



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Chappie Jones
Councilmember David Cohen
Councilmember Matt Mahan

SUBJECT: Homeless Funding
Transparency

DATE: December 1, 2022

APPROVED:

Recommendations

Direct the City Manager to develop a public-facing page on the City's website by the end of January 2023 that clearly and simply reports the various sources, expenditures, and outcomes of the City of San Jose's direct expenditures on permanent and transitional housing, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, and related services.

1. The public should be able to clearly and simply identify the sources of funding – whether local, state and federal—without interpreting bewildering jargon or navigating an alphabet soup of acronyms.
2. Each program/ initiative/ funding category (e.g. “permanent housing,” or “transitional housing”) should be identified, with some link to a definition of what the program does and who is served.
3. “Outcomes” must be described, rather than mere “outputs.” Outcomes should focus upon the number of people we're serving, housing, keeping housed, etc.
4. In parallel, staff should update relevant data on San Jose's open data platform (data.sanjoseca.gov)
5. Staff should update the webpage at least quarterly to reflect funding decisions and updated outcomes.

Discussion

“Show Your Work”

Homelessness is the crisis of our generation, in every large city in the Western United States. Everyone is intensely frustrated, and the public understandably demands accountability. Some will exploit that as an opportunity to point fingers, blame, and

demagogue. Whether to respond to justifiable demands for accountability, or to correct the factual record by those who wish to contort it, we're not making it easy for anyone to understand what we're doing, how we're spending resources, and the specific outcomes. In the words of every high school math teacher, "show your work."

As an example, the latest PIT count reveals that for the first time in many years (and despite rising homelessness generally), San Jose—with many partners—has reduced unsheltered homelessness in our city. That reverses a decade-long increase in that painful, grim measure. The shift in direction results from our ability to rapidly deploy transitional and emergency housing. During the pandemic, we leveraged \$17 million in state funding - paired with local, federal, and philanthropic dollars [- to construct three quick-build interim housing communities that have served more than 700 unhoused residents, 82% of whom remain housed after exiting.](#) In our homelessness prevention efforts, we've contributed more than \$9 million in partnership with Destination: Home for rental assistance to keep 97% of the hundreds of very vulnerable families stay housed a year later. We committed our share of Housing Authority vouchers to a countywide initiative to end family homelessness, and now 95% of our unhoused families are sheltered. We'll help thousands more through our more than \$200 million investment in permanent housing in recent years, in addition to the City's hotel/motel voucher program, rapid-rehousing, bridge housing, safe parking, and other initiatives. The public, policymakers, oversight agencies, non-profit partners, and the media should readily see this data, rather than having to dig for it in lengthy reports to Council or committees, to understand how public money is being deployed, and not.

Cities Under Fire

Over the last several weeks, local communities in California have taken fire for State homeless funding. This is curious, given that the State of California [still provides no ongoing stream of funding to cities or counties for the construction or operation of permanent, transitional, or emergency housing](#) for the unhoused. Moreover, less than 5% of California's record-setting surpluses over the last two years were allocated to homelessness, the top concern of Californians in every survey reported in recent memory. Nonetheless, Governor Newsom threatened to withhold the third round of one-time Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP) funding from California's largest cities and counties.

Senator Dave Cortese also fired off a letter to the City Manager seeking an audit of state funding used by the City to address the City's largest encampment in Columbus Park. City Manager Jennifer Maguire informed Senator Cortese that the State actually didn't provide any funding for that effort. In fact, no state funding directly supported the City's efforts to house any of the more than 190 encamped residents there; indirectly, we did place several residents in quick-build housing communities that the City built with state, City, and philanthropic funding two years ago. Maguire offered Senator Cortese the opportunity to have him or his team sit down with City staff to pore through the numbers, to understand, for example, how the Guadalupe River Park effort has been overwhelmingly funded with City dollars, and with City-authorized Housing Authority

vouchers. Rather than take the City Manager up on her offer, Cortese issued a press release on the day before Election Day, demanding an audit of all state and federal funding anyway.

Rather than waiting for state audits, press releases, and public skirmishes, let's affirmatively tell the public exactly how their dollars are being spent on homelessness, and what outcomes they're getting. It can only help all of us— as policymakers, implementers, and advocates—to better allocate those dollars to get people off the street.