



Edward Varso
Chief of Police
1163 N. Centre City Pkwy.
Escondido, CA 92026
Phone: 760-839-4721 Fax: 760-745-3432
evarso@escondido.org

February 26, 2024

Mr. Greg Anglea
Chief Executive Officer
Interfaith Community Services
ganglea@interfaithservices.org

Mr. Anglea:

I am writing to you in regards to the ongoing project led by the Escondido Police Department's Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) Unit at Interfaith Community Services (ICS), located at 550 W. Washington Ave.

The COPPS Unit began monitoring ICS in September 2023, after noting that 550 W. Washington Ave. consistently ranked among the top 10 locations (in terms of calls for service) in the city of Escondido. My officers noted daily, recurring signs of crime and disorder associated with your business, along with repeated violations of your conditional use permit (CUP). The COPPS Unit had successfully worked through projects in the area immediately surrounding ICS, resulting in significant reductions in calls for service (typically ranging from 60% to 80%) prior to opening this project. And considering that most, if not all, of those projects were related to the crime and disorder surrounding ICS, the COPPS Unit deemed it essential to initiate a similar project at 550 W. Washington Ave.

The results of that project have been profoundly disappointing. By way of summary, the following CUP violations were observed prior to and during the deployment period of this project:

- 1) ***Resolution 2019-01 - "...No trash, liter [sic], or other solid waste is permitted outside of the building or on an adjacent public right of way, other than in designated receptacles..."***

This CUP violation was repeatedly observed before and during the project.

- 2) ***Resolution 2019-01 - "No shopping carts, wheeled carts, food containers, suitcases, bags, bicycle, or such items are permitted outside of the building within public view, or on an adjacent public right of way."***

This CUP violation was repeatedly observed before and during the project.

- 3) ***Resolution 2019-01- "No loitering outside the building in public view or on the adjacent sidewalk or public right of way is permitted. This includes...the frontages of Washington Avenue and Quince Street... includes anyone waiting for services or entry to the building..."***

This CUP violation was repeatedly observed before and during the project.

- 4) ***Resolution 2019-01 - "There shall be no measurable increase in calls for services associated with the facility, when compared [sic] to the average of the past three years."***

Calls for service data indicates in 2019 there were 436 calls for service, which exceeded 2017 (289 calls for service) and 2018 (388 calls for service). Upon opening of the project, there was an initial decrease in calls for service at ICS. In recent months, calls for service have steadily increased.

- 5) ***Resolution 2019-01 - "The holder of the Conditional Use Permit shall make the premises available for inspection by City staff during operating hours, and shall provide such business records, licenses, and other materials necessary to evidence compliance with the conditions of approval."***

Sergeant Stewart had been in contact with your staff throughout the project deployment period. In October, your staff requested calls for service data that was originally presented in September of 2023. Sergeant Stewart immediately replied to your staff and exported, and annotated, 13 pages of data within two weeks of the request. A question was presented regarding the data, which Sergeant Stewart immediately addressed.

At Sergeant Stewart's request, your staff provided a list of basic needs services on October 4, 2023. Sergeant Stewart attempted to reconcile the basic needs service list amongst the seventy plus other programs offered at the 550 W. Washington Ave. location. The purpose of Sergeant Stewart's inquiry was to ensure that he understood all services provided at the location in order to address any concerns that those services were contributing to crime and disorder. Sergeant Stewart made seven additional requests for the same information from October 2023 to February 2024. Sergeant Stewart's last inquiry was to Chief Program Officer Filipa Rios on February 3, 2024 following a telephone conversation. As of February 22, 2024, he has yet to receive an answer.

- 6) ***Resolution 2019-01 - "Operator will provide the highest priority for persons referred by the Police Department who are screened and a fit for the purpose of the Emergency Shelter. If Emergency Shelter beds are unavailable, alternative housing options will be provided."***

The COPPS Unit has noted this CUP violation multiple times. Most recently, a family with four small children from Escondido and experiencing homelessness, was contacted and seeking assistance. Interfaith Community Services advised a wait of at least three months with no wait list available. No alternatives were offered by staff.

- 7) ***Resolution 2004-71 "Only programs detailed in this report shall operate at this site unless a modification to the CUP has been approved."***

"Other activities not specified, are not permitted as part of this CUP. A request for other activities shall require a CUP modification."

555 N. Centre City Pkwy. Resolution 2021-04 – “The operation and use of the subject property shall be consistent with Project Description and Details of Request, designated with the Approved Plan set. b. Nothing in this Permit shall authorize the Applicant to intensify the authorized activity beyond that which is specifically described in this Permit.”

“Limitations on use. Prior to any use of the Project site pursuant to this Permit, all Conditions of Approval contained herein shall be completed or secured to the satisfaction of the Community Development Department.”

During the initial months of this project, according to staff, news reports, and your social media site:

- Interfaith Community Services moved individuals staying at Haven House (permitted for 550 W. Washington Ave.) to the Turk Recuperative Care Center (unpermitted for 555 N. Centre City Pkwy.).
- Undocumented asylum seekers were brought into the vacant emergency shelter at Haven House.

In both instances, these CUP modifications were not approved by the City of Escondido. You were provided written notice of this by the City Manager's Office, and continued operating in violation of your CUPs at both locations.

Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in an increase in calls for service to the Turk Center, as well as significant increases in crime, disorder, and calls for service to the former Rancho Las Palmas restaurant immediately north of the Turk Center.

Due to the lack of communication, continual CUP violations, and the steady increase in calls for service, it appears to me that Interfaith Community Services has little interest in working with the Escondido Police Department to address the problems of crime and disorder on its two properties. For this reason, I must allocate my limited resources to other areas of the city in need of assistance. **Effective immediately, the COPPS Unit's project for Interfaith Community Services, located at 550 W. Washington Ave., is suspended.** This project will be referred to the City of Escondido Planning Division, Code Compliance Division, and City Attorney's Office for further action.

Sincerely,



Edward Varso
Chief of Police

Cc: Sean McGlynn, City Manager
Mike McGuinness, City Attorney
Chris McKinney, Deputy City Manager