

DATE ISSUED: November 7, 2002

REPORT NO. 02-265

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
Agenda of November 13, 2002

SUBJECT: Short-Term Transitional Housing Program for Displaced Seniors

SUMMARY

Issues -

1. Should the City Council approve a one-year renewal (January 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003) of the transitional housing program for displaced seniors, contingent upon identification of funding, and continuation of case management services from the County of San Diego?
2. Should the City Council direct the City Manager to identify funding sources, in partnership with the Housing Commission, Centre City Development Corporation and the County of San Diego, for the lease and operational costs associated with a transitional housing facility for displaced seniors?
3. Should the City Council authorize the City Manager to enter into agreement with the Housing Commission to master lease downtown SRO Hotels?

Manager's Recommendations -

1. Approve a one-year renewal (January 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003) of the transitional housing program for displaced seniors, contingent upon identification of funding, and continuation of case management services from the County of San Diego.
2. Direct the City Manager to identify funding sources, in partnership with the Housing Commission, Centre City Development Corporation and the County of San Diego, for the lease and operational costs associated with a transitional housing facility for displaced seniors.
3. Authorize the City Manager to enter into agreement with the Housing Commission to master lease downtown SRO Hotels.

Other Recommendations - None.

Fiscal Impact – The City’s cost to continue the current level of service for an additional twelve months is approximately \$191,000. It is anticipated that San Diego County will provide case management services at its expense, and Senior Community Centers, a non-profit agency, will administer the program without additional City funds. The City, in partnership with the Housing Commission, Centre City Development Corporation, Senior Community Centers and the County of San Diego will continue to pursue funding sources for the \$191,000 housing costs.

BACKGROUND

Senior Community Centers (SCC), a non-profit agency located in downtown San Diego provides services to seniors 60 years of age and over, and has reported a dramatic increase in the number of new homeless seniors requesting services on a daily basis. In the year 2000, their center provided social services to 142 homeless seniors. In 2001, they served 232 homeless seniors. During the first nine months of 2002, they have already passed last year’s total number, serving 256 homeless seniors. Other agencies serving the homeless population echo that disturbing trend, reporting crisis level increases in the number of seniors seeking their services.

In light of this growing problem, a Short-Term Transitional Housing Program for Displaced Seniors began operations on January 1, 2002 through a collaboration among the City of San Diego, San Diego Housing Commission, Centre City Development Corporation, County Aging and Independence Services, Senior Community Centers, San Diego HOT Team, San Diego Reach, and Travelers Aid Society.

DISCUSSION

Short-Term Transitional Housing Program:

In the current calendar year, the San Diego Housing Commission master leases 35 rooms in two downtown SRO hotels, with a \$168,000 contribution from the Centre City Development Corporation. The County’s Department of Aging and Independence Services provides case management services, contracted through Senior Community Services, to 20 of the 35 program participants through December 31, 2002. The San Diego HOT Team, San Diego Reach, and Travelers Aid Society provide placement and case management for the remaining 15 program participants. The City’s Homeless Services Program is responsible for overall program oversight.

In addition to case management services, all program participants are eligible to receive day center services at the SCC congregate meal and health center located at 9th and Broadway – these services include: physical and mental health screening and services, congregate and home-delivered meal programs, socialization opportunities, transportation assistance, legal counseling, and referrals to adjunct services.

The first ten months of the transitional program for homeless seniors yielded outstanding results. Of the 101 program participants case managed by Senior Community Service Centers, 16 are still in the program. Of the 85 that have moved on, 54 have moved into stable living environments. The attached program summary (Exhibit A) compiled by Senior Community Centers details program outcomes for the first ten months of operation.

The immediate problem facing the program is that current funding is about to expire. Without additional funding for the shelter costs, as well as a commitment from the County to continue case management services, the program will end on December 31, 2002.

Assisted Living Program for Frail Elderly:

According to Senior Community Centers staff, the recently completed needs assessment funded by Alliance Healthcare Foundation, indicates that 76% of the 136 homeless and near homeless seniors surveyed reported at least one health problem that limits their daily activities, and 50% reported having four or more physical limitations. Some of these people are so disabled that they cannot walk the length of one block, bathe themselves, or perform other necessary daily activities. These individuals are not physically able to participate in the transitional housing program.

