

## BUILDING JUSTICE PODCAST



### CRISJ Building Justice Podcast

**Season 2, Episode 19 :** [Vice Mayor and City Councilmember Eric Guerra on economic development, housing, homelessness, and uplifting the working class.](#)

**Moderators:** Political Science Professors Monicka Tutschka and Kristina Flores Victor

**Guest:** Eric Guerra, Vice Mayor and City Councilmember from District 6

**Please note:** This transcript may be imperfect. Please contact Professor Monicka Tutschka (tutschka@csus.edu) directly should you have questions.

#### Music lyrics:

Company under construction, the function, justice for the human family we demand it. Justice, true freedom, equality is a must. Thus, decolonization of the planet. So bust this. People be the power now we're Building Justice. Pulling out divinations, now we're Building Justice. Welcome the planet to the Podcast, "Building Justice," "Building Justice," "Building Justice." Building is to add on, or to do away with.

0:24

#### Monicka:

Welcome to 'Building Justice,' a podcast by Sacramento State's Center on Race, Integration and Social Justice. Our acronym is CRISJ. We explore critical issues affecting our communities with the hopes of creating a healthier and more just world.

I'm Monica Tutschka, and I'm a professor of political science here at Sac State, and I'm here with Professor Kristina Flores Victor. Kristina and I are colleagues in the political science department. Our guest for today is Vice Mayor and City Council Member Eric Guerra. This is part two of a two part conversation with Eric.

In part one. for those of you already listened, you'll recall that we talked to Eric about his experience as a Sac State undergrad and Master's degree student. Eric told us about the struggles that are associated with being a working class student , and a working class student who is also a

first generation immigrant. We learned about what students can do who are in that situation and what we as residents, allies of working class students, administrators, other faculty, city officials, state officials, what we can do to make the experience of college and the transition from college to a career better and easier for working class students who may or may not also be first generation immigrants.

In this episode ,Part two, I'm going to be asking Vice Mayor and City Councilmember of District Six some questions about economic development, especially when a development is occurring in underused city corridors. I'm going to be talking about affordable housing and housing generally, and I'm going to be talking about the elephant in the room---homelessness. So let's get at it.

2:18 Let me turn now to some policy questions and let me begin with the topic of economic development. Eric, A Sac Bee article published in September 2022 describes you as an advocate for small business and economic development in under-used city business corridors. How can high skill economic development projects like the Aggie Square Development Project both help and harm low skilled workers and working class people who reside in these kinds of business corridors? And I don't know if my audience knows anything about Aggie Square, so you can also talk a little bit about that.

3:04

**Eric Guerra:**

Sure. Yeah, definitely. Glad to talk about Aggie Square, which is a, basically, a research and development arm of the UC Davis health system that's both a public and private project that can spawn a lot of new ideas, and new business, and new development in an area that for many years has had very little economic activity. And in fact, a lot of businesses closing down. So, you know, the question and, you know, when people talk about economic development, they think about, I think, for either two points of view. One: is making a lot of money; or two: the dangers of what's happened with displacements, of communities completely being wiped out and and what happens to those families.

And I like to center myself back on, you know, my own life experience and and think about economic development in this way. We left our little pueblito in Michoacan, a little town up in the Sierra Sierra Madres And we left because of poor economic policies that destroyed the local economy. And then the local economy couldn't sustain itself. And we came to the United States looking for opportunity: for a place to either, you know, find income, you know, create a business or whatever we could do to provide for ourselves. So because local jobs is important, making making sure that we have a strong economy that can continue to increase wages, provide health benefits, create a retirement for so that people can age in a dignified way. Yes, we need more local jobs, because if you can create a local employment opportunity where someone is close to their home, that means they get home for their family, Two: They also ---it's environmental way to do it. Right now, the fact that someone has to drive from for a full summer Elk Grove to Sacramento for work, that's just not good for the environment. You see the congestion, the poor, air quality, you know that that comes from it. But also it creates more unity between, you know, when we look at employers and community relations, who is supporting those local schools, the football teams, the, you know, all the arts locally? We need that connection.

