



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember
Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: SUICIDE PREVENTION
POLICY

DATE: September 28, 2017

Approved:

Date:

9/28/17

RECOMMENDATION

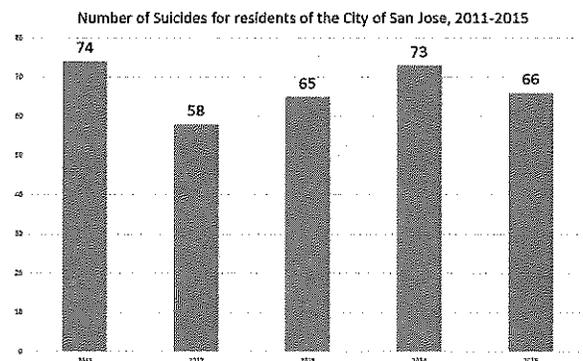
I nominate for priority setting on October 17, 2017 the development of a Suicide Prevention Policy, including but not limited to:

1. Assessment of city-owned properties with recommendations for preventative measures.
2. Explore how the City could support the County's efforts to promote suicide prevention education and align its policies.
3. Review all the City's public safety protocols in the event of a suicide attempt and make any necessary updates including internal procedures for suicide prevention awareness for city managers and supervisors.

BACKGROUND

Suicide prevention is an emotional and very real subject that affects people from all walks of life. The City Council recognized the importance of this issue when it adopted a resolution in 2011 proposed by then Councilmember Kansen Chu supporting the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategy Plan. San José has historically been an advocate for suicide prevention even though mental health services does not fall under the city's purview. Nevertheless, it remains a preventable tragedy that affects thousands of people a year.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, each year 44,193



Source: Santa Clara County Medical Examiner

Americans die by suicide and in 2015 alone, 494,169 people visited the hospital for injuries due to self-harm. In San José, there has been 336 suicide fatalities between 2011 to 2015. More disturbingly, San José residents have the highest youth suicide rate in the county. (ATTACHMENT A)

While the county is largely responsible for mental health services, there are potential policies and strategies that cities can implement to increase suicide prevention. In 2010, the City of Palo Alto adopted a resolution to not only support the County's Strategic Plan but approve their own suicide prevention policy as well. (ATTACHMENT B) The policy promoted planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies for suicide prevention and intervention and encouraging mental health care.

Similar to how the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force has policies and strategies to prevent youth from the very self-destructive gang lifestyle or the Department of Transportation's VisionZero strategy to prevent traffic fatalities, the city can explore how it can promote suicide prevention further within its own jurisdiction. A recent example is the reconfiguration of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library. After several suicide attempts and fatalities in the library's high atrium, the City and San José State University took upon itself to place infrastructure barriers to prevent further attempts.

Living and working in the Capital of Silicon Valley comes with its own barrage of stresses. From a housing crisis to a highly competitive business environment, our residents often struggle in coping with those stresses. Sometimes these stresses can manifest into suicidal or self-harm behavior and that is where we must take part in making resources as available as possible. One suicide fatality is one too many and we can do our part to address the needs of our community to help prevent suicide.

ATTACHMENT A

Table 2. City of residence and city of suicide-related injury of suicide deaths that occurred in Santa Clara County, CA, age 10–24, vital statistics.*†

	n	%
City of residence*		
San Jose	98	41.7
Other Santa Clara County City	46	19.6
Other Non-Santa Clara County City	38	16.2
Palo Alto	15	6.4
Sunnyvale	14	6.0
Santa Clara	12	5.1
Morgan Hill	11	4.7
Unknown	--	--
City of suicide-related injury†		
San Jose	89	43.8
Other Santa Clara County City	61	30.0
Palo Alto	21	10.3
Sunnyvale	17	8.4
Other Non-Santa Clara County City	13	6.4
Unknown	--	--

Case Definition: (1) County of death listed as Santa Clara County, (2) Decedent 10 to 24 years of age, (3) Manner of death listed as suicide. This case definition was used to understand the characteristics of youth that died *in* Santa Clara County regardless of where they were injured, or their place of residence.