In light of this, SCC staff is in the process of developing a program for the frail elderly. They are identifying local senior care providers interested in providing assisted living services to homeless seniors. The program will include 24-hour supportive services, all meals and additional case management services. The average length of stay for people placed in the assisted living component is anticipated to be approximately one month. During this time, a case manager will work with the client to evaluate Social Security and other benefits, medical needs, and permanent housing options.

The nature of this program is more intensive than the transitional program and is more costly. It is estimated that the cost per client will approximate \$2,000 per month. This compares to \$475 per month for the transitional program, which does not include meals and 24-hour care.

Program Options:

With the goal of preventing a break in service or a permanent end to the program, staff from the City, Housing Commission, County, Senior Community Centers and others have come together to identify service options and funding sources. Staff also coordinated with the Mayor's Senior Advisory Board.

The working group developed four options (Exhibit B is a Summary of Program Options):

Option A – Current Level of Service for One Year of Independent Living Program

This option provides housing for 35 independent living clients in SRO hotels for twelve- months. The estimated cost of housing is approximately \$191,000, which is \$23,000 more than the current year cost for the same level of service. The increase is due to anticipated rent increases.

Option B – Current Level of Funding for One Year of Independent Living Program

This option provides housing for 31 independent living clients in SRO hotels for twelve- months. The estimated cost of housing is approximately \$168,000, the same level of current year funding. The number of clients has been reduced from 35 to 31 to maintain the existing funding level.

Option C – Current Level of Funding for One Year of Independent and Assisted Living Programs

This option provides housing for 18 independent living clients in SRO hotels for a twelve- months. In addition, it adds housing for three assisted living clients at a senior care facility over a twelve-month period. The estimated cost of housing is approximately \$167,000, which is \$1,000 less than the current year cost.

Option D – Current Level of Funding for Six Months of Independent and Assisted Living Programs

This option provides housing for 35 independent living clients in SRO hotels for six- months. In addition, it adds housing for six assisted living clients at a senior care facility over a six-month period. The estimated cost of housing is approximately \$170,000, which is \$3,000 more than the current year cost.

Important Note: All options are contingent upon the County of San Diego providing case management services at its expense throughout the program period.

Funding:

The housing costs of the first year transitional program was funded by Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC). During initial discussions with CCDC, staff has been advised that the source of funds used for the current program has been designated for affordable housing by the City Council in August 2002.

We have not identified an alternative funding source to continue the program at this time. However, staff will continue to seek a funding source(s) with the goal of preventing an interruption of service.

Recommended Option:

With the rapid rise in San Diego's cost of housing placing a major strain on seniors living on fixed incomes, there is a need for both the short-term transitional and assisted living programs. However, due to the lack of a short term funding source, staff feels it prudent to recommend Option A, which provides for the current level of service for a period of one-year. If funding opportunities become available, staff would then return to Committee and the City Council proposing program expansion, which would likely include an assisted living program.

Long -Term Program Goals:

The long-term solution to homelessness within the senior population should be addressed from a multi-disciplinary prospective. The lack of affordable housing for very low-income seniors is the primary cause of homelessness among this population. The high cost of housing also exacerbates problems related to health, mental health, and nutrition. Therefore, providing safe, stable housing must be the first priority. Secondly, it is critical that this housing include services to properly address the medical conditions and level of functioning of the homeless seniors. To this end, the acquisition of a facility to provide senior-specific housing (multiple levels, including emergency, transitional, and independent) and a continuum of supportive services is under review by Senior Community Centers.

A long-term program would be more ambitious and costly than the level of service in the current transitional program. The collaborative, which is comprised of Senior Community Centers, Housing Commission, CCDC, County, City and others will continue to meet to develop programs and identify grants and other long term funding sources.

CONCLUSION

The current transitional housing program is considered to be highly successful and cost efficient. Addressing homeless problems through prevention is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Homeless Policy (000-51). A bed in a mental health facility costs an average of \$125 a day, supportive housing costs an average of \$25 a day and assisted living averages \$66 a day.

ALTERNATIVES:

Do not fund the second year of the Transitional Housing Program for Displaced Seniors.

Respectfully submitted,

Hank Cunningham
Director
Community & Economic Development

Approved: Bruce Herring
Deputy City Manager

Attachments: [Exhibit A - Short-Term Transitional Program Statistical Summary](#)
[Exhibit B - Cost To Provide Transitional Housing for Homeless Seniors](#)