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CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jacky Morales-Ferrand

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON THE SAFE PARKING PROGRAM**

DATE: September 9, 2019

Approved D. DSyL Date 9/9/19

SUPPLEMENTAL

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

On June 13, 2019, the Housing Department presented an update on the pilot program at Seven Trees Community Center to the Neighborhood Services and Education (NSE) Committee. The Committee referred the staff report to the full City Council for consideration with direction to bring forward recommendations for the safe parking pilot program for families at Seven Trees Community Center and Library.

OUTCOME

The City Council will provide direction regarding the safe parking pilot program for families and the use of Seven Trees Community Center as a safe parking location.

BACKGROUND

On October 16, 2018, the City Council approved funding in the amount of $250,000 to LifeMoves to operate a six-month Program for families with minor children at the Seven Trees Community Center and Library (Seven Trees). On March 26, 2019, the City Council approved an amendment to the agreement with LifeMoves to provide additional funding in the amount of $400,000 to expand the Program to two additional City owned sites until June 2021. The two additional sites target households without minor children. The contract amendment also included funds for the continuation of the family program at Seven Trees until June 2021.

LifeMoves began the Program at Seven Trees on November 1, 2018. The service rich Program can serve up to seventeen families per night. The Program operates on an overflow parking lot at Seven Trees for seven days per week from approximately 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. LifeMoves offers basic necessities and private security, while also providing personalized case management, employment development, and housing placement services.

ANALYSIS

Program Outcomes and Data

The following statistics for the Program is comprised of data collected from November 1, 2018, through July 31, 2019. A total of 58 families (96 adults and 107 minor children) were enrolled in the Program during that time period. Some characteristics of the families and children being served include:

- 48% are from single parent households and 53% are intact households.
- 70% of participants reported their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino.
- Eight families included pregnant women.
- 33% of children being served were under the age of five.
- School districts with the highest number of children in the Program include:
    - 17 in Franklin McKinley;
    - 12 in San Jose Unified; and
    - 10 in Alum Rock.

The primary causes for homelessness reported by families included: inability to afford rent, domestic violence, overcrowded housing, and rent increases. LifeMoves' priority is to engage participating families in finding the most suitable temporary (e.g., shelter) or permanent (e.g., affordable rental unit) option for each family. Between November 2018, through July 2019, 54 families have exited the Program. Much of the exits were to either shelters (23 families), a family or friends' residence (8 families), and/or a permanent housing opportunity/rental unit (12 families). During this timeframe, the average stay at the Program site was 41 days. Resources being offered to the families have been client-centered, including:

- 42 service referrals for vehicle assistance and/or repair were completed. Vehicle repairs include, but are not limited to, tire repairs, car battery replacements, smog fees, registration fees, and other minor vehicle repairs.
- 147 referrals for housing services were provided including housing assistance, housing search and placement, housing furnishing, and stable housing referrals.
- 55 referrals for employment services were provided to families and adults which included job search and readiness, completing job applications, attending job fairs, resume assistance, and writing cover.
- Other services offered including advocacy, basic needs (such as showers and food), bus passes, shelter referrals, childcare, educational services for children, benefits assistance (food stamps, social security applications, cash-aid), behavioral health, counseling, and legal services. Attachment A contains a video to a LifeMoves safe parking story. Attachment B contains a podcast with Silicon Valley Community Foundation about the LifeMoves Program.

Safe Parking Pilot Family Program Evaluation

Since receiving direction from the June NSE Committee, the Housing Department and LifeMoves completed the evaluation of the Program to determine whether it is serving families with young children in the best way possible. The evaluation consisted of:

- Examining participation rates;
- Feedback from participants; and
- Feedback from the program operator, LifeMoves.

One of the challenges for the Program has been lower participation than expected; the site has never operated at full capacity. The average nightly participation has been 4-7 families per evening which is less than half of the site's capacity. Families are not required to be onsite every night. Since the inception of the Program, LifeMoves contacted 689 families that were either on the waiting list for shelter or referred by a partner for potential enrollment in the Program. Of the families contacted, a significant number of families (303) were not interested in participating in the Program. The most common reasons expressed by families for non-participation were: inconvenient location, staying in a shelter or motel, alternate place to park, or currently parked near family/friends.

The Housing Department and LifeMoves staff also took direct feedback from homeless families participating in the Program. Positive feedback received about the Program included the access to showers, space for program meetings and celebrations, and access to the Community Center and Library programming. Also valued were assistance and connection to other needed services and support, such as childcare, counseling, and financial assistance. Some of the drawbacks heard from families were the lack of access to cooking facilities for meal prep, lack of privacy, and required vehicle moving during the day. Families also reported feeling unsafe or scared in the area around Seven Trees. Almost all of the families stated that they would choose to stay with family/friends or a motel if given the opportunity for the benefit of their children to sleep indoors.

Finally, the Housing Department conducted an internal analysis with LifeMoves staff about strengths and challenges of the Program. The strengths included:

- Support for families, including meeting basic needs, housing search assistance, benefits enrollment, and employment assistance;
- Access to community center, utilizing space for case management and reserving space for events for families such as monthly birthday parties for children; and
- Access to showers.
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The Program's challenges included:

- No access to laundry;
- No access to cooking facilities;
- Parking lot is very exposed and public;

- Required vehicle moving during the day;
- Safety concerns of families; and
- Families are currently staying on the parking lot periodically, often choosing to stay with friends/family or a motel if they have the opportunity.

