



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Jimenez

SUBJECT: Actions Related to the Bridge
Housing Community

DATE: December 12, 2017

Approved

Date

12/12/2017

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the staff recommendation with the following additions and modifications:

1. Direct staff to focus efforts on one Bridge Housing Community (BHC) pilot site and conduct environmental analysis only on that one pilot site, rather than on three sites.
2. Direct staff to evaluate cost-cutting measures and seek alternative funding sources that would not divert funds already appropriated for permanent housing.
3. Direct staff to determine if housing a targeted population in the BHC pilot site would violate Fair Housing laws. Specifically, consider using the Kenton Women's Village in Oregon as a model for the pilot site.
4. Modify the Scoring Matrix to allow staff the flexibility to focus development efforts on sites that, in addition to scoring highly in the matrix, have community and neighborhood support.
5. Direct the Planning and Housing Departments to concurrently focus on diverse solutions to solving our homeless crisis:
 - a. Explore an emergency ordinance for the implementation of safe parking programs and come back to Council with a timeline for implementation.
 - b. Approve the Rapid Rehousing activities and second unit revisions as suggested by my colleagues, Councilmembers Rocha and Khamis.
 - c. Continue prior Council direction to pursue hotel/motel acquisition strategies as recommended by Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Carrasco, and Councilmembers Jones, Peralez, and Arenas.

ANALYSIS

The housing crisis affects every square inch of San José. There is no district, neighborhood, transportation corridor, or shopping center that has not been impacted by the consequences of people living on our streets. Because of this, our response must be as far-reaching as the problem.

Bridge Housing Communities (BHC) are just one tool in our toolbox that should be deployed simultaneously with a multitude of other strategies to meet the ever-growing need for housing.

I agree with the Mayor and many of my colleagues that, as a City, we should proceed with Bridge Housing Communities to house our most vulnerable population. Housing Department staff and our City have invested a significant amount of time and resources into researching and developing a BHC program. We have gone as far as to have specific state legislation passed for San José. We should proceed with BHC, but in a responsible and fiscally conscious manner.

We recognize that we simply cannot afford ten BHC sites across the City, one in each district. In fact, we do not even have enough funds to build out and implement one site. The Housing Department has \$2.3 million set aside, when the total cost is \$4,268,000 -- hence a shortfall of -\$1,968,000. Therefore, searching for sites in every district is unrealistic and diverts resources from implementation.

As we all know, AB2176 does not waive CEQA. Therefore, a pilot site will need to be thoroughly evaluated for environmental impacts. We should not spend time or money evaluating sites that we do not have the resources to build out. To save time and money, I suggest that we have only the most viable pilot site reviewed for CEQA compliance.

We should invest the available funds in the build-out of one pilot site and begin seeking financial support from other sources to avoid using funds that would otherwise be used to build permanent housing. San José and Silicon Valley are blessed with wealth and innovation, and we should not be afraid to engage foundations or even our corporate citizens for grants, donations, and sponsorships to defray the cost of innovative solutions to the housing crisis. However, the cost per unit described in the Housing Department's memo is beyond the pale of what is acceptable. We need to find better, more cost-effective solutions.

Separately, the City so far has been silent on a key question: who will live in the BHC pilot site? Women are one of the most vulnerable populations on our streets. Homeless women are more susceptible to violence and sexual assault. A study of homeless women in Los Angeles' Skid Row conducted by the Downtown Women's Action Coalition found that women "experiencing extreme poverty or homelessness are disproportionately more likely to have survived physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.... Women surveyed had experienced sexual assault at a rate nearly twice that of the general population; 19.3% of women in the United States have experienced sexual assault in their lifetimes. By contrast, 39.4% of women surveyed experienced sexual assault at some point in their lives."¹ Furthermore, women have unique hygiene needs that make living on the streets very challenging. Additionally, focusing a pilot project on women or individuals with shared, common needs may have cost saving impacts. For example, if a site is designed for women, we would only need to build one restroom and shower facility as opposed to two. Services and case management could be geared to the particular needs of a target population. If we are going to start a successful pilot project, I suggest we focus our limited resources on those that have the greatest immediate needs

¹ <http://www.downtownwomenscenter.org/2016-needs-assessment/>

and who are already the most vulnerable on our streets. The Kenton Women's Village in Oregon may serve as a good model.

The Scoring Matrix as proposed by the Housing Department gives us a good start in analyzing sites for viability. However, because we are seeking to house individuals with difficult lives and complicated needs, we need the flexibility to choose sites that have other beneficial qualities that cannot be quantified in a matrix, such as the response from neighboring communities and local support from advocates and other groups. The Housing Department as experts in this field need the flexibility and discretion to pursue sites that make the best overall sense, even if they don't score the highest.

My hope is that a BHC pilot is successful in creating safe and cost-effective transitional housing for vulnerable homeless residents in San José. However, it is evident that even a successful pilot for 40 people will have a very limited impact on our homeless population of over 4,000. This is why I encourage our City Council and City Departments to work on other solutions at the same time. We do not have the luxury of implementing one strategy at a time - we need to look at all our options and pursue them all vigorously. I believe that given the low cost and minimal infrastructure required for safe parking, we can implement an emergency ordinance to get a program off the ground as soon as possible. The other options discussed in the memo by the Housing Department should not be seen as alternatives to BHC but as complementary efforts that in addition to BHC that can bring relief to those suffering from homelessness.

Creativity and innovation are what make San José a great place to live and thrive. Let's make sure that everyone has equal opportunity to access our region's prosperity.

Attachment

Kenton Women's Village: <https://www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org/provide-shelter/kenton-womens-village/>