

Vice Mayor Rose Herrera  
District 8



## February 2016 Newsletter Message

Dear Neighbors,

Statistics are numbers, which help us make decisions. But behind some of those statistics are the names of real people who have lost their lives while driving on our roads. We can calculate total numbers of deaths on our roads, but the reality and sad truth is that those deaths represent tragedy to a family and a loss to our community. Even though, among large cities, San José has one of the lowest traffic fatality rates nationwide, one death is too many. Increasingly, residents are demanding that we do more to make our streets safer. Speeding is the number one culprit in traffic deaths. Slowing down drivers and making our streets safer for people requires an approach that includes Speed enforcement, Education and changing the way we build roads in our city.

Almost one year ago, on January 26, 2015 on Yerba Buena just after noon, two teenagers speeding at upwards of 70 mph hit and killed Kiran Pabla, 24. Kiran was jogging along the sidewalk and was struck by one of the speeding cars when it lost control on the downhill turn in the road. The speed limit sign reads 40 mph on this stretch of Yerba Buena. Unfortunately, the two young drivers were probably racing and failed to think about the possible consequences of their thrill ride.

Immediately after this accident, I insisted the police department put a temporary radar feedback sign on the street. With my urging, the Department of Transportation worked quickly to expedite the installation of a permanent radar feedback sign where it is still operating on the downhill side of Yerba Buena heading Westbound. There is an additional, existing radar feedback sign just past the fire station. San José PD has also marked Yerba Buena as a priority for "overtime" traffic enforcement when resources allow. This has resulted in more police presence in the area. But writing more tickets is only part of the solution.

In an effort to slow down drivers along Yerba Buena, Department of Transportation is considering installing rumble strips on the downhill side of Yerba Buena. Rumble strips are little buttons usually used to divide lanes laid out across lanes to remind drivers to slow down. Rumble strips feel uncomfortable to drive over at higher speeds so hopefully this will work to change speeding behavior. They also produce higher noise levels from cars who travel over them - so there are trade-offs.

In response to this and other fatal traffic accidents, in particular the rising number of pedestrian fatalities, I pushed to include community outreach across the city as a part of the Vision Zero campaign. Vision Zero is a campaign which strives to achieve zero traffic fatalities for all transportation modes. We've held four community meetings across the city centered on the areas with the most accidents - the 20% of the roads that account for 80% of the accidents. Residents who attended the meetings were able to give valuable feedback about their neighborhoods to city staff from the Department of Transportation, the Traffic Enforcement Unit of the Police Department, and groups such as California Walks and Silicon Valley Bike Coalition were available to educate residents along with hearing their concerns about where the biggest traffic hazards occur. No one knows a neighborhood as well as the residents who live there so this was very helpful to hear first-hand accounts of problems areas.

Making our streets safer will also involve changing our car-centric culture and looking at designing our streets in a way that ensures safety for all modes of transportation. Examples of this include making wider pedestrian walkways, segregating bike lanes from car traffic, and in some cases reducing the number of lanes, or by making them narrower, forcing cars to slow down. By strategically placing trees in between roadways and sidewalks, thus protecting the pedestrian instead of the outdated practice of placing the tree along the sidewalk/private property border, you can better protect pedestrians walking near the road. Some of these improvements will come along as streets are repaved but the biggest changes in street design will happen over time with new developments.

Our current street designs are based on State Highway standards that focused on moving cars quickly with little regard for pedestrians. The City of San José Department of Transportation (DOT) has been leading the effort to convince cities to adopt new street guidelines for cities that will transform urban city streets into slower and safer roads for pedestrians.

Slowing down speeding drivers will save lives. It makes a difference how fast someone is driving as to their survivability in a crash. At 20 MPH a pedestrian versus car accident is survivable but at 40 MPH the chance of it being fatal to the pedestrian goes to 80%.

Our police department needs additional tools to enforce speeding laws. Technology can help. This is why I advocated for and the city council agreed to prioritize pushing for State Legislation that will allow the use of speed enforcement cameras (currently illegal) to help slow down drivers. In the meantime, please drive the speed limit and encourage your neighbors, friends, co-workers and family to do the same. Let's surprise ourselves and reach that zero fatality rate sooner rather than later.

If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to email my office at [district8@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:district8@sanjoseca.gov).

If you want to get involved in helping us achieve our Vision Zero Campaign or want more information go to: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/42849>.

I want to keep you informed! Sign up for the District 8 newsletter - go to [www.sanjoseca.gov/district8](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/district8).

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rose Herrera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rose" and last name "Herrera" clearly distinguishable.

Vice Mayor Rose Herrera