



Diocese of El Paso

Catholic Pastoral Center

September 18, 2017

Senator José Rodriguez
Commissioner David Stout
City Representative Alexsandra Annello
Rev. Rafael Garcia, SJ
Mr. Max Grossman
Dr. David Romo

Dear Senator Rodriguez, Commissioner Stout, City Representative Annello, Father Garcia, Mr. Grossman and Dr. Romo:

The tapestry of neighborhoods that make up downtown and South El Paso, such as Segundo Barrio, Chamizal and Duranguito, is an important part of the cultural and religious heritage of the Catholic community in El Paso. Our community of faith continues to sustain a vibrant network of support for families, migrants and the poor there.

I have watched the events of the last several months in Duranguito, and last week in particular, with increasing concern. I am saddened that the situation has fallen into a lamentable state of increasing tension and mutual mistrust.

In the midst of these tensions, all El Pasoans are called to contribute to the common good of our community and to the flourishing of our city and families. Together with the residents of our historic neighborhoods, all of us have a stake in the future of El Paso and Duranguito. In his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis notes that there is “a need to protect those common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of ‘feeling at home’ within a city which includes us and brings us together.”

I have asked Mayor Margo to recognize the importance of an open and respectful process to ensure that all the stakeholders can be part of the solution. My letter asks him to take positive steps to guarantee the safety of those who continue to organize in Duranguito and to secure the properties that have been damaged to ensure their structural integrity. I have heard unfair characterizations of the intentions of those pained by the potential loss of Duranguito and have asked to Mayor to do all in his power to end this.

I also ask you to be respectful in your public comments regarding the Mayor and city officials in the interest of civil dialogue. Clearly some kind of development will be necessary for the future of Duranguito. The question appears to be how the desires of those who seek to preserve its rich heritage can intersect with those who are able to pursue the next chapter in its history.

Be assured of my support and prayers for you as you work to build a community that respects and integrates the culture of the residents of our historic neighborhoods, their aspirations and their potential.

Sincerely,

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Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz, DD
Bishop of El Paso