



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember David Cohen

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 28, 2022

Approved

Date: 6/27/2022

SUBJECT: SOAR SITE EXPANSION PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct staff, in coordination with Council offices that do not currently have a SOAR site in their district, to evaluate additional options for future SOAR sites, including potential RV sites, as resources become available. Staff should consider locations that are not in close proximity to existing sites, or to sites proposed in the June 23 staff supplemental memorandum, and these sites should be prioritized for expansion of SOAR services.

BACKGROUND

I appreciate the work staff has done to expand the reach of the city's SOAR program, and to ensure that city services are reaching as many of our unhoused residents as possible. The services offered at these sites, from hygiene and sanitation to housing and shelter outreach, have gone a long way towards connecting unhoused residents to safer, more stable accommodations while also mitigating the environmental and health impacts of encampments; staff's recommendations for expanding the program will expand these services to crucial hotspots in parts of the city.

The supplemental memo from staff also provides an opportunity to look at where else we can expand the program to connect the greatest possible number of residents with services and resources. Currently, SOAR sites are concentrated in Districts 3 and 7, with multiple sites proposed for expansion in District 2. Evaluating options for SOAR sites in areas where encampments have grown large and entrenched but are not near existing sites would enable us to more effectively use the SOAR program as a tool for serving the unhoused and bringing them into shelter.

For example, in District 4, my office has visited and spoken with residents of at least two major encampments in Alviso; these residents are miles away from the nearest SOAR sites and have expressed a strong interest in the services provided by the SOAR program. Residents living near these encampments likewise expect that their communities should be kept clean and sanitary

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while we work to connect encampment residents with housing—and yet District 4’s encampments, along with those in other districts, still have not received any SOAR services. Council offices and staff should work in close coordination to determine whether such encampments would be appropriate for designation as SOAR sites, so that Council offices can serve as a voice for their unhoused residents and community advocates and staff can be made aware of sites where there is interest in receiving SOAR services.

The SOAR program has a proven track record of success in connecting unhoused residents with services and preventing cleanliness and pollution from becoming problems around encampments. As resources and funding become available, we should strive to expand not only the number of sites but also the geographical reach of the program and its services.