



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: October 11, 2022

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO PREVENT, ADDRESS, AND SEEK AN END TO HOMELESSNESS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego has made significant investments in programs and services to prevent people from falling into homelessness and put them on the pathway to stable housing if they find themselves without a home. On October 19, 2021 (15), the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved recommendations included in a Board Letter entitled *Compassionate Emergency Solutions and Pathways to Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness in East County* and broadened the scope of the Board Letter to the entire region. This action authorized County staff to identify appropriate locations for emergency housing options, develop a program with flexible funding to address barriers to housing stability, enhance outreach and case management with the addition of six social workers, and improve data collection and analysis countywide.

Following this action, the County's Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) has had an opportunity to put those Board directives into action. HSEC has led efforts to resolve a large encampment at North Magnolia in Unincorporated El Cajon with numerous partners, including the Department of Public Works, Department of General Services, Homeless Assistance Resource Team, Behavioral Health Services, Psychiatric Emergency Response Team, the Sheriff's Department and various community partners. For two months, these teams were deployed to the North Magnolia encampment to address the concerns of local residents and businessowners and resolve critical health and safety risks. A collaborative approach with several County departments has connected encampment residents to housing and resources.

Based on the directive to create emergency housing solutions, the County continued to build on their existing outreach efforts with the launch of the North Magnolia Safe Parking Program, the first of its kind in the unincorporated area of San Diego County. The Safe Parking Program provides 17 spaces that accommodate individuals and families experiencing homelessness and who have an operational vehicle with a safe place to park and stay overnight while they seek supportive services and housing. Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities

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contracted with Dreams for Change to operate this program. They are a local homeless service provider with well-established expertise in the operation of safe parking solutions. This program has been operating at full capacity since its launch in mid-August.

In Fiscal Year 2021-22, HSEC's East County outreach and case management team completed over 1,900 engagements with individuals who reside in East County, collected 363 self-sufficiency applications in the field during outreach and connected 118 individuals to housing as well as other resources. HSEC is also establishing a Specialized Funding for Imminent needs program projected to be operational by November 2022. Lastly, HSEC programs such as Housing and Disability Advocacy Program, Community Care Coordination Programs and Housing Our Youth serve East County specialized populations who are at risk or experiencing homelessness. These programs serve persons with disabilities, veterans, severely mentally and physically ill, transitional aged youth and justice involved individuals by connecting them to housing and other resources.

Although these intense efforts successfully connected many of our most vulnerable to housing and other resources, there is a need to do more. The County recognized this by officially declaring homelessness a public health crisis on September 27, 2022 (21). By leveraging partnerships, the County can prevent and seek an end to homelessness, focusing on evidence-based solutions. Such solutions include the use of sleeping cabins, sprung shelters, recreational vehicle (RV) camping, safe camping, and similar shelter options. This request seeks support for recommendations to promptly address the public health crisis of homelessness through a County purchase of sleeping cabins or sprung shelters to be used by partner organizations to shelter our region's homeless population.

Recommendations in this board letter would also encourage private organizations committed to addressing homelessness to bring their innovative solutions forward and work with the County on this effort. These actions will help make meaningful change and effectively close gaps currently existing for those unable to secure shelter.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON AND VICE CHAIR NORA VARGAS

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to explore the feasibility of purchasing sleeping cabins or sprung shelters for partner organizations to place on their properties for use as shelters for people experiencing homelessness and return to the Board in 30 days. This exploration should include stakeholder input sessions to determine need, interest, and capacity of local organizations to utilize sleeping cabins.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop criteria necessary to site County funded sleeping cabins, sprung shelters or similar shelter options on non-County properties and return to the Board in 30 days.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to engage local private companies that have new and innovative solutions to address homelessness and explore public/private partnerships between the County and such entities interested and capable of providing innovative approaches to end homelessness and return to the Board in 120 days with an update.

