



## **Foothills Community Policing Council**

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### **RECOMMENDATION: Public Safety Concerns and Unvetted Voucher Distribution to motels at Tramway/Central**

Crime statistics indicate that there are upwards of 50 calls per week to the small and concentrated area of motels on Central/Tramway. At approximately 5 pm on May 15, 2021, a murder occurred in broad daylight at Central/Tramway. Concerned community members notified FH- CPC, and FH-CPC subsequently submitted a summary of safety concerns to city and APD officials and other concerned individuals.

**Reason:** Businesses, residents, and motel residents have expressed concern about the public danger (highest number of calls per week in any concentrated area in both the city and the state) at Tramway/Central motels. Family and Community Services is the city department that provides vouchers to non-profit agencies (Veterans Integrated Services, Hope Works, Heading Home, Barrett House, Catholic Charities, etc.) to distribute for emergency temporary housing. We are told that these vouchers are issued at-will with no oversight or monitoring. These vouchers are not tracked or coordinated among agencies. As a result, many these vouchers are issued to non-vetted repeat offenders. Many of these offenders not only trash the room of the motel with drugs, alcohol, prostitution, guns, meth labs, violence, etc. but invite other criminals into the room to further exacerbate the already out-of-control situation. When motel officials call the police, the police cannot intervene to remove the voucher resident because the city policy prevents the police from doing so. Foothills CPC committee members have been informed by a very reliable source who has asked to remain anonymous that once the voucher is paid for the motel, the individual cannot be evicted. The vouchers are provided for short-term emergency shelter, not long term. The maximum length of stay for a voucher is a two-week period. These criteria have not been followed, and some vouchers are extended for as long as three years, according to information provided by motel personnel. Since there are no kitchenettes or other amenities for long term stays, these motels do not qualify as long-term housing, and when these criteria are not met, additional health and safety hazards are created.

The objective reality is that conditions along East Central, and the specific issues of these motels have become a serious problem for the businesses in the area, the residents of the entire Foothills Command (the excess of fifty calls/week to this one location drains police resources for the rest of the area command) and present an unfortunate spectacle to tourists and travelers passing through Albuquerque.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That vouchers to these Tramway/Central motels be suspended until such time as they are properly regulated:

1. Family and Community Services has a safety plan in place that tracks each voucher no matter what non-profit passes it out. Family and Community Services is responsible for tracking police calls from voucher users. Voucher users who are disruptive to the extent of needing police intervention are no longer eligible for vouchers. Family and Community Services always track the concentration of vouchers and mitigate oversaturation areas if necessary. That Family and Community services track individuals using vouchers and regulates and enforces the time limits as well as other regulations.
2. That a crime prevention protocol be developed that Family and Community Services coordinates with APD, Homeless Coordinating Council, ACS, and other agencies, to ensure enforcement of law and regulations.
3. That voucher recipients must be vetted to ensure they meet safety criteria (to community, to tourists, to themselves). Criteria for this must be developed. For those individuals deemed dangerous, special monitored facilities must be provided. Any non-profit not following regulations must be deemed ineligible for voucher distribution.
4. Family and Community Services must delegate that only a certain % (maximum 20) be allocated at any one time to any one location.
5. Motels identified as “nuisance properties” are ineligible to receive vouchers.
6. Motels that accept vouchers must notify the public with signage at check-in desk so that innocent tourists can make an informed decision whether or not to stay in that motel.
7. Motels that accept vouchers must be required (not voluntary) to be certified in crime prevention through APD.
8. Criteria must be developed that clearly stipulates when “nuisance properties” **must** be deemed nuisance. Currently, the Zoning Department takes a very non-enforcement approach leaving the residents of the city to submit complaint after complaint with no action taken. The city, not the community, is responsible for regulating nuisance properties. Once those criteria are met, the property should automatically be deemed a nuisance. Nuisance property process must be developed with zoning department overseeing nuisance properties. The zoning department, not community members, enforces regulations on nuisance properties and proceeds legally resulting in property being razed if necessary. Other cities have a dedicated alert department to follow mandatory zoning enforcement procedure.