With the Aggie Square project, we started off with all of those pieces. We wanted to make sure we weren't going to displace folks. And so immediately we said, we've got a time horizon to

start building affordable housing, to be able to have housing for those who are on the low income level. We also need to have a mixed income housing for folks who are clerical workers, who are teachers, who are the support staff that that can maintain the development. And we also have a shortage of market rate housing for, you know, the professionals.

If we don't do, if we don't figure out how to make this project succeed, then we will miss an opportunity to provide local jobs. And then our folks will have to leave their neighborhood. We want to make sure we have local jobs here.

6:05 Second, if we did nothing, we allowed the the research and development private arm of the University of Davi, the University of California, Davis, to go on its own, it could have some very dramatic effects, where not only the construction and transportation impacts on the on an area could be bad, but it also could create some major displacement where the cost of housing that had already been rising because of the pressures of the housing market, you know, on its own, would be exacerbated by the demand to hire local jobs.

A business will fill its need. And that's one thing that's important to understand---that if that facility opened up, they're going to need all of those workers. And if the, and if we don't do everything we can to increase the skill level of the community so that those local jobs are for local workers, then the business will fill those those needs. And those workers will want to live in an area close by because no one loves to be stuck in traffic, thus displacing people.

So it was for us, it was not a choice to leave it on its own or to not let it happen. It had to be. We had to figure out how do we create a community benefit agreement that addresses. Housing, that addresses transportation ,and, more importantly, how we look at it increasing and creating local job opportunities

Our result [of the community agreement] 20%, We made a mandate that 20% of those jobs would have to be within the immediate zip code areas of that. So creating a requirement to hire locally at 20% and then get to a future goal of 25% meant that one in every four people would have to live in the area.

7:50 So on the second piece, as I said, we need to create a one stop job center so that we can look at the skill level, increase and provide a direct way for local folks to be hired. The first approach was on the construction side, and so we created an apprenticeship program as part of the requirement where we recruited local folks who wanted to learn the construction trade that would later on follow them in their career. And now you see, if you go down Stockton or Broadway, you see the construction happening...of...uih...and that is training a lot of folks who may not have had a college education, may not even had in a high school education. Some of them who are returning from, you know, from the correctional system, many veterans are folks who, you know, wanted a job in the construction training area. But those are apprenticeship programs for people in the area.

As soon as that place, this research and development place opens up, we need to be ready. And we're in that process now of making sure that we have the right systems in place so that we're training not only the technical people, say, for the jobs of of labs, of nurses, folks who have the technical, but also the supports staff, people who don't want to do that work and want to go into, you know, the clerical work of running an organization that don't require a four year degree. So, you know, we could talk a lot about about that.

9:12 But I want to focus back on what economic development is about. It's about creating a strength, resilience for a community, for a region, creating economic mobility, and thinking about that early on so that, as families think about, "Maybe I start off as a clerical worker, but maybe I want to become, you know, a nurse or a manager in in this area and become, you know,

a CFO for this area.” So we want to make sure that when we have these discussions, how do we make on and off ramps for folks?

9:46 And lastly, and I will I won't say 'lastly'---to conclude---a big piece was, “What does this mean for our neighboring schools and the pipeline for our students?” So we will always need to to fill the attrition of jobs, but we want to make sure that our students feel like this is a pathway for them, that that they see themselves as the leaders in the innovation here. And we're talking about South Sacramento, Glen Elder, Oak Park, you know, Fruit Ridge Manor, Tahoe Park. We want to make sure that that the workers there reflect the community and by starting off with the school. So we're engaged with the schools right now to start thinking about what's the career pathways, not just for the health and science, but for everything that it takes to run a research institution down to the attorneys, to the CFOS, you know, the human resources folks. Those are all great careers. So let me stop there, Professor Tutschka, and and see if you have questions about of that approach. But I guess I'm going to ground it on: You know, it's about creating opportunity and thinking about opportunity for those in the community.

### **10:54 Monicka:**

I hear that you're committed to economic development. And what I think is really interesting is you're asking us to think about economic development in this kind of way.

