



CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

City Council

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Dear District 9 Residents:

Bernalillo County has proposed creating one or more Tiny Home Villages in Albuquerque to address the growing concern of homelessness in our community. The County proposed that three of the possible six Tiny Home Village sites would be along the East Central corridor in District 9. Some clarification is helpful, as an initial matter.

First, the City Council as a body had nothing to do with this initiative and Mayor Keller has taken no position. One City Councilor has announced her support, although I know of no other Councilor who has gone on record to support the project.

Second, implicit from the above statement, I had nothing to do with the project. I was shocked to read in the newspaper on August 2 that three of the six potential sites were in District 9. I decided to wait to hear from my constituents before I announced my position or took any action. I mailed many of you about the meeting that was held on August 9, and I encouraged people to go and to communicate your concerns to my office. I also set up a poll on my City Council webpage.

I am amazed and encouraged by the level of participation and the thoughtful comments we received. We received 724 responses, with 83.6 percent being against Tiny Home Villages on or near East Central. We also received 724 written comments.

I have now heard from my constituents. I ***will oppose*** the implementation of a Tiny Home Village near the East Central corridor in District 9. I will provide my reasons why I believe the Tiny Home Village concept is flawed, particularly on East Central.

First, we have been working hard for many years to revitalize East Central, and to remove the stigma of the region as a run-down area. I have sponsored legislation that makes revitalization of East Central a City policy. We are making strides, but the progress is slow. Government-incentivized redevelopment efforts often include “catalyst projects” which seek to create something attractive, economically vibrant and exciting that will change the perception of the area. A Tiny Home Village on East Central could have the opposite effect of cementing the negative perception of the area we are working so hard to correct.

Second, the City has a provision in its building code for very small homes. The building code requires that a very small house has a bathroom, a tub or shower, and a sink. These requirements are there to “protect the life, health and safety of the inhabitants.” The Tiny Homes that are proposed by the County have no bathrooms, showers or sinks. Instead, they are placed on wheels to fit within the state definition of a recreational vehicle (***not*** regulated by the City) rather than an occupied building, which ***is*** regulated

by the City. I neither understand nor agree with the County's proposal to build substandard public housing in District 9.

Third, the sponsors of the Tiny Home Village proposal began with the premise that the Tiny Homes Village concept is a good idea for the City of Albuquerque. I have my doubts whether this is a good investment of public funds. Each village would only house 30-45 people, at a cost of \$2 million—not including operating costs. The estimated homeless population in the City is between 1,500 (based on the people who have checked into shelters at one time or another) and as high as 5,000 (assuming a possibly large number of individuals who have never sought shelter or services).

I will be sponsoring legislation that asks for a moratorium on Tiny Home Villages in the City. This would prevent the construction of any Tiny Home Village until the City has obtained an independent, comprehensive analysis of the best way to deliver services to the homeless that will generate measurable results. Of course, we will never eliminate homelessness. However, some cities have reduced homelessness while providing people in crisis opportunities for rehabilitation. San Antonio is a notable example and Salt Lake City has had some success. Mayor Keller has recently announced some very different proposals that are promising and merit serious consideration.

The Bernalillo County government *is* subject to the City's zoning laws, and the City Council can and should, place the Tiny Home proposal on hold until we have a comprehensive analysis of best practices nationally.

I believe that the community has a moral obligation to look for ways to assist the homeless in our community. I will support comprehensive data-driven options. We will have to devote resources to the problem. However, our funds are limited. We should not rush into projects that are an ineffective use of our tax dollars and that could significantly damage other important and established City policies—such as the redevelopment of East Central.

Thank you for taking the time to get involved in this important issue and letting me know your concerns. I will continue to do my best to advocate for you.

Sincerely,
Don