Transition Families in Safe Parking to Motel Voucher Program

The Housing Department recommends transitioning the families in the Program to the new Motel Voucher Program (discussed as a separate item on this agenda). This transition would not occur immediately but it is anticipated that all the families would be move into a motel within two months. This would provide adequate time to complete the contract and identify motels willing to participate in the Voucher Program. After the Motel Voucher Program is launched, no new families would be enrolled to participate in the Safe Parking Program. LifeMoves will work with families currently in the Program to transition to the Motel Voucher Program. Any families who declined the Motel Voucher Program would be transitioned out of the Program, and assisted in finding other alternatives such as space at a shelter or referral to another safe parking site.

Based on the feedback and analysis cited above, motels are a better and safer option for families with young children for the following reasons:

- Healthier option for families with young children to sleep indoors;
- Access to private restrooms and showers;
- Families would have more flexibility (not have to leave in the morning or move during the day); and
- Access to a full array of supportive services and case management.

The contract with LifeMoves for the Motel Voucher Program is $1.9 million for a two-year program serving 60 households.

Seven Trees Community Center Location

The NSE Committee direction from June was to evaluate whether a family safe parking program was the most effective interim solution for families and to bring a recommendation to Council. While, the Housing Department recommends transitioning the families into the Motel Voucher Program, the Seven Trees Community Center could continue to operate as a safe parking location and serve single adults.

The safe parking program for single adults at Roosevelt and Southside Community Centers launched on May 15, 2019. The direction from the City Council was to operate these two additional sites with less services and optional case management. The two programs had a slow ramp up period by design to better understand need, site logistics and the demand for services. So far, Roosevelt is averaging 8-10 vehicles per night and Southside is averaging 10-12 vehicles a night.

LifeMoves hired one case manager to oversee both sites but based on the high demand for case management services, LifeMoves recently hired an additional case manager. As of late August, LifeMoves began enrolling more participates at both sites and anticipates both sites at full capacity (24 vehicles per site) by the end of September 2019.

Single adults are offered services on a voluntary basis and individuals are not required to work with a case manager. The cost is $150,000 a year per site to operate a safe parking program for single adults, with a target of serving 144 cars or RVs per year. The table below shows the budgeted funds approved in the amended agreement with LifeMoves for operation of safe parking at all three sites. The source of funds are the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and the Housing Trust Fund.

Site	**FY2019-2020**	**FY2020-2021**
Seven Trees Community Center	$250,000	$250,000
Roosevelt Community Center	$150,000	$150,000
Southside Community Center	$150,000	$150,000
Total	*$550,000*	*$550,000*

Keeping the Seven Trees site open for single adults would increase the number of safe parking spots for homeless persons in San José. In order to achieve this, multiple departments would need to coordinate their services to address the existing conditions in the neighborhood. On May 23, 2019, the Housing Department hosted a community meeting at Seven Trees Community Center to report back to the community on the pilot program and take input from residents. At the meeting, several residents expressed concerns about RVs parking in the area, illegal dumping, litter, and crime. These conditions were existing in the neighborhood prior to the start of the safe parking pilot program.

Seeking to address the issues raised by residents in the neighborhood, the Housing Department worked with multiple departments to provide additional immediate services and proactive responses to the area. For example, lighting was repaired, garbage cans were added and the parking lots of the Center were power washed. Also, the Anti-Litter Program proactively abates approximately 1.5 tons of trash in the area every other week. Parking control also started proactive enforcement in the area. The most recent data from across multiple departments showed no increase in crime, a decrease in illegal dumping, and the registration of nine vehicles from the surrounding area to the City's other safe parking programs at Roosevelt and Southside. If a safe parking program were to remain at Seven Trees Community Center, the City would continue to provide a coordinated response and resources to address the conditions in the neighborhood.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The Housing Department will bring an evaluation of the safe parking program at all three locations to Council next summer. Also, the results of both the Motel Voucher and Safe Parking Programs will be reported in the HEAP activities report to the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

As a condition of receiving the State grant funds, the City is required to provide reports to the State regarding the number of families served and the types of services they received until all funds have been expended by the June 30, 2021 deadline. These reports will be posted to the Department's website.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The following alternative was also considered:

Alternative #1: The City Council could choose to locate a safe parking pilot program for single adults at another location in the City.

Pros: More options would be available to homeless persons in San José.

Cons: It would take 4 – 6 months to complete a new community outreach process for a new site.

Reason for not recommending: It would take several months to find another location for a safe parking program. The Housing Department would review and evaluate sites. Once a site is selected, the Housing Department would work with the Council office to schedule one to two community meetings, meet one-on-one with stakeholders and if necessary attend nearby neighborhood association meetings as well. Given the Departments current work load, the Department does not have capacity to conduct a community outreach process at this time.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the September 10, 2019, City Council Meeting.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The request for approval for the new Motel Voucher Program contract with LifeMoves is scheduled to be heard by the City Council on September 10, 2019, prior to this item. Funding for the actions recommended in this memorandum are contingent upon approval of that item.

If the City Council should approve the recommendation to discontinue serving families at the Seven Trees Safe Parking location and offer the Motel Voucher Program to the same families, funding capacity in the current contract for Safe Parking will become available. As a result, staff is seeking City Council direction to either relocate the site for families and/or repurpose those funds for a single adult Safe Parking Program. Staff will return to the City Council with recommendations to amend the current contract based on the direction received.

/s/
JACKY MORALES-FERRAND
Director, Housing Department

For questions, contact Kelly Hemphill, Homelessness Response Manager, at (408) 975-4483.

Attachment Index:
Attachment A: LifeMoves video on safe parking: https://lifemoves.org/safe-parking/
Attachment B: Link to podcast with Silicon Valley Community Foundation: https://svcfpodcasts.libsyn.com/the-life-of-a-silicon-valley-family-living-in-their-rv#Oy6B7fZqOClCqzHU.08