



PUBLIC SAFETY

As a city that is consistently named one of the safest cities in the country, Santa Clara is committed to promoting a living and working environment that allows for the best quality of life. Staff is monitoring and tracking legislation to ensure that proposed legislation is aligned with the City's continued interest in public safety. This Legislative Advocacy Position summary focuses on several public safety issues.

Community Safety

Crime prevention and enforcement efforts are integral to creating and maintaining a safe environment for residents and visitors. Gun violence is now the leading cause of premature death in the U.S., killing more than 38,000 people and causing nearly 85,000 injuries a year. The City supports legislation that seeks to eliminate gun violence like AB 688, which, if passed, will impose stricter requirements for firearms left in unattended vehicles. The City also supports legislation that increases penalties for chronic offenders. Recent legislation has shifted responsibility for all sentences non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenders from state to local jurisdictions, reduced penalties for certain nonviolent crimes, and allowed parole consideration for nonviolent felons. Individuals that are apprehended for property crimes, among others, often recommit similar crimes after they are released after a shorter sentencing, which is made possible in part by AB 109, Propositions 47 and 57.

However, the City recognizes that crime prevention and enforcement efforts alone cannot foster community safety and wellness. Education, intervention, and prevention efforts on topics like gun violence, gang activity, alcohol or tobacco use, pedestrian, driver, and bicycle safety, and driving under the influence are equally important. The City's Police Department currently provides anti-bullying education through the D.A.R.E. program and would like to see similar efforts and measures to eliminate discrimination, bullying and harassment, and improve general safety at schools. Similarly, developing and maintaining community partnerships and multi-jurisdictional efforts also help reduce crime and enhance safety. Staff supports legislation that promotes local authority for public safety, preserves funding levels for existing public safety programs (e.g. Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant - JAG), much needed equipment and enforcement activity, identifies new funding sources for departments to share information and resources to promote public safety, and promotes employee training and wellness, such as AB 680.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

As the State and region continues to experience an unprecedented number of natural and manmade disasters, the City recognizes the importance of a comprehensive risk management approach to emergency preparedness, fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency medical services. These areas require continued research and data-driven decision-making. Staff supports community risk reduction strategies, such as fire safety education programs and initiatives that reduce the need for in-hospital emergency medical treatment. The City will also benefit from legislation and initiatives that aim to prevent and mitigate catastrophic fires through better interagency cooperation and improved allocation and positioning of resources. There is a need for funding to assist jurisdictions with disaster preparedness and response and to provide corresponding homeland security related training.

Fines and Forfeitures

The City has seen a gradual reduction in revenue from fines and forfeitures. Staff supports measures that aim to return revenue generated from the enforcement of crimes back to the originating agency to sustain their efforts. In addition, staff supports measures that provide local agencies with financial relief (reimbursement) when the state legislature or any state agency mandates a new program or increased level of service (Proposition 4, 1979). These efforts provide the City's general fund with expense recovery.

Infrastructure and Technology

Many of the public safety efforts outlined in earlier sections depend on reliable infrastructure and advanced technology. Improved interoperability is an important goal for public safety because it can assist first responders in any major incident. The City supports legislation that improves infrastructure and technology, which will enhance public safety professionals' ability to respond to all types of emergencies and communicate within and across jurisdictions. Examples of infrastructure and technology includes, but are not limited to, phone systems, radio interoperability, Text-to-911, wireless networks, emergency alert systems, and dedicated data communications networks and systems. Additionally, the City supports local regulation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAV), including the right to authorize use of UAV systems by public safety agencies and the right to restrict or prohibit UAV use that interferes with or poses a threat to emergency operations or public safety.

Vulnerable Populations

Human trafficking takes on a variety of forms and may intersect with domestic violence in multiple ways. When an individual is trafficked by an intimate partner, family member, or other member of the household, domestic violence often also occurs. Additionally, domestic violence at home may become a 'push factor' that causes someone to become vulnerable to trafficking. Human traffickers are also often engaged in other crimes, which increases overall crime in the City. Other vulnerable populations that require additional attention include the homeless and mentally ill. Police calls involving the mentally ill, including those who are homeless, are on the rise. First responders can benefit from additional training and tools to deal with the mentally ill and domestic violence and human trafficking victims in emergency situations so that successful and safe outcomes can be reached. In general, the City supports legislation that aims to reduce and address homelessness, human trafficking, and domestic violence and provide aid to the homeless, the mentally ill, human trafficking and domestic violence victims and survivors, and other vulnerable populations.