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4. Find that the proposed actions are not a project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378 and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed actions may have a significant effect on the environment.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The cost of living and housing prices continues to increase in our region leaving many families in our region at risk at homelessness. To address the varied needs of San Diego County residents at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, it is imperative we explore additional actions to ensure a healthy, safe, and dignified environment for all. Identifying additional actions further emphasizes the County's compassionate approach to addressing homelessness by exploring partnerships with organizations to increase shelter capacity and keeping unsheltered residents safe from the dangers associated with living on the streets.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Working with private entities to site sheltering options on their properties and in the development of public/private partnerships to create innovative approaches to addressing homelessness will result in sustainability enhancements in terms of health/wellbeing, equity and environment. Sheltering people in emergency shelters with necessary infrastructure will reduce waste left in public spaces, thereby protecting the environment and water resources. Additionally, living on the streets is connected to health disparities and providing shelter will protect the health and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness. Finally addressing homelessness through public/private partnerships will provide just and equitable access to County services and build resilience in the vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There may be future fiscal impacts based on recommendations from today's action. Funding for the costs will need to be identified; HHSA will monitor its budget and return to the Board with mid-year action to adjust the budget as necessary and/or incorporate future budgets as funding becomes available. Staff will return to the Board for consideration and approval of any other future fiscal impacts that may result from the recommendations. Upon return by staff, funding for future costs will need to be identified by the department and will proceed once identified. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

Providing additional sheltering options and programmatic partnerships with private entities will beneficially impact our communities and businesses. These efforts will ensure that the business community has an environment where they can thrive, where workers feel safe, and families feel welcome.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego region faces a growing housing crisis where inflation and lack of wage growth is driving up rent and home prices, forcing displacement of households and contributing to historic

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homelessness rates. Since January 2021, the County has undertaken several major initiatives to intensify its efforts to address the region's ongoing homeless crisis. These actions include the creation of a new Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities to focus our efforts on preventing and reducing homelessness in San Diego County. We have also acted to address the issue of homelessness using a compassionate approach to assist the regions unsheltered populations and officially declared homelessness a public health crisis. The Board dedicated \$85 million in federal stimulus funding to homeless solutions, including housing, low-barrier shelters, acquisition of facilities and wraparound services, expanding the Regional Homeless Assistance Program vouchers, and local rental subsidy program. Additionally, we are working to identify and implement locations and compassionate emergency housing options such as the North Magnolia Safe Parking program, developing flexible funding programs to address barriers to housing stability, and implementing a pilot shallow rental subsidy program focused on preventing our senior populations from becoming homeless.

Despite our efforts, the County continues to experience challenges in managing regional homelessness. The Regional Taskforce on Homelessness (RTFH) reported that cities across the County are seeing increases in homeless activity, a clear indication of the need to get people off the streets and into shelters.

Community cooperation through public-private partnerships can become the key to success in reducing homelessness and improving conditions for this vulnerable population. By coming to the table with open minds and willing hands, government, community organizations, and the private sector can create a system with effective solutions that works for our most vulnerable community members. Today's action directs County staff to explore the purchase of sleeping cabins, sprung shelters, or similar solutions, partner with interested organizations to put the shelters on their property, and develop a siting criteria for interested partners as a guiding tool for organizations desiring to partner with the County on this initiative. It also directs the Chief Administrative Officer to leverage the technology and creativity of local companies interested and capable of providing innovative solutions to address homelessness such as improved access to services and shelter. This set of recommendations has the potential to have the greatest impact on the short and medium-term by making shelter solutions available to partner organizations in a quick and effective manner.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Today's actions to direct the Chief Administrative Officer to 1) explore the feasibility of purchasing sleeping cabins or sprung shelters for organizations to place on their properties for use as shelters for people experiencing homelessness; 2) direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop criteria necessary to site sleeping cabins or sprung shelters on non-County properties; 3) engage local private companies that have new and innovative solutions to address homelessness and explore partnerships between the County and such entities interested and capable of providing innovative approaches to end homelessness are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15262 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Section 15061(b)(3) is applicable because it can be seen with certainty that this action has no potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. At this time, the only action is to explore the feasibility of purchasing sleeping cabins or sprung shelters for use on non-County property. Staff will return to the Board for direction and approval to potentially move forward, make changes to, or not move forward, at which time the

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appropriate CEQA will accompany any future Board actions. Section 15262 is equally applicable because the actions before the Board include feasibility analysis and design for possible future actions that does not commit the County to any definitive course of action. Subsequent actions would be reviewed pursuant to CEQA and presented to the Board for consideration prior to implementation or use of any acquired property.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the County of San Diego's vision of *Live Well San Diego* and align with the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and Strategic Initiatives of Equity by providing dignified living environments to communities and improving the well-being of our residents and environments.

Respectfully submitted,



JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A



NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, First District