If there are private developers with capital who are pursuing profit, who are proposing to enter into a working class neighborhood that has underutilized space, we need to think about that development and how it's implemented in a certain way. If we bring empowered government, working class community members around that development to the table, then perhaps we can ensure proper implementation. And by proper implementation, you're talking about a big research hub surrounded by affordable housing, middle class housing, and market rate housing. You're thinking about a research hub where the community members who might be working class and low skill have a real shot at getting a job at the research hub because research hubs have all kinds of jobs that they need to be filled. You're talking about ensuring that there are job centers around that hub, that trained community members for the jobs that that research hub needs. You're thinking about how to structure jobs within that research hub so that a working class person who might start, you know, at minimum wage has an opportunity to rise and maybe become a manager, has opportunities to develop different skills to get promoted. And you're also thinking about schools in the in the local communities around that research hub and how to plug those schools to the research hub so that students who might want to explore what's going on in that research hub and perhaps create a career there have those possibilities. And that's a different kind of vision of a research hub than simply one where those at the very top are making a heck of a lot of money, and the community around that hub barely have crumbs.

### **MUSIC BREAK**

### **13:28 Monicka:**

My question here is, you know, sometimes deals are made, but then they're not implemented very well or the promises are kept. And working class folks will say, “You gave us all these promises, but they didn't last very long and you had to hire so many people to implement it. So the amount of money really left for us is 1/10 of what it was promised.” So how do we as residents in this area, as citizens of the community, as public officials, try to hold the deal, to make the deal stick and to hold people accountable if the deal doesn't stick long term?

**14:14 Eric:**

Sure, part of it was how we structured the deal. So a couple of thoughts.

One, if you just go to a business and you ask for, say, an immediate lump sum, umm, to support the the mitigating impacts, you might be selling yourself short. And, well, that was part of the deal, you know, because, you know, we did need an infusion of cash. And then the commitment from both the city, UC Davis and the private developer, you know, at first .

The community benefits agreement was draft as a city ordinance that could create legal litigation. And and here's where where the use of the courts is great because then it helps enforce the government and the private side by crafting a community benefits agreement that is legally binding and that can also be used. And we put it in an ordinance so that the public could go to the court and enforce the city, saying, "City, you're not doing what you have committed to". Right? So that that was part of the mechanics of how we enforce it.

But more importantly, what we said was, if we have to go to the courts, then it becomes an army, and then it becomes a fight between attorneys and who can afford the bigger attorneys. So what what was more important to us was how do we create, in the process, a dispute resolution process? So we don't ever get to that point. So we don't get to the point where it becomes confrontational with the community or in and the university, or the university and the city ,or the government or what.

How do we create a process that we're consistently moving forward because we know that this community benefits agreement will outlive my term on the City Council, it may outlive others terms because we hope that this is a long term anchor project for the community.

And in it [the agreement] requires a number of checks, participation from community members, from workers, and so that ,as we move forward, everyone is involved in the success of of this project. And when there, when there are questions or when there are disagreements, we created, you know, "okay, how do we resolve this dispute so that we don't get to a point where we're litigating each other?"

And I and I think that was a pretty novel idea that came about because we actually got into a lawsuit and it almost caused the project to fall apart. The community sued and then also a labor union sued.

But if we would have had no project and we would have had no opportunities to even fight over. So it was one of those where we,. As we got through this process, we realized we need to find ways so that we can work together in the long term. We know there will be disagreements. It's how, the question i: how do we resolve these disagreements so that it doesn't become, you know, two armies or three armies of attorneys fighting each other to resolve the dispute.

**17:21 Monicka:**

When you first said, well, people can take them to court, I thought, well, that means that victory will go to the more powerful lawyer. So I'm so relieved that there are these other mechanisms that are being brought in to resolve conflict and to have discussion, to implement and enforce this that may may take a lot of human power and labor, but might not require as much capital.

**17:45 Eric:**

And it does take time to your point. You know, in fact, you know, after our podcast, we have our our standing meeting with the community benefits agreement. And and that's that's, that's an

important factor. If you value ,if you value input, then it's going to take time. And if you value the fact that we don't want to spend time litigating or risking a project, then you have to, you have to make sure that we're we're addressing those questions head on earnestly and with with the point of how do we resolve it, not how do we win one person over another. Like, that's that, I think, that's been the point here.

