



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CORRECTION: City of Fremont Releases Open Letter to Fremont Community**

*Letter Addresses Civility, Community Engagement and the Homeless Challenge*

**Fremont, Calif. – August 9, 2019** – City of Fremont Mayor Lily Mei released the following letter addressing the importance of a continued dialogue around homelessness in Fremont:

July 29, 2019 (corrected August 9, 2019)

An Open Letter to the Fremont Community:

The City of Fremont has been ranked as the “happiest city” in America, but recently, many are not happy. Why? Because the City recently began studying the potential of creating a temporary Housing Navigation Center as part of a comprehensive effort to address the growing challenge of homeless encampments spreading through the city. The thoughts of possibly having the Center near their neighborhood got many worried. While we understand their concerns and requests not to have the Center near schools or residential areas, we also have a responsibility to look into all factors to address this crisis realistically and effectively. As your Mayor, I sincerely hope to have your support and understanding by way of this letter.

The City has undertaken many efforts and has seen a steady increase in several areas:

- In July 2018, the City had identified 133 encampment sites; as of June 2019, that number has increased to 178 encampment sites.
- In Fiscal Year 2018-19, which runs July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019, the City has conducted biweekly cleanups removing 72.33 tons of debris using approximately 900 contractor work hours.
- The Fremont Police Department states that approximately 10% of the calls for service requiring police responses are disturbance calls involving people experiencing homelessness. Homelessness in and of itself is not a crime.

The challenge continues to grow and isn’t going away on its own. California shares the largest burden of the national crisis, with 25% of the nation’s homeless population. Between 2017 and 2019 the number of homeless individuals in Alameda County increased 43%. Mayors from all cities in Alameda County have met monthly over the last year to work on collaborative solutions to this issue.

Motivated by a desire to resolve these challenges and to make the most use of over \$2,000,000 in state funding, the City began studying the merits and viability of a Homeless Navigation Center, defined as follows:

A Housing Navigation Center is a facility that transitions, those experiencing homelessness, into permanent housing, stabilization, and self-sufficiency, through coordinated services.

On Site Services:

- No walk-ins
- Adults only
- Up to 6 month stay
- One-on-one intensive housing case management
- Linkages to other needed services

- Hygiene facilities
- Meal services
- Placement to permanent and supportive housing
- Management and operations plan
- 24/7 staffing and security
- A safe, clean, calm and flexible environment to rebuild lives

Upon studying and learning that the Navigation Center model is operating successfully in other cities, both Alameda County and Hayward are in the process of opening Navigation Centers as well, and the Vallejo City Council approved funding for a Navigation Center in May 2019, our City Council decided unanimously to do the same for our community.

While legitimate concerns have been expressed by neighborhood groups, others have reacted heatedly based on assumptions, such as people without a permanent home are likely to be sexual predators, criminals, and drug addicts. The fact is that many of the homeless in Fremont grew up here, attended school here, work here, or have family members in the area and identify as residents of the City of Fremont. For women especially, domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness with 89% of homeless women having experienced severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives.

With these dynamics in mind, as Fremont's Mayor, I am seeking your cooperation to assure open and civil discussion, even of controversial issues, in a safe and orderly setting.

In order to effectively listen and represent our community and represent them, our City is engaging in a full outreach campaign and we will be hosting two workshops:

- Wednesday, August 14 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Harbor Light Church, 4760 Thornton Ave.
- Saturday, August 24 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Harbor Light Church, 4760 Thornton Ave.

Additionally, an online forum is being developed as a platform for dialogue and to ensure that residents who are unable to attend the community workshops have an opportunity to participate. Information about the project, including previous staff reports, can be found on a dedicated webpage at [www.Fremont.gov/NavigationCenter](http://www.Fremont.gov/NavigationCenter). A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) has been developed by City staff from community member questions, and will continue to be updated at [www.Fremont.gov/NavigationCenterFags](http://www.Fremont.gov/NavigationCenterFags). If you have a question that has not been answered it can be submitted to [hnc@fremont.gov](mailto:hnc@fremont.gov).

As the nation experiences its own challenges with divisive rhetoric, where people of differing opinions are personally attacked and ostracized, the City of Fremont is committed to working together to maintain the unity amidst diversity that has always been a hallmark of our City. We strive for a place where people from all backgrounds and perspectives can openly and safely share their viewpoints, and where residents have the opportunity to extend compassion for others beyond their nuclear families and neighborhoods. By working together, we can and will move Fremont forward.

For more information on how you can help, visit [www.Fremont.gov/HowCanIHelp](http://www.Fremont.gov/HowCanIHelp).

Sincerely,



Lily Mei  
Mayor

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