



HOUSING DIVISION

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HOUSING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

January 9, 2020

Subject

Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 Housing Commission Work Program Item: Report on Homelessness

Recommended Action

Receive report and provide any input to staff

Discussion

City Council identified Homelessness as a priority setting item for the FY 2019-20 City Work Program. The project objectives are to: (1) conduct audit of services available in Cupertino for the homeless community; (2) confirm estimates of homelessness in Cupertino; and (3) explore solutions for homeless students. The City collaborated with service providers including the County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing (County), West Valley Community Services (WVCS), and De Anza College to identify strategies and resources to assist the homeless.

Background

On October 16, 2018, City Council conducted a study session on homelessness. Representatives from the County, WVCS, MidPen Housing, and Charities Housing reported on the current status of homelessness and available resources in Cupertino. City Council recommended that Staff: (1) update the City website to include information on housing for students; (2) explore teacher housing further; and (3) work with the County on their Board referral to discuss teacher housing with De Anza College. Following the study session, Staff updated the City website and held meetings with De Anza College to discuss teacher housing.

In discussions with De Anza College, it is understood that affordable housing is a desired tool for employee retention. Land and funding need to be identified in order to develop housing. The City will continue to work with De Anza staff to identify land and explore funding sources to support teacher housing.

In order to understand the current needs of homeless residents in Cupertino and throughout the County, staff worked with service providers to create a list of services available, confirm estimates of homeless residents in the City, and explore solutions for homeless students. Results are as follows.

1. Audit of Services Available in Cupertino for the Homeless Community

Staff conducted research and met with service providers to create a list of existing services available to homeless residents of Cupertino, see attachment A.

City Housing and Human Services Grant Funding

The City annually releases a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) / Request for Proposal (RFP) for housing and human service funding, see attachment B. Funding sources include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the City's Below Market Rate (BMR) Affordable Housing Fund (AHF), and General Fund Human Services Grant (HSG). Through these funding sources, the City currently provides funding to West Valley Community Services for two homeless programs as follows.

Funding Source	Agency	Program	Amount
CDBG	WVCS	Community Access to Resource & Education (CARE)	\$35,000
HSG	WVCS	Haven to Home	\$40,000

The City's FY 2020-21 NOFA/RFP is open through February 7, 2020 and agencies may apply for funding for additional programs and services for the homeless.

County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing (OSH)

The County OSH leads homelessness initiatives including homelessness prevention, emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. The County OSH currently collaborates with numerous service providers including WVCS and Destination: Home, a public-private partnership that drives and aligns resources to create permanent housing and sustainable support systems. Staff met with representatives from the County and Home Base and discussed the County's role in managing homeless grants and their work on the Community Plan to End Homelessness.

Community Plan to End Homelessness

The County, along with Destination: Home and the City of San Jose are leading the effort for the 2020 Community Plan to End Homelessness (the Plan). The Plan is a five-year community plan that will focus on increasing the capacity and effectiveness of housing programs, addressing the root cause of homelessness, and improving the quality of life

for unsheltered individuals. The Plan will be presented to Cities in Santa Clara County in early 2020 for adoption.

West Valley Community Services (WVCS)

WVCS' programs work to address basic human needs through focusing on food, housing services, family support, and mobile services. Staff met with representatives from WVCS and the Cupertino Library to discuss the rising rate of homelessness in the City. WVCS and the Library expressed a need for a drop-in day shelter and a mobile hygiene facility such as Dignity on Wheels.

Dignity on Wheels

The non-profit organization, Project WeHOPE launched Dignity on Wheels in 2015 to address the lack of hygiene facilities accessible to homeless individuals. Dignity on Wheels serves six cities throughout Santa Clara County and San Mateo County and provides mobile hygiene services such as shower and laundry facilities.

Rotating Safe Car Park

According to the the Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Comprehensive Report 2019 (the Report), 18% of individuals reported staying in a vehicle which is a substantial increase from previous years. According to census results from this, and past counts, the number of individuals staying in vehicles (cars, RVs, and vans) has increased 146% since 2015, reaching 3,655 individuals in 2019. Cities throughout the County have amended ordinances to legalize rotating emergency shelters such as the Rotating Safe Car Park (RSCP) program. The RSCP program provides homeless individuals and families a safe environment to park their vehicles and sleep overnight and connects participants with case management programs. The RSCP pilot program for the City of Saratoga started in June 2018 and was approved by City Council in February 2019. The program now includes 11 host locations in the South Bay.

