



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: September 24, 2019

APPROVED:

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS ANNUAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Accept staff Annual Report on Homelessness.
2. Comply with Council's explicit direction from last year's hearing, as reflected in the Council-approved memorandum:

"Future Annual Homeless Reports and HEAP reports should provide apples-to-apples metrics that enable the Council to better understand where best to invest each marginal dollar to maximize benefit to recipients and minimize hardship, e.g., dollars-expended per-individual-moving-to-permanent-housing. a. The comparisons should...help us better understand how we've been spending money in the past, and to see how variations and tweaks in programs may help us see dollars used more effectively to help more people. b. Metrics may differ based on the general category of strategy (e.g., 'housing-based solutions,' 'interim housing,' etc.), but should enable Council and public to understand if we're maximizing our scarce dollars within that broad strategy. Where metrics cannot adequately capture progress, or where too speculative...simply designate that there is no suitable metric."¹

The City Manager and Housing Director can start complying with this direction by first identifying what objective(s) we seek to achieve within each category of funding, and settle upon a suitable means for measuring success. That metric should then be used as a basis for comparing all programs within that category.

¹ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6794717&GUID=C78EE510-0D40-4BB3-B65B-6D9E8F3BE116>, Mayor Liccardo, Councilmembers Jones, Davis Memorandum, November 21, 2018

3. Pilot the use of “invitation zones” in those specific heavily-impacted neighborhoods where temporary housing solutions (e.g., shelters, transitional housing, and safe parking) with services for the homeless are being deployed, to:
 - a. Give first priority to helping the homeless in the immediate geographic vicinity get off the street, and
 - b. Enforce a “no encampment zone” for the blocks surrounding the facility to ensure a visible, measurable improvement in the quality of life of the neighborhood served by the City homeless resources.

4. With regards to the stalled efforts to achieve a lease agreement with Caltrans for a Bridge Housing Community (BHC):
 - a. Direct the City Manager to evaluate and identify those efforts that can move forward on a parallel path with the delayed negotiation to finalize the Caltrans lease agreement, including the 1-2 month City Staff review of the BHC construction plans, and any off-site construction, among other work.
 - b. Should the City Manager be unable to confirm that Caltrans has agreed on every significant deal point by September 30, 2019, return immediately to City Council with a proposed resolution conveying the Council’s finding that Caltrans has failed to meet the letter and spirit of SB 519 (Beall & Bradford), approved and signed in 2018, requiring Caltrans to lease parcels at \$1/ year in San Jose and Los Angeles for homeless housing and services.

BACKGROUND

Invitation Zones

With regard to “invitation zones,” we have heard repeatedly from City and County officials of the importance of relying upon the County’s coordinated entry system to prioritize who receives housing at each new site or project. The focus, of course, is on providing services to those most vulnerable residents, a laudable goal to ensure both the most cost-effective use of scarce public resources, and to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable residents. I agree with that goal.

This logic exhausts itself, though, in our current context. In every heavily-impacted neighborhood, such as in Downtown, along Monterey Road, or Oakland Road, one can find a target-rich environment of homeless residents in severe need, and with virtually every malady. We appreciate the City’s efforts to fund outreach teams to increase the likelihood to serve local residents, but this is of little solace to a neighborhood feeling overburdened by the impacts of local homeless population when we can’t even tell them that the project will demonstrably improve their own neighborhood. Even our most sympathetic residents are feeling compassion fatigue from the impacts of nearby encampments. We have seen Housing staff and several Councilmembers repeatedly daunted by the prospect of building a project in a particular neighborhood, in part because the City has absolutely nothing to offer that already-burdened neighborhood for their willingness to take on more.

My colleague Mayor Libby Schaaf informs me that Oakland has utilized an “invitation zone” model for several “tuff-shed” sites. The process is straightforward: first identify the homeless in the immediate area, get them into shelter or housing first, and then to clear the surrounding area of encampments as something of a reward to the surrounding community for becoming a site for the provision of housing or homeless services.

At the very least, we should try this approach at one or more sites—whether for shelters, safe parking, or transitional housing—because our current approach is not enabling us to move fast enough to counter this crisis. Where there is a mismatch of services with need, then we could use multiple project sites to triage the homeless in the invitation zones collectively, to ensure that the three or four communities served are getting the benefit of actually seeing improvements in their own neighborhoods.

Bridge Housing Communities

The Council approved moving forward with tiny home communities nearly a year ago. The implementation of this critically-needed program has been stalled over negotiations with landowners in each case, VTA and Caltrans. Staff must more clearly communicate to the Mayor and Council the nature and source of the problem so that more robust action can be taken to resolve this logjam.