

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 7



City and County of San Francisco

MYRNA MELGAR

June 11, 2024

Sometime in July, the SFMTA will begin a planned repavement and improvement project along Winston Drive near Lake Merced, followed by enforcement of 4-hour parking limits. In preparation, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) is ramping up outreach to vehicularly housed residents in the area to offer housing assessments and other assistance such as vehicle repairs. As stated in HSH's end of year [report](#), five outreach events were also held in 2023 in the area on weekends where 140 individuals were contacted and 128 were enrolled in the *Online Navigation and Entry System* for potential housing placement. 38 families have successfully transitioned into housing.

The most recent Point-In-Time (PIT) count shows 13% fewer people sleeping on the street or in tents since 2022, but the number of living in vehicles rose to 1,442 citywide, a 37% increase from 2022. In some ways, San Francisco has been slow to respond to this growing population. An offer of temporary shelter is not enticing for a family with children to give up the security, privacy, and mobility of living in a vehicle. It is important to be aware that homelessness has increased in the US by 12% in 2023, showing that this is not just a local problem and that pushing them out of the county is not a real solution.

Since I took office in Jan 2020, I have sought to establish a Safe Parking Area on the Westside of town to relocate these vehicles off of our city streets into a more organized environment as people transition into more permanent housing solutions. My staff and I met several times with groups of the RV families (as arranged by the Coalition on Homelessness). We learned that much of the population along Winston Drive are hard working immigrant families with children, working low paid jobs in the service industry. Often their stories involved an eviction or losing their jobs during COVID workplace closures and never fully recovering. While lacking housing, these residents are not high needs with mental or addiction problems. Their only "crime" is being poor while living and working in a city extremely lacking in affordable housing options. Nevertheless, use of the public right of way on Winston Ave for housing folks in vehicles has never been approved by the City government, and there are risks to both the people living in the vehicles and the community. Some of these risks to residents of the vehicles include the risk of collision from cars traveling on the road, lack of disposal services for garbage and sewage, and the risks of fire from gas powered generators on the dry grass that grows on the unimproved sidewalk. Additionally, Winston Ave is immediately adjacent and uphill from Lake Merced, which serves as a secondary water source for the City in case of disaster.

I am deeply disappointed that the search has failed so far due to bureaucratic hurdles and seeming lack of prioritization. The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing has been successful in placing families into shelter and permanent housing, but it lacks the expertise and executive power needed for the logistics of establishing a Safe Parking Site. Some of the potential sites we looked at were even government owned, but we could not secure agreement to lend them even temporarily. The Board of Supervisors has passed legislation to expedite the establishment of these sites, and the City had a successful pilot project at the Balboa Upper Yard, but a system to identify land, and quickly establish this use does not exist.

As one Supervisor in District 7 I lack the authority to control the workplans of the City's Departments. I can only urge them to act with expediency as follows:

1. HSH to develop and execute a plan to stabilize this population of folks. People living in their vehicles have different needs to the population experiencing street homelessness, and an offer of congregate shelter is a step down from an enclosed vehicle that locks. The coordinated entry system needs to be adjusted to allow folks to be successfully housed.
2. MTA and HSH must coordinate, cross train, and develop systems for enforcement that support people, and keep track of who has received services, and who is eligible for housing support.
3. The Department of Real Estate must identify a site for a municipal RV and vehicle lot where folks can pay a low fee to safely park, with services that are appropriate for this population.
4. The Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs must support and provide services to this population in coordination with other departments to ensure people's safety and successful integration.

Meeting this emerging need will save our City resources in the long run, before residents fall into deeper crisis and will also support communities by improving road safety.

Sincerely,



Myrna Melgar
Supervisor, District 7
San Francisco Board of Supervisors