*data available from 2003–2015

†data available from 2005–2015

-- Suppressed because cell size < 10

Source: Garcia-Williams, A. et al (2016). *Epi-Aid 2016-018: Undetermined risk factors for suicide among youth, ages 10–24 — Santa Clara County, CA, 2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd/hi/hd/epi-aid/Documents/epi-aid-report.pdf>

ATTACHMENT B

Resolution No. 9132

Resolution of the Council of the City of Palo Alto In Support of the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan and Approval of the City of Palo Alto Suicide Prevention Policy

WHEREAS, the Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, in his 1999 "Call to Action to Prevent Suicide," stated that suicide in the United States is a serious public health issue and the most preventable form of death; and

WHEREAS, the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action promotes "increasing the proportion of family, youth and community service providers and organizations with evidence-based suicide prevention programs" (Objective 4.7); and

WHEREAS, Santa Clara County has lost an average of 140 individuals in recent years to suicide, and many other County residents attempt suicide or express suicidal thoughts, making this a significant public health issue; and

WHEREAS, almost all Santa Clara County cities annually have residents of all races, gender, ages, and other social characteristics either express, attempt, or die by suicide, affecting many members of our communities, making this a community matter requiring collective action; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to support the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan goals to (1) reduction of deaths by suicide, (2) increase awareness and understanding of suicidal deaths and what to do, (3) improve data collection, monitoring and follow up, and (4) have residents respond to a person in need; and

WHEREAS, educating people on suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors and removing stigma about mental health treatment, recovery and resiliency is enlightened action; and,

WHEREAS, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, along with the leadership and staff of the Mental Health Department, the members of the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee (SPAC) and the many public participants, has sought to prevent suicide by holding public meetings and discussion sessions and approving a county prevention plan; and

WHEREAS, the City's Policy and Services Committee has approved a Suicide Prevention Policy and Mental Health Promotion, which is attached to this Resolution as Attachment "A";

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Palo Alto does hereby RESOLVE, as follows:

SECTION 1. The Council of the City of Palo Alto hereby proclaims its support for and approval of the County of Santa Clara's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, and it calls upon all citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools to support the vision of preventing death by suicide and creating a healthier and safer community.

SECTION 2. The Council hereby adopts a policy entitled "Suicide Prevention Policy and Mental Health Promotion," which policy, attached hereto as Attachment "A", is in furtherance of the County's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan.

SECTION 3. The Council finds that the adoption of this resolution does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act and no environmental assessment is required

INTRODUCED and PASSED: DECEMBER 13, 2010

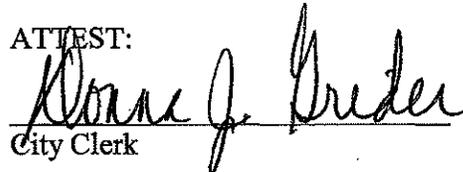
AYES: BURT, ESPINOSA, HOLOMAN, KLEIN, PRICE, SCHARFF, SCHMID, SHEPHERD, YEH

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:



City Clerk

APPROVED:

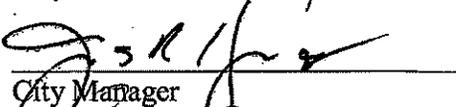


Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Senior Asst. City Attorney



City Manager



Director of Community Services



Director of Administrative Services

ATTACHMENT "A"
CITY OF PALO ALTO POLICY STATEMENT

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY AND MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

The Palo Alto City Council and City Administration understand the concern that suicide poses to its residents and employees/employers. Within that framework, the City shall adopt suicide prevention strategies and intervention procedures. These policy and procedures will be compatible with the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan that was adopted by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on August 24, 2010. To meet these goals, mental health care shall be promoted and supported for community members in need.

This policy shall advance current strategies and best practices as designated by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, a national agency promoting the National Suicide Prevention Plan, and the California Suicide Prevention Plan.

This policy promotes planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies for suicide prevention and intervention and encouraging mental health care.

This will be accomplished by City staff and residents gaining a better understanding about the causes of suicide and learning appropriate methods for identifying and preventing loss of life. The policy and procedures will include training in identifying those at risk (gatekeeper training) and how to report suicide threats to the appropriate parental and professional authorities.

This policy shall provide for active collaboration on similar work by the Palo Alto Unified School district and other local and regional authorities, including Santa Clara County government. This policy shall advance current strategies, including but not limited to, parent education, youth outreach, mental health support of students, means reduction, youth mental health screenings, and grief support amongst other actions.

The implementation of this policy (and related procedures), supports initiatives and actions taken by the community task force, Project Safety Net, or any future similar committee. Their activities will be agreed upon, implemented and evaluated.

A strong and effective educational program to promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of residents and employees/employers including, but not limited to, understanding of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience. Additionally, an easily accessible list of mental health and suicide prevention resources shall be maintained.

The City Manager or his/her designee shall establish a crisis intervention plan and procedures to ensure public safety and appropriate communications in the event that a

suicide occurs or an attempt is made by an individual in the City of Palo Alto. The City Manager will explore how this policy relates to the City's Emergency Crisis Plan.

Funds to implement this policy shall be provided, as available, and shall be sought through private donations, grant applications and other sources of outside funding. Additional funding will also be sought through partnership with the Palo Alto Unified School District and other agencies with expertise in this area.

This policy and related procedures shall be reviewed annually to confirm compliance and to make any necessary revisions.