



# CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

## City Council

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 17, 2015

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#### Statement on Homeless Camp

In the Albuquerque Journal, an advocate for residents of a new homeless camp in Barelás stated, “The neighborhood is a compassionate neighborhood and wants to do something about ending homelessness and the City hasn’t shown the leadership to do that.”

I strongly object to the second part of that statement. It seems to ignore years of City Council support for a workforce housing capital budget set aside, as well as the recent exhaustive efforts by the City Council and Bernalillo County Commission to strengthen supportive housing, behavioral health, and social service case management.

Homelessness is a problem nationally due in part to the ongoing enrichment of a privileged population at the expense of everyone else. I know of no urban municipality that has yet come up with a silver bullet to altogether end homelessness, but *our* community is really trying.

The City is working together with advocates, the provider community, State and County for long-term solutions. After overwhelming support in the last election, we all will be taxed under the 1/8 cent County tax. We should have a strong say in how the new revenue is used.

A good structure was recommended by the Behavioral Health Task Force last October. It requires significant state as well as city and county funding. I am working through the Council budget process for capital and operating budget funding. A site will be identified for renovation/construction of a central crisis center with emergency housing. A big challenge is the recruitment and training of a larger corps of behavioral health and social service case managers.

As to the homeless camp: When I visited the new campsite it was clear that several people living there are behaviorally unstable. Unless they just recently showed up in Barelás, they have already been offered behavioral health support and short-term housing at the previous 1<sup>st</sup> Street site. Some people at the previous site refused that help; others accepted a motel voucher but may not be receiving case management during their one-week voucher.

While I did not necessarily support the evictions at the original site, neither do I support the uninvited takeover of the new site surrounded on three sides by a single-family neighborhood. In contrast, at Las Cruces’ Hope Village, a non-profit organization oversees a structured self-governing transitional camp with adjoining social services. Under a well-defined program, I could support such a temporary facility. I believe that the City and County could facilitate, but should not operate or govern it.

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