# CHICO FIRST! Unity, Action, Vigilance.

Every Chico resident is entitled to enjoy personal safety and quality of life. This means freedom from violence, threatening conduct, and fear for the health and safety for yourself and your loved ones. Each of us is entitled to security for our property, and general respect and care for our public assets, including the streets, sidewalks, bike paths, public parks and waterways that course through the soul of all that is our beloved Chico. Historically, Chico has been a small farming and college town that offered both safety and quality of life in good measure. These are some of the most precious assets we can possess. This is our Chico heritage, and it is time to reclaim it.

Today, we live in a time in which available government resources have been limited by the mismanagement of perhaps well-meaning, yet ineffective policy makers. We have come to depend upon our government agencies to do the things we all agree need to be done, and we pay our taxes to get these things done. Thereby, we have provided ourselves with police, firefighters, courts, and means of management of our public utilities: roads, sewers, power and water. But our government agencies are also doing things which may not be so universally accepted as essential. Sometimes it seems our leaders take care of themselves before handing out the leftovers to the rest of us.

Perhaps we have lost our perspective regarding the proper relationship between government and citizens; after all, the government works for people, not the other way around. Our first priorities must always be determined by a measure of what is essential to the health and safety of all citizens, and in support of the quality of life available to every resident. Most would agree that protecting public safety and quality of life are the most essential duties of government agency. It is upon these principles that citizens lend their support to their government representatives.

In many ways, we now find our community in a deplorable state. Crime is increasing and ever present, with the lawless and rowdy becoming ever more emboldened by our inability to effectively enforce our laws, or to insure personal accountability for lawless and offensive conduct. We find ourselves feeling sad and angry as we look upon what has become of our city, frustrated by the continued downward spiral of our safety and quality of life, while hearing the constant refrain from government officials that they just don’t have the local resources or support from State and Federal agencies to do any better.

In times of crisis, two things naturally occur. People generally come to the aide of those in most need. We render them first aide, we feed them, shelter them, and try protect them from further injury. We do these things despite the costs of personal inconvenience and expense. This effort comes from a spontaneous responses by individuals to catastrophes; people helping people, motivated by compassion and empathy for the welfare of other humans.

Then we begin to rebuild. This takes widespread cooperation. As we progress from restoring essential services and infrastructure, we begin thinking about not just how to restore things to their original state, but also how we can make things even better than they were before the catastrophe hit.

While Chico is still a fine place to live, with many natural resources and a small town culture of friendly people, it is also blighted by crimes of all kinds. In addition to the most serious personal and property crimes, we find illegal campsites along our waterways throughout the city, with human waste, garbage, rotting food, soiled clothing and household trash, bicycle parts and discarded syringes strewn around them. As we travel through town, often with our children in tow, we witness open drug use, aggressive panhandling, filth, violence, and other signs that our civil order is breaking down. We need not accept this condition as a “new normal”. It is a crisis, a catastrophe that has not yet passed, and we can respond to this crisis as we do with all others: with Unity, Action, and Vigilance.

We are unified by the idea that we live in a civil society, with laws, rules, and morality. The personal virtues required to live with others by observing these social norms is a value that is deeply engrained in our history and sense of community, and are widely accepted as duties of citizenship.

We understand that we exist as part of a community, feeling pride, love and affection for the place where we live and our own place within it. Because of these roots, we feel we belong to something, that this community and all of the community assets we cherish are ours as much as any other’s. From these roots, we branch out into the varied and diverse activities and organizations that make up the entirety of the City we call Chico. That affection and pride is offended by the experience of seeing individual conduct and other blights that reflects opposite attitudes; disrespect for other people, our environment, and our community. You don’t have to break the law to be disrespectful, but lawlessness is the highest form of disrespect.

When our property is taken or our safety is threatened, among the other strong emotions that arise is the moral offense of disrespect. This leads to anger and frustration, made worse when we look to our public agencies for help and justice, and we find they are not there. We can do better, and unless we are prepared to accept that Chico is not deserving of our respect, we must do better.

It is time for the citizens of Chico to come together to consider the health and safety of our city to be a top priority, to put Chico First! Chico should be first in public safety and first in quality of life. I think we are unified in that desire, and increasingly we are speaking up and taking action. By communicating and coordinating our activities across the many diverse people and organizations in our community, we can increase the scope and effectiveness of our efforts to recapture the ideals of our lovely city.

Our method is direct action, both as volunteers for the various projects already underway and those being imagined, and as advocates for policies and government action consistent with our goals. Through ongoing vigilance we can identify the most critical issues, and insure that we don’t lose the ground we gain.

This is the intended meaning of the following words: **Chico First! Unity, Action, Vigilance.**