**Monicka:**

Yeah. I think the more kinds of conversations you have that come to some resolution, the more you build trust with the community. And there is a lot of mistrust around developers and around the city. And so these are ways to start to regain trust, rebuild trust, so that more, even more ambitious projects can be successful in the future. So that sounds fantastic.

**MUSIC BREAK**

**19:09 Monicka:**

Let me turn quickly to the issue of affordable housing. I know that the city said , or the Sac Bee said that the city needs to build 17,000 units of housing for very low and low income residents this decade. And the Bee also said that you have a record of championing affordable housing, especially along the Stockton corridor. And so here's my question, and it's a question about, you know, can capitalism really, unregulated, unfettered capitalism really deliver on this need?

Um, you know, I think that developers have an interest in making profits and there's more profits to be made building less affordable housing on certain lots. And, you know, homeowners who are trying to build equity to pass on intergenerational wealth to their families, whether those are low income, middle income families, they also would rather have a more expensive housing project built because they will raise their home value. And so I have this feeling---I haven't done enough research on this (this isn't my area of expertise)--- that capitalism left to its own devices, is not going to provide those 17,000 units.

And so, you know, my question is, what is the role of a city and the state? I mean, should we really be advocating---folks who are social justice advocates here--for public housing, like really public public housing? Or do we ask taxpayers to help sweeten the deal so developers don't have to pay as much? Or do we penalize and, you know, impose rules to kind of force developers in some way to build affordable housing? Or do we do we become more lenient on SEQUA requirements? Or what do we do to get more public housing built? And is unregulated capitalism going to do it?

**21:04 ERIC:**

Well, I, here's one of those where---the reason we regulate the market is because the market will function as markets do. But the, but, you know, and here here's hopefully Doctor Wassmer from my master's class is paying attention that I listen. You do have negative externalities. The role of government, which is the bottom end of the Munger Triangle, Dr. Wassmer, is is is to make sure that we balance those, you know, that we make sure that we, you know, protect those, you know, that are in the very neediest. But at the same time, help us move forward.

And so when it comes to housing, the reality is almost all of the above, because here's the issue. If we only focused on the 17,000 extremely low income and and low income housing, then we would have completely not dealt with the issue for our our teachers are our Sac State professors, for example. And, you know, and and the clerical workers are, you know, grocery

workers like they don't meet the the that window of extremely low income and low income housing. So we do need that middle income housing, that mixed income housing.

And then, do, also, if if, as a government entity, we don't focus on where do we want...Where do we want our families as they grow their careers? Do we want them to only find opportunities out in the suburbs? And if we don't focus on on that type of market rate housing, then we're going to encourage sprawl. And the negative outcome of that was ,was that people lose their their life on the freeway, you know, and I mean that in time and literally as well.

So I think we one: we have to think about, okay, how do we ensure that we're, one, doing the things we need to like encouraging the state and federal government to push on more funding for the gap financing. Now the city in good times I advocated for and we were able to secure to fund our own gap financing and you'll see the construction projects down Stockton Boulevard now for mixed income housing. But the city alone can't do it. So this is where we do need the state and the federal government to help with the gap financing for nonprofit mixed income housing and affordable housing and all.

23:30 And then looking at land and where we can, you know, where the state and the federal government can come in and subsidize the what I call 'the wet stuff.' Nobody talks about the the actual, what it actually takes to build housing, which is a sewer or water electrical lines before you even put up a door. So this is where my engineering side, you know, comes in, where I'm you know, my obviously my passion is to build housing. But if you can't in these areas that were old commercial corners, they weren't they were built as highways. They weren't built as residential area. They're built to support a gas station, a dry cleaner, you know, maybe the occasional restaurant. But they weren't built to support, you know, multifamily housing. So we need to be able to look at, okay, how do we reduce the cost of that?

