



**OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER CHRISTOPHER WARD  
THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

DATE: July 19, 2017

TO: Honorable Committee Members

FROM: Councilmember Christopher Ward, Chair, Select Committee on Homelessness 

SUBJECT: Recommendations for an Immediate, Initial Response to the City's Unsheltered Crisis

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The number of unsheltered homeless people in the City of San Diego has jumped 18% from January 2016 to an estimated 3,200 people, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count (PITC) conducted by the San Diego County Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH). The PITC numbers provide an important snapshot of the region and confirm the crisis that many of us have seen in our communities over the past year.

The purpose of this memorandum is to recommend an immediate, initial response to the City's unsheltered crisis.

Temporary and Short-Term Approaches to Address Unsheltered Homelessness

 *Utilize Golden Hall and Qualcomm Stadium Practice Field for Interim Bridge Housing*

Bridge housing provides a safe and supportive residence to individuals who are in the service pipeline while they are assisted as quickly as possible in moving into permanent housing. Individuals recommended for temporary housing in these locations would be already identified in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and matched to permanent housing but are waiting for permanent housing to become available (this includes rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing).

It is critical that these two interim bridge housing locations be supported by Housing Navigation Services to place individuals into permanent housing as soon as possible. Additionally, participants at the sites must be supported by Case

Managers coordinated through CES to ensure that they are able to transition into permanent housing and become self-sufficient.

These facilities can be conditioned to operate with residential supervision, crisis intervention, security, meals, restrooms and showers. Program support services will be designed to emphasize and limit the maximum length of stay for homeless individuals in interim bridge housing to 90 days.

In addition to Bridge Housing, these locations will also seek to work as extremely low-barrier Interim Housing that will be targeted to those currently living in encampments, tents, and hand-built structures. It is anticipated that entry into the Interim Housing component will be facilitated through street outreach partners and the Interim Housing program will provide a safe place for those to get assessed by CES if not already in the system, and work with staff to immediately develop a housing plan. It is imperative that for those living in encampments, tents, and hand built structures who want to access shelter that the environment be low-barrier and accepting of pets, couples, and not have restrictions on sobriety.

Lastly, while these two new initial locations are explored and programs developed, the City must concurrently seek opportunities to expand capacity at its existing interim housing locations and encourage and assist service providers to do so as well.

#### *Expand Street Outreach to Focus on Engagement and Placement into Permanent Housing*

The City, in partnership with the RTFH and service providers, should expand its street outreach services to help people get off of the streets and into permanent housing. An effective street outreach program would encourage relationship building and include street-based education and outreach, access to interim shelter, survival aid, individual CES assessments, trauma-informed treatment and counseling, prevention and diversion services, information and referrals, crisis intervention, and follow-up support. This outreach and relationship building is especially critical for the city's growing homeless youth and young adult populations.

The City must expand health-related outreach efforts, and reinstate and grow the Resource Access Program (RAP) in the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. RAP is a paramedic-based surveillance and case management program that intercepts high-frequency EMS users. RAP seeks to reduce dependence on EMS and acute care services by linking individuals with appropriate resources for their underlying medical, mental health, and social needs. Since its inception, RAP has saved taxpayers approximately \$2 million in diverted public health costs, but currently there are no community paramedics dedicated to the RAP program. RAP staff can also operate as a CES access point to ensure those they contact who are experiencing homelessness get on a pathway to permanent housing.

The City should also explore the creation of a homeless mitigation team that can respond immediately to community/business concerns with those sleeping unsheltered and focus on connecting the individual to services rather than just moving the individual along.

Lastly, in addition to requiring a current Conditional Use Permit for the Neil Good Day Center, the City must explore expanding CES assessment services at the facility. The day center provides a critical opportunity for outreach workers to build relationships and connect individuals to resources.

#### *Expand of Safe Parking Programs and Care Zones*

According to the 2017 PITC, over 800 individuals were living in vehicles. Safe Parking Programs, such as the one currently operated by Dreams for Change in Kearny Mesa and Golden Hill, offer a respite for those facing homelessness by providing safe overnight parking (from 7pm to 7am) for qualifying individuals and families that are currently living in their vehicles and actively seeking housing.

Dreams for Change program requirements which can be replicated include a current driver's license, vehicle insurance, and registration. Program participants receive a special permit to display. Depending on the location, access to restrooms will be provided on-site with existing facilities as well as job training and case management. Enrollment and participation in such programs would be coordinated through CES.

The program should be replicated and expanded citywide and local non-profits, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, merchants, local business owners, the city and other government entities should cooperate to identify and provide safe parking locations for vehicle dwellers and/or collaborate on the implementation of the program.

The City should immediately explore the use of all city-controlled Park and Ride Facilities, Qualcomm Stadium, Sports Arena/Valley View Casino Center, De Anza, and similar locations for the Safe Parking Program. The City should consider the use of Oversized Vehicle Ordinance Revenue to support the expansion of the program.

Lastly, while exploring additional safe parking opportunities, the concept of Care Zones should also be considered. Care Zones would function as sanctioned areas which allow for temporary encampments and provide access to sanitary facilities, social services and security. These programs would also operate as a CES access point.

 *Expand Storage Opportunities*

The City-supported Transitional Storage (Check-In) Center provides clean storage bins and lockers to over 400 homeless individuals to temporarily store their belongings. The center offers a place for homeless families and individuals to safely store their personal belongings as they search for employment, attend class, or meet with a service or medical provider while freeing the streets of personal belongings and encampments.

The current facility has undersized storage bins and has reached capacity. The demand for storage space continues to grow. The City should seek additional warehouse space, expansion at Golden Hall, and/or a sprung structure at the city-owned property at 20<sup>th</sup> & B for additional storage opportunities. These expanded locations can also act as access points for CES since in many cases these services may be some of the only services those living unsheltered might access. It is critical to use these locations as engagement points as well as CES access points to ensure those accessing storage get on path to permanent housing.

I seek support for and feedback on the development of these suggested programs and request that the Committee direct Council District Three to work in partnership with the Office of the Mayor and appropriate City Department(s), San Diego Housing Commission, Office of the City Attorney, the County of San Diego, RTFH, and other regional partners to bring forward a funding request and implementation plan for City Council consideration.