B. Community Identified Transportation Improvements

For years, long-standing communities have asked for investments in their communities, and now is the time for the City of Fresno to make those investments in much-needed transportation improvements. Below are transportation projects your constituents have identified as top priorities for their communities.:

- a. Protected bike lanes (Class IV Separated bikeways) need to be placed around the following areas:
 - i. Complete protected bike lanes beginning on NW Olive and Hughes and going along Hughes to Mckinley. This would be conducive to a safe biking path to Addams Elementary (District 3)
- b. Complete Street projects need to be completed around the following areas:
 - i. Complete streets on Olive between Hughes and Marks (District 3)
 - ii. Cedar Ave between Mckinley Ave and Jensen Ave street needs to be repaved and maintained, as well as bike lanes (District 5)
 - iii. Butler Ave between East and Hazelwood Avenues needs to be repaved. (District 5)
 - iv. Local roads in the Winchel and Sequoia area need to be repaved such as Fifth Street from California to Ventura Avenues. (District 5)
 - v. S MLK Blvd and E. Jensen Ave street needs to be repaved and maintained (District 3)
- c. Traffic lights need to be placed around the following areas:



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- i. Traffic lights on Olive and Hughes as there have been fatal accidents at that intersection. (District 3)
- ii. Fremont Elementary School on Weldon and Tellman needs a traffic light. Lots of students and families cross this dangerous intersection for school. (District 3)
- iii. Comprehensive safety upgrades near Calwa Elementary: For years, the community and the parents of Calwa Elementary have asked the City to place stop lights on the corners of Cedar and Jensen, Jensen and Rowell, and a safe crossing path on Jensen between Cedar and Rowell. This will create a safe walking path for children, who have experienced near collisions with traffic. (District 5)
- d. Street lights need to be placed around the following areas:
 - i. Near Addams Elementary neighborhood to ensure safe and secure travel for residents, especially after dark (District 3)
 - ii. On Mckinley between Marks to West Ave (District 3)
 - iii. On N Golden State Blvd between 3 Palms mobile home park and Olive (District 3)
 - iv. On S. Crystal from Sunset Elementary to W. Kearny Blvd (District 3)
 - v. All corners at the intersection of Willow Ave and Tulare Ave need adequate street lighting (District 7)
 - vi. Street lighting is needed on Tulare Ave between Chestnut Ave and Peach Ave (District 7)



- e. In-pavement lighted crosswalks need to be installed at the following locations:
 - i. A lighted crosswalk is needed at all intersections of Rowell Elementary School (District 7)
- f. Sidewalks need to be repaired and maintained throughout Chinatown (District 3)
- g. Bus upgrades need to occur along the following routes:
 - i. Higher bus frequency with Route 35 that goes to Addams; and protected bike lanes that go along Cambridge starting from Blackstone to Clark (District 3)
 - ii. Bus stops should include accessible lights, shade, and benches for people with disabilities throughout the City of Fresno

A. Community Identified Park and Community Center Projects

- a. Extend Maxie L Parks Community Center. The south wall within this community center needs constant maintenance and shading is needed (District 3)
- b. Community residents and parents of the Addams community have asked for a park nearby for several years and have identified vacant lots for a green space that they want to be able to design as a community. (District 3) The following spaces have been identified:
 - i. Southwest corner of Mckinley and Marks
 - ii. Northeast corner of Mckinley and Marks



- iii. Using the ponding basin behind Addams Elementary to place a Community Center

III. Inclusive & Transparent Public Process

Finally, as the City of Fresno develops its City budget including appropriating the rest of the American Rescue Plan dollars along with other federal and state funding sources, it is imperative to implement an inclusive, transparent, and responsive public process. We highly recommend participatory budgeting as the City has implemented such a process before through the Transformative Climate Community (TCC) process.

The City and Councilmembers should conduct inclusive participatory processes to meaningfully and intentionally include all Fresno residents.

We do want to note that constituents appreciate Councilmember Arias, Perea, and Esparza's efforts to engage his constituents across District 1, 3, and 7. Residents look forward to seeing priorities and projects raised during conversations be reflected in this year's budget.

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We respectfully ask that the FY23-24 budget process be transparent, meaningful, inclusive, and responsive so as to ensure equitable investments for all Fresno residents regardless of zip code, income, race, gender, immigration status, and housing circumstance. Now is the time for the City of Fresno to lead the San Joaquin Valley with bold initiatives, policies, and investments, and start to address the years of systemic oppression against BIPOC communities.

Respectfully,



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