And if it's SEQUA reform that you're looking at, then then you also have to think about, okay, SEQUA got us to a place where no one questions that it was a protector of the environment. But, and so, when you start messing with with those laws, then you got to understand, okay, well, where in the in those aspects of the laws are you, could you pose risk to the to the public health? And where is the law being taken advantage of? So all of those pieces have to have to be looked at because there have been people who take advantage of them.

So and back to the point about, okay, how do we how do we move forward? Well, we have to be thoughtful about all those aspects. How do we meet that gap? And if we only look at public housing, which we do have our housing authority, they meet a particular role and they meet a particular need, but it costs almost half a million dollars per space if we build in that direction, you know. So, so but yes, they do fit a need and we should use them, but we should look at our nonprofit affordable housing developers as well. But the big issue that they come across is that gap financing. That's where government can come in to help fill the extremely low income and the middle income.

25:30 Do we need to have some some mechanisms, say, for the development community? Yeah, we do have some where they they pay fees into a trust fund. And it's a , it's one of those things where, you know, for those who are studying economics : "elasticity." At some point, you know, the the the the developer will say, "I will choose to go build in a different location. " So finding that elasticity and finding the point to where they decide not to build here then---because it's easy for them to go build in any jurisdiction that probably has much more relaxed regulations.

And then recognizing that we don't live in an island. Sacramento itself---its policies--you know, because we're surrounded by a number of other regions, we have to think, "Okay,

how do our policies linking with the overall housing market and knowing that we're going to see continued housing pressures moving forward?"

26:30 Lastly, I'll just say that, you know, we need to think about what kind of community we want in the future. So we should you know, for a long time, our housing policies were you had to build 15% of your income mandated for affordable housing, and then the rest could be, you know, your market rate housing. Well, what happened from that policy? That policy meant that we did build a bunch of apartments that were, you know, low income apartments.

But the only other product was a four bedroom, two and a half bathroom, three car garage homes, which were not an entry point for young families. And so we have to think about encouraging the construction development of smaller homes and smaller units. My wife and I first started off in a home that was a two bedroom house. You know, that that was the homes that many of the young families after we war to build. So thinking about housing policy can't just be myopic. We have to think about what is the global need.

### **27:31 Monicka:**

Well, wow, I just learned a tremendous amount and you really expanded my thoughts on this issue. And really honing in on this idea that there are a lot of, you know, first time homebuyers who are middle class families that want to take the plunge into homeownership. And we need to create a housing stock that they can afford and they can thrive in. It's not 50 or 60% of their income. So how do we build that stock? And then you also raise this issue that I hadn't thought of about the nonprofit sector and what role they have in building housing and how much the city can do to build that infrastructure the sewer, the water, the electricity that is going to create the conditions for developers to be able, even for-profit developers, to be maybe more willing to take the risk to build that kind of housing, whether it's affordable housing or middle income housing.

## **MUSIC BREAK**

### **28:43 Monicka:**

Welcome back, everyone. We've just been talking to Vice Mayor and City Council Member of District six, Eric Guerra, about housing and what role the government should play vis a vis housing. And some of the ways the government can be involved is in subsidizing the infrastructure. Another thing the city, the state and even the feds can do is provide gap financing and preferably gap financing for nonprofit, affordable housing developers so that they have that money that they can use to build the housing that we need. We heard Eric talk a little bit about the pros and cons of SEQUA, because on the one hand, we want to make sure that whatever is built is built in an environmentally conscious way. And yet we know that there are lots of people who use SEQUA in a way that is legally mischievous to either ensure that something isn't or is built according to their private interest. And finally, we hear a little bit about mechanisms that perhaps can be used to compel developers to help cities have the funds that they can then allocate for a diverse housing stock. And we worry, though, about whether if those fees are too high, will the developers just pull up stakes and develop an area that doesn't have those kinds of fees attached to them?

30:10 So I think what we are hearing from the Vice Mayor and City Council Member from District 6, Eric Guerra, is that things are really, really complex and talking about housing with this kind of complexity is really hard and really fulfilling.



