




AGENDA REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Daryel R. Dunston
Homelessness
Administrator

SUBJECT: Clarifying Alternative Shelter
Provisions

DATE: December 8, 2020

City Administrator Approval 

Date: December 10, 2020

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Amending Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S. Requesting The City Administrator To Follow The Center For Disease Control (“CDC”) Interim Guidelines On Homelessness And COVID-19 To Only Clear Encampments If Individual Housing Units Or Alternative Shelter Is Provided; Clarifying The Requirements For The Provision Of Individual Housing Units And Alternative Shelter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report clarifies the definition of “alternative shelter” as it applies to provisions offered to unhoused individuals and families prior to the completion of a scheduled encampment closure. Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S. requires that alternative shelter provisions be made to any person impacted by an encampment closure, and this report outlines the various City interventions that satisfy this requirement. It is also important to note that this report intends to clarify the term “provide” as used in Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S., since an offer of shelter may not always be accepted.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

In March 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S. in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, specifically focusing on the pandemic’s adverse impact to the unhoused population. Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S. established the requirement to comply with Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on homelessness and COVID-19, providing that encampments may only be cleared if individual housing units or alternative shelter provisions are made available to any person impacted by a closure operation. The ambiguity of the term “alternative shelter” has created some uncertainty, both to staff and the public, which this report intends to clarify.

In October 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution Number 88341 C.M.S., which established a new Encampment Management Policy that designates high- and low-sensitivity areas. The

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policy defines high sensitivity areas as, “locations where the health and safety impacts of homeless encampments are heightened due to the potential degradation of critical infrastructure, restriction of public amenities or services, or significant obstructions to residences, businesses, emergency routes and rights-of-way...and [p]arks with playground structures or tot lots, or that host City-sponsored programs or classes for children.” Within high-sensitivity locations, the City prioritizes maintaining these areas free of encampments, however, prior to any closure operation being conducted, an alternative shelter offer will be made to all individuals impacted by the closure operation. This report clarifies the definition of alternative shelter.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The City of Oakland provides an array of emergency shelter and transitional housing provisions that satisfy the definition of alternative shelter. Alternative shelter is any shelter or housing provision that is determined to be suitable for human habitation as an alternative to sleeping in a tent, make-shift structure, or shelter otherwise determined to be insufficient for human habitation (e.g. abandoned building, freeway underpass, children’s play structure). Additionally, the City’s emergency shelter and transitional housing programs are funded by federal and state grants that impose stringent guidelines regarding the eligible use of said funds. The following programs meet the eligible use requirements that are outlined in the federal and state grant agreements, which are monitored by federal and state partners, and recognize Oakland’s emergency shelter, community cabins, and transitional housing interventions as programs “informed by a best-practices framework focused on moving homeless individuals and families into permanent housing.”

Emergency Shelter Programs

Congregate Shelter

The City and its contractors operate three congregate shelter sites where unsheltered homeless individuals and families can receive shelter, meals, shower, and housing navigation services. All three shelters have reduced their bed count to comply with physical distancing guidelines. The shelters are located at 2272 San Pablo Avenue (Saint Vincent de Paul Emergency Shelter – 75 person capacity), 7515 International Boulevard (Crossroads Emergency Shelter – 90 person capacity), and 4300 San Pablo Avenue (Family Matters Emergency Shelter – 10 family capacity; moving to 5276 Broadway in 2021). There are no limitations on the length-of-stay at any of the City’s congregate shelter programs, although given the dual programmed space at Saint Vincent de Paul (which doubles as a cafeteria during the day), the physical cots are removed and reset daily.

Community Cabins

The City and its contractors also operate five “community cabin” sites where unsheltered homeless individuals (adults only) can stay in a cabin that is insulated, has doubled-paned windows, a locking door and fire-resistant drywall, safely wired electrical lights, a cell phone charger, operable toilets on-site, and regular showering capacity. Housing navigation services and exit resources are also provided to assist participants with costs associated with acquiring

permanent housing (e.g. application fees, security deposit, first month's rent). The cabins are located at 1449 Miller Avenue (Miller – 38 person capacity), 3401 Mandela Parkway (North and South – 76 person capacity), 599 Oak St. (Oak St. – 38 person capacity), 555 27th St. (Northgate – 40 person capacity), and #9 E. 10th St. (Lake Merritt – 40 person capacity). The length of stay is typically six to nine months.

Operation HomeBase & Covenant House Youth Shelter

Additionally, the City programmed a total of 82 travel trailers received from the State of California to be used to house up to 128 unsheltered homeless individuals at-risk of contracting COVID-19 (i.e. elderly and/or medically compromised individuals), and up to 30 transitional aged youths. Each trailer is equipped with separate sleeping quarters, a restroom (with shower), kitchenette, with running water, and electricity. Meals are also provided. The remaining 24 trailers received from the State were programmed in Berkeley, Hayward, and Alameda City. There are currently no limitations on the length-of-stay at Operation HomeBase and at Covenant House's Youth Shelter.

RV Safe Parking

Finally, the City and its contractors operate three safe parking sites for recreational vehicles where unsheltered homeless individuals can park without the threat of being ticketed or towed. Each site has 24-hour, 7-days-per-week (24/7) staffing, on-site security, electricity, drinking water, portable toilets, weekly shower service, garbage service, limited passenger vehicle parking, and the opportunity for participants to bring their pets. The lots are located at 615 High Street (45 vehicle capacity), 711 71st Avenue (45 vehicle capacity), and 3499 Beach Street (17 vehicle capacity). There are currently no limitations on the length-of-stay.

Transitional & Permanent Housing Programs

The Henry Robinson

The Henry Robinson Multi Service Center is a transitional housing program operated by Bay Area Community Services, providing transitional housing to homeless adults in addition to essential wrap-around services. Participants have access to running water, showers, electricity, meals, and housing navigation services. Exit resources are also provided to assist participants with costs associated with acquiring permanent housing (e.g. application fees, security deposit, first month's rent). The program is housed in the historic single-room occupancy Touraine Hotel, which is a City-owned property located at 16th & Clay, accommodating up to 137 individuals at a time. The length-of-stay is typically six to nine months.

The Holland

The Holland is a single-room occupancy hotel that the City purchased in October 2018 to expand operations of the Henry Robinson Multi Service Center, which allows for an additional 85 unsheltered single adults to be served at a given time. Participants enjoy the same amenities as program participants at the Henry Robinson Multi Service Center. The length of stay is typically six to nine months.

Matilda Cleveland

Matilda Cleveland is a 14-unit residential facility for unhoused single parents and their children. Located at 8314 MacArthur Blvd., a full array of on-site services are offered for program participants, including life skills training, case management services, enrichment activities for youth and after school projects for children, and connection to community resources. There are currently no limitations on the length-of-stay.

Families in Transition (FIT