2. Estimates of Homelessness in Cupertino

The Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Comprehensive Report 2019 (the Report) was released in early 2019, please see attachment C. The Report includes data from the Point-in-Time Census (Census) of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals/families. The Census indicated the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness in over a decade with 9,706 homeless individuals throughout the County. The total number of homeless individuals increased by 31% compared to the 2017 Census. Additionally, the majority (82%) of individuals are unsheltered, which is a 45% increase from the 2017 Census. Results from the 2019 Census counted 159 individuals experiencing homelessness in the City of Cupertino, a 25% increase compared to the 127 individuals counted during the 2017 Census.

3. Explore Solutions for Homeless Students

Staff met with representatives from De Anza College and discussed housing insecurity among students. According to a Fall 2018 survey of De Anza College students, 5 out of 10 students are housing insecure and 2 out of 10 students are homeless. Furthermore, the 2019 Census and Survey found that approximately 16% of homeless respondents were less than 24 years old. Potential programs to address student housing insecurity include the following:

Student “Home Match”

The “Home Match” program is a potential solution for college students looking for affordable housing. The Berkeley Home Match program is a pilot housing program that pairs graduate students with UC Berkeley retirees who have vacant rooms or ADUs. According to the Year 1 Report (attachment D), students enrolled in the pilot program paid approximately 45% below the average rent for a room. Homeowners also benefited by earning almost \$1,000 per month on average.

Homeless Student Parking (AB 302)

The proposed Assembly Bill (AB 302) would require community colleges with on-campus parking facilities to grant overnight vehicle access for the purpose of sleeping to any homeless student currently enrolled in coursework and in good standing with the community college. The measure is currently on the inactive file on the Senate Floor.

Additional Strategies and Resources to Assist the Homeless

The State, San Francisco Bay Area local governments, service providers, and private corporations are exploring creative solutions to address the rising issue of homelessness. Potential solutions include the following:

State Legislation

In October 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom signed 18 bills into law to combat the statewide housing crisis. The bills are designed to remove barriers to housing development, enhance tenant protections, and fund housing initiatives. Included is Senate Bill (SB) 744, which streamlines the approval process and allocates up to \$2 billion for the development of permanent supportive housing and mental health services.

Private Partnerships

Tech companies including Google, Facebook, and Apple recently pledged to invest a combined \$4 billion to help ease the housing crisis. Apple announced in November 2019 that it would invest a total of \$2.5 billion with \$2 billion going to the State for affordable housing and first-time homebuyer assistance programs. Furthermore, \$300 million worth of Apple-owned land is slated for affordable housing development, \$150 million will be donated to Housing Trust Silicon Valley to support new affordable housing projects and

grants, and \$50 million will be donated to Destination: Home's Supportive Housing and Innovation Fund to accelerate the construction of deeply affordable housing.

SAFE Navigation Centers

San Francisco has approved eight navigation centers since beginning a pilot program in March 2015. The newest center, Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center, opened in December 2019. The location houses approximately 200 individuals and connects guests to social services and housing assistance. Between 2015 and 2019, over 5,000 clients have been served at one of San Francisco's navigation centers with nearly 46% of clients exiting to permanent housing or reunifications with family/friends.

Tiny Houses

Many major cities including Oakland, San Jose, Denver, and Seattle are turning to tiny homes or "cabin communities" to support temporary housing for currently unsheltered homeless individuals. In December 2018, San Jose's City Council approved a pilot program to construct a total of 80 short-term units on land owned by the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Caltrans. The two tiny home villages are expected to open early 2020 with the pilot program running until 2022.

Next Steps

The Housing Commission has the opportunity to review the report and provide input for City Council consideration. It is expected that the Homelessness report will be presented to City Council at the January 21, 2020 meeting.

Sustainability Impact

No sustainability impact.

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact.

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Attachments:

A – Audit of Services Available in Cupertino

B – FY 2020-21 Notice of Funding Availability / Request for Proposals

C – Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Comprehensive Report 2019

D – Berkeley Home Match: Year 1 Report

E – Assembly Bill 302 Text