I've got a final question, and this is the sort of the, you know, the elephant in the room. And I know a lot of people shy away from talking about this topic because it just seems like an issue that has no near or even a long term solution. And that's the the unhoused population in Sacramento. I know the long term solution for that is more housing, but there are also short term things that we need to think about. And I know you supported the tiny home project, the "stay safe community," and there was some pushback from from residents around that community. So what are your reflections on how we help in the short term? Because the long term is housing I suppose. But in the short term, what kind of measures we can can, how do we, on the one hand, find a compromise where we provide something that is adequate for unhoused people for the short term, and something that will not or will also be acceptable to NIMBYs who don't want an encampment in their backyard. What is the sweet spot there that somebody like me who wants to accommodate both of those angles, could rally behind and push, as a resident of Sacramento?

### **31:47 ERIC**

You know that this, you know, this issue is one that unfortunately has been ignored by by many folks for decades, for decades. You know, and you can go back to, you know, when Governor Reagan closed the mental health hospitals and didn't fund the regional centers. And nobody wants to return of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" or Nurse Crachett. Okay. I mean, I say that jokingly, but of course, we want people to be serviced with dignity, but they never funded the regional centers. And that set our counties up for failure. When we had deficits, major deficits in 92 Governor Pete Wilson, you know, to meet its state obligation put all the responsibility on the counties to provide mental health support and housing support so that the state could budget its its books by, you know, because of federal constitutionality. I get that. But it also meant that the localities who didn't have the infrastructure with regional centers now were tasked with the service providers. And then when you go back to our last housing crisis, Governor Brown and his action move, again,t all of the mental health services, the housing, the substance abuse, you know, services back down to the counties. Those multiple iterations of pressures on the localities that left each individual county, 58 counties, to figure it out for themselves.

And that unfortunate series of events have led to a problem that is affecting our entire state in every and everywhere in in the West Coast. And now you're seeing it across the country. But to the point where the courts have said, you know, we have a humanitarian crisis and that's why there are legal restrictions. So going back to your real question, how do we how do we find that solution?

34:00: Number one, I think that just tents on themselves, as we saw in the weather, you know, it just it's not it's not a safe solution, period. You know, it may be a solution. And that sounds controversial for the for for folks who are strong advocates for our in the house community. And don't get me wrong, I, look I lived in my car, you know, at the Wienerschnitzel parking lot. I know it. But I also know what the elements are like. You know, I remember when, you know, (in the abandoned ranch house we lived) when the roof blew off during the flood of 86, you know,

I mean, that that, I mean, so we need to make sure that we're finding space and what what has been the biggest challenge for a lot of localities is is just that---land and space---because when we had the housing crash in 2008 and and 2010 through 2012, a lot of local governments sold off their surplus land. So the only land that's available is private land. So, that means we have to go buy the private land, and it might be land that, at one point, the local government

owned---so at a higher price, I mean, we just got talking about the cost of housing and the cost of prices So the biggest challenge now is locations.

And when I talk to most residents, you know, they they they want the humanitarian

**Monicka:** and business owners.

**35:30 Eric:**

Yes. Yeah. And even business owners, you know, I mean, look, I've talked to a lot of business owners, you know, restaurant owners who also give food to them. But they just they would like them to not, you know, be on the front of their property. But but most folks want a humanitarian solution.

Where we are today, now, the city and the county have finally gotten into, again, a legally binding agreement. And, you know, for for those of us who have government,

**Monicka:**

is this through, is through Measure O?

**Eric:**

Well, the measure required it for it to go into effect. But whether Measure O would have passed or failed, we all, myself and a couple of Supervisors, recognized that we needed to have that agreement, whether it failed or passed. Like the success of us ever to resolve this means that cities and counties, counties that have the health resources and cities that have land use authority have to work together.

And that legally partnership agreement, now, helped us stand up some immediate shelters during the storm. So we saw the benefits already because we found a pathway to work together, a pathway for dispute resolution, and also because of the legality of it, a way to sue each other. But because that agreement has a dispute resolution process that we put in there, it helped us resolve our problems. And, and, and we were able to immediately house, I think it was 200 people who were in need because of the rising waters.

