



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: QUICK-BUILD
EMERGENCY
INTERIM HOUSING

DATE: November 29, 2022

APPROVED:

11-29-22

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Accept Councilmember Cohen's memorandum
2. As part of the 2023-2024 Proposed Budget development process, direct staff to present a modified cost estimate for maintaining quality of life in neighborhoods hosting current and future interim housing communities that:
 - a. Reduces the walkshed for coverage of enhanced services to ~5 mins/0.25 miles
 - b. Includes "no encampment zones" within a similar radius, such as 1,000 feet
 - c. Repurposes some or all onsite security costs for BHC's and EIH's towards enhanced neighborhood services, as a transition from "security" to "stewardship"
 - d. Considers re-examining expenditures for those staff that either cannot provide visible outcome improvements (e.g. community liaisons) or present challenges with the contemplated tasks (e.g. vehicle abatement)
 - e. Considers employing formerly unhoused residents living in interim housing communities (with appropriate abilities) to help provide some of the contemplated enhanced services at the direction of a managing non-profit, consistent with our "San Jose Bridge" model, e.g.,
 - i. outreach to nearby encampments,
 - ii. cleanup the surrounding neighborhood,
 - iii. neighborhood patrols to notify police of safety concerns, and
 - iv. communication with neighbors, e.g., attending neighborhood meetings.
 - f. Incorporates other learning garnered from the pending Homebase study that can improve operations and reduce costs

DISCUSSION

With our vote today, Council reaches an important milestone: getting 1,000 quick-build units completed or under development by the end of 2022. What started as an innovative alternative to congregate shelter at the onset of the pandemic morphed into a scalable model that has already provided safe, dignified housing for more than 700 formerly unhoused residents, and includes flexible designs that could offer permanent housing as well. For the first time in many years, and despite rising homelessness generally, we've reduced unsheltered homelessness in our city - a result of our ability to quickly deploy modular interim housing. Getting interim housing built rapidly constitutes a life-or-death matter for many on our streets, and we must continue to accelerate and expand our work.

Yet, too often we encounter vehement community opposition rooted in concerns that interim housing will reduce public safety, attract encampments, and increase blight in their neighborhood. The data squarely counters such concerns, as staff's analysis shows that with regard to calls for police and most blight-related services, "... a majority of requests stayed the same or decreased after each site opened" (page 14 of staff memo). However, we can, and should, do more to demonstrate that interim housing communities make good neighbors, and align resources for enhanced neighborhood services with expectations.

Staff's recommendations and cost estimates for enhanced neighborhood services set us on the right path, but require refinement. First, we should explore reducing the cost and area for enhanced services to a five-minute walk/0.25 miles, while implementing "no encampment zones" within a similar radius (such as 1,000 feet). If we wish to get more unhoused people off the street through the construction of quick-build housing communities, we must encourage more neighborhoods to embrace the construction of EIHC's. They won't do so—and bluntly, shouldn't do so—if they see existing EIHC's surrounded by encampments. This program requires the "buy-in" of our community, and we don't get "buy-in" from ambiguous commitments.

We appreciate the concerns about the impacts of abatements. Those concerns—such as loss of property and increased disruption—can be mitigated by rapid (but sensitive) response before an encampment becomes established. Certainly, before an abatement of any encampment can proceed, **outreach efforts must include offers of available shelter or housing**, which may include an offer at the nearby EIHC should the individual's acuity match the EIHC service level. Given the relatively consistent availability of space in congregate shelters, this should not present an undue limitation, and the Ninth Circuit's *Boise* decision does not appear to require more.

We should also consider employing unhoused residents who are living in interim housing communities to steward and become safety ambassadors for the surrounding neighborhood, roughly resembling the successful Groundwrx program downtown, and in lieu of adding multiple costly City FTE positions. Through a partnership between Goodwill and LifeMoves, we already plan to employ residents of the Lot E/Guadalupe quick-build housing community to steward Guadalupe River Park as an extension of the SJ Bridge program and to supplement park maintenance. We should consider this model for other interim housing communities, for several reasons. Residents with lived experience become the most effective ambassadors for convincing others to accept housing and services. Providing able-bodied residents with a resume-building opportunity helps those able to continue on a path to self-sufficiency and future employment. **To be clear, participating in neighborhood patrols, clean-ups, outreach, or any other work will not be a condition of housing in any interim housing community, but rather an option for**

residents to earn an income, build a work history, and create a stronger sense of community.

Finally, we must acknowledge that significant overhead in the existing EIHC operational model - often, north of \$600,000 annually per site - for onsite security does little to actually improve safety. Neighborhood calls for police services actually drop after the construction of EIHC sites anyway (page 15 of staff report). Contracted security guards do not actually interrupt fights or confront potential predators; rather, they call the police when they see trouble. We should consider how we can transition some of these expenditures from “security” to “stewardship” -- employed residents, for example, can provide “eyes on the street,” call the police, and receive emergency training in the same way that contracted security agencies can.