

Dear Fresno,

Nearly eight years ago my family and I moved to Fresno. Not knowing anyone or anything about Fresno, I moved out of obedience to God's voice. Surprisingly, I was met with much cynicism about Fresno. Often folks asked me "Why would you move to Fresno?" Well, I firmly believe that people make the place. And it's the people of Fresno that made me fall instantly in love with this place.

I developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for our community during my five-year tenure as CEO for Habitat for Humanity Greater Fresno Area. There, I adopted a guiding principle that 'everyone deserves a decent place to call home.' This sentiment was also felt and shared with me by then Mayor elect Jerry Dyer as we sat for coffee. His God given 'One Fresno' vision resonated with my heart as he wonderfully articulated that 'everyone' should have an opportunity to thrive in our City. While we didn't know each other well, once again, out of obedience to God's voice and the Mayor's invitation to serve as our City's Deputy Mayor –I followed.

When the administration took office in January of 2021, I got to know our Mayor on a more personal-level. Whether in public or behind closed doors, I witnessed his heart and commitment for the people of our beloved City, particularly for the underserved. Being a firsthand observer of the Mayor's sincere dedication to our community ignited my joy in fanning the flames of his vision. It was clear that this work was always about people.

There is much that I am proud to have been part of, including:

- Driving the creation of the Mayor's One Fresno Housing Strategy
- Collaborating with staff to enhance operational improvements in our planning and building divisions – key to our housing efforts
- Supporting efforts in investing in over 1,000 underserved youth to attend our new Camp Fresno
- Partnering to provide access to nearly 20,000 youth and their families to attend our world class zoo free of charge
- Working with the Mayor and the One Fresno Foundation board to provide scholarships to youth and sponsorships to youth serving organizations
- Overseeing the Youth Jobs Corps Program roll out that has provided living wage employment with holistic support services to 200 disadvantaged youths...and counting

The above achievements have been greatly rewarding and touching. I was once that young person, living with housing instability and in need of an opportunity. Through God, my community responded; and so have we. We will continue to pay it forward!

Over the past two and a half years, through collaboration with the Mayor, Deputy Chief of Staff, City Council we have appointed over 50 individuals to serve our community on municipal boards and commissions.

Another milestone that has left an enduring stamp on our City has been the establishment of the Office of Community Affairs. Being asked to lead an office that gives voice to the voiceless, connects resources to the unconnected, and improves civic engagement amongst the marginalized has been a great honor. Leading this work alongside Harjinder Saini, Sandra Lee, Pastor B.T. Lewis and Alma Martinez has resulted in thousands in our city feeling valued, helped, and heard.

Of all these successes, arguably my greatest gratitude is for the improvement in positive sentiment about the City of Fresno. And for good reason. In just one year, from 2021 to 2022 we realized;

- A **51% reduction** in gang related shootings and **19% reduction in homicides**
- A **13% year-over-year community-wide reduction** in homelessness
- Fresno leading the **second strongest post-pandemic economic recovery** in the nation
- Recognition among the “Nation’s Top 10 most improved cities in economic productivity growth”
- Fresno’s wages being among the ‘fastest growing’ in the state of California
- Fresno ranked as #13 in the nation for ‘fastest growing cities’ in 2022 with a 2.3% GDP growth and;
- A 36% reduction in citywide poverty over the last eight years

It's amazing to see what God can do by grace, through people. It's encouraging to see when our people believe that they have value and are worthy of investment. And on the heels of the news of the state's \$250M commitment to downtown Fresno's future infrastructure, it's equally encouraging when others see that we have value too.

So, I stand here at a moment where I've heard God yet again. This time He is guiding me to depart from my role as Deputy Mayor. I find this guidance a bit curious. I love the people of Fresno. I love our Mayor, our team and my job. Nevertheless, I've never believed that understanding the “why” is a prerequisite to obedience. While I am not certain what awaits me, I am certain of one thing –God loves Fresno. And it is for this reason, as I announce my departure, I leave with my heart full still shouting from the mountaintops ONE FRESNO!

Love you.

Matthew