Now it's a short term solution. What we need to be able to do now is is have a better coordination with the state on their surplus property that they do have and find ways to access space so that we can prop up locations. We're working with motel, the motel industry that is dying slowly and and using those spaces because we do know that congregate shelter, many folks who are unhoused don't want to go to a congregate shelter. So we do know that retrofitting individual spaces where they can get their space, that the the the the dignity that they need, but also the support that they need. That's the next piece.

It's not just about housing. No one, someone who's living in the elements is not going to be able to move their, their condition, whether it's a physical condition or a substance condition or their focus if you don't have housing.

But we need to have the support services. So now we're working with WellSpace to provide and look at creating an acute center with the mental health and substance abuse and treatment to help people get back on their feet.

38:02 The last piece is, okay, you move people into a tiny home project ,into a triage place, but if we don't address the permanent supportive housing side of it (this is a to earlier conversation), where are they going to go? You know, they're going to end up back in their

situation. So ensuring that every city and every region is building their amount of permanent supportive housing is important.

Down by my house here, there's a motel that used to be a really bad place for drugs, prostitution, assaults---next to a gas station. We converted that into permanent supportive housing. I've never had an issue as a council member from it, and it's right next to a single family community. So one : highlighting the successes of permanent supportive housing is important because we need to have a pathway for those who may never be able to support themselves.

If anybody takes the time to read the report that comes from the point in time count, they'll see that the majority of people that are on the street are in their seniors. When I was on the street, I was 18. I was young. I had I was in and good health. I had all my mental faculties. And so for even even then, it seemed impossible. So now imagine if if you're a senior, if you you know, when I when I when you look at the report, many people are, you seniors as well.

And then early intervention, obviously, on mental health and substance abuse is something we've always talked about---So all of that, to say, a big piece, we can have a whole conversation about, but that needs to continue so that we we don't end up what we see now, a lot more young people coming into and into homelessness than we did before.

So all of that is to say the biig piece we could have a whole conversation about it. Multifaceted. I, I appreciate Sac State,'s you know, uh, education, because it's, I will honestly say, some people say, that, "you know, it's not the books that train you that its the Life experience," but it's both. And I will tell you that that the skills that I've learned here about how to break down some of these problems and talk about them, and so that it's not hyperbole. And, you know, while that may be politically expedient, I think it's important that we talk about all of that, how all of this is interconnected and be able to solve a solution.

40:21 The immediate thing we do need to find space. We need to find space so that we can set up locations. And that's been a challenge because the available space, you know, unfortunately is owned privately or sometimes unable to be used. We look at a site that would have been perfect in partnership with, St. John's, who's an expert in in helping, you know, women who are of substance abuse treatment and are homeless. But it was an old landfill that has methane exhaust coming off of it. And you can't have people on that. Right. You know, you don't want to you want to try to avoid doing any additional harm. So that that is our biggest challenge.

We do feel optimistic, though, that in this partnership agreement, the county is going to come up with an immediate 250 spaces and they're looking at another 500 that can triage people to move in and out. We have the challenge now of how do we make sure that we have a path for them as we move people out and and doing it in a coordinated approach. So our teams that are going to come out and talk to folks and in fact, as they're doing it today, is a licensed social worker. Sac State is part of that. They're helping us train the shortage of social workers, a peer that can help connect and help create trust, and then a housing specialist that can help identify where there is space. Where do we do have shelter space? Where do we do have vouchers? Where we do have housing so that at the point of contact, we're building a relationship with the person who's experiencing homelessness.

**Monicka:**

...a tremendous amount of detail and precise speech around this issue. And I do think that a lot of the times there is a lot of rhetoric, but there aren't concrete, umm, proposals being put forward. And I just appreciate the depth of your knowledge around this issue and the concreteness with

which you convey it and the rigor with which you are thinking about this issue, because it builds trust that elected officials do care and are really thinking hard about this.

