



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 11, 2020

Approved

Date

2/11/2020

SUBJECT: PROPOSED EXPENDITURE PLAN FOR THE HOMELESS HOUSING, ASSISTANCE, AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept staff recommendations and recommendations from Mayor Liccardo, and Councilmembers Peralez, Diep, Davis, and Esparza
2. Direct the City Manager and Staff to:
 - a. Release funds allocated to homelessness prevention to Destination Home for Fiscal Year 2020-2021.
 - b. Include detailed data on how HEAP and HHAP funded programs serve families and children in an updated staff report for the upcoming council item: "Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Among Families with Children", cross-listed to Council at the September 12, 2019 meeting of the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting.
 - c. Explore leveraging city services that increase housing stability such as recreation classes, SJ Learns programs, or workforce development through strategic inter-departmental coordination, to support the programs being funded by HHAP.

BACKGROUND

San Jose families are in desperate need of housing solutions that immediately provide stability for vulnerable households on the verge of homelessness. Often for these families, quick access to rental assistance, legal services, or funds for a deposit on an affordable apartment can mean the difference between living in a car or staying in a home without disrupting a child's schooling and well-being.

Currently, the Prevention and Shelter Diversion to Permanent Housing program is only able to serve 20% of the families that seek help. This program is an important component to keeping families and children stably housed, preventing evictions and displacement. The need is clear and urgent. These families need access to homelessness prevention services now – and I appreciate the leadership and commitment of my council colleagues, the city administration, and our community partners in addressing this issue.

Today, however, while I support the items moving forward I must ask for staff to release the funds that we are allocating to the Prevention and Shelter Diversion to Permanent Housing sooner than they are proposing on page 7 of the staff memo. The funds should be in use no later than July of 2020, to keep more families from facing homelessness and needing costlier support services in the future. There is no virtue in saving these dollars for later, and no comfort to the family that becomes homeless today that we will have more funds available next year.

Additionally, it is important that the council have access to metrics and data relating to children and families for each housing program the City funds, to ensure that we're prioritizing the needs of the countless vulnerable families that work so hard to avoid being visibly homeless. I ask my council colleagues to add this data request to staff's updated report for their upcoming council item on Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Among Families with Children, which was cross-listed to council by the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee in September.

Lastly, as we continue to create innovative partnerships and solutions to tackle our housing crisis, staff should also work to leverage existing city programs to expand on the support services offered through HHAP or other housing funding. The City has several programs like recreation preschool or workforce development that could provide increased stability for families struggling to remain safely housed.