Three takeaways that I got and there was probably 15 takeaways, but three are one, just the need for the need for space. Like if we want---we need space. Two: partnership between the city and the county is going to make it harder for the county to blame the city and the city to blame the county. So there's shared responsibility, shared accountability. And you talked a lot about just the diversity within the unhoused population. They're not one monolithic group and highlighting the fact that some people are going to need permanent supportive housing and and the state and and citizens are going to have to pay taxes to provide that housing for folks who are not going to segway back to a job. And this is our responsibility to human beings by virtue of their dignity

And highlighting these success stories because the news is always just framing the disaster around homelessness. But success stories where people do find housing in communities next to single family homes and those public housing facilities do not lead to prostitution or whatever the stories are that come up. So really revealing the dignity of unhoused people, how successful they can be as your neighbor, how important it is to live side by side with people who might not be in your same economic predicament. How much you can learn from folks who might be differently economically situated, and those positive stories and and the work that you're doing as now Vice Mayor and City Councilmember to get those spaces for people is just fantastic.

44:08 One last question, and this is a question that's really important to me. What can I do as just a resident to try to support efforts to advance the needs of unhoused people? Like, what should I be doing on a day to day basis to help with this effort? As someone who--- NOT someone who wants to just have homeless people disappear, and Segregate them. Separate but equal is not equal. Sorry. So I'm not interested in just pushing unhoused people somewhere else. But what could I do as someone who wants to successfully integrate unhoused people into my neighborhood and my community?

**Eric:**

I think that the first part is what I what I've learned when I went through my citizenship is that is being engaged , being an engaged citizen. I mean, that in the, in the in the residential terms. It is important to be involved in a community, it's important for you to understand where we are and what the complexities are. You know, it's probably more important than than following the national press and all the drama that's happening over there, because it's important for you to be able to have that dialog with your local elected official in a very earnest way, to avoid elected officials from moving quickly into rhetoric, which is unproductive and creates a bigger problem for us to be able to solve issues.

And I say that from a point of working with elected officials, for elected officials in a realm , and now being one. The power of citizens and the power of constituencies, the more that they're well informed, they can speak articulately about what, they, what's happening in how things are unfolding is going to help the decision making process. Wwhat voting is not enough.. It's important to be an engaged citizen in that, so that, twhen you have conversations with your elected officials and when you vote on initiatives, you're voting...,

you don't have to have a lot of money, if you're a donor and you've got money, hey, you're a Sac State and you did well, you know, *pitch in a little bit here*. You know, these service providers are doing a lot and many [unhoused people] are are escaping situations , many of the

women with children who end up on the street are escaping domestic violence. They their only place of housing was with their their perpetrator. So if you've got a little extra cash, you know, to support, say, the Family Justice Center, which, by the way, is almost almost exclusively Sac State alums on the board. You know, I will say you help them out, you know, and and then, you know, don't let the issue, you know, become binary and and understand that it will take time.

**Monicka:**

Kristina is there's something else you'd like to add before we close or anything else you want to share, and then I'll ask Eric if you want to share anything at the end? No, Kristina, you're all set. You gave me the thumbs up. Eric, is there something you want to tell the our listenership, and then I'll close us out?

**Eric:**

Well, let me just close by saying thank you to Kristina and Monicka for for this opportunity. But more importantly, thank you Sac State and all of the faculty and staff who who are creating a future for people. I feel that there is very few entities around ,not only, you know, in our region, but in the country where in less than a generation, an institution of people who care move people out of abject poverty, out of hunger, into an opportunity, into prosperity, the middle class and and beyond. And that's Sac State. I've seen it happen so often. It's so empowering, so uplifting. And to me, I will forever be grateful to such a great university. So with that, I'll say thank you and go hornets and stingers up.

48:14

**Monicka:**

That was a phenomenal way to close. I share that. That love of Sac State and all the faculty and staff and administrators who make this place so empowering to students. And I feel so lucky to be around students who are teaching me things every single day. So with that, thank you for listening, everyone. We hope our ongoing conversations sparks understandings, empathy and motivation to join the struggle for a better future for all.

You just listened to the 'Building Justice' podcasts. The information contained in this podcast represents the views and opinions of the hosts and the guests and doesn't necessarily represent the views and opinions of Sav State or CRISJ. Take care, folks.

**Outro Music Lyrics**

No more penalties and no more wars. Based on the actions. Now, time for "Building Justice," "Building Justice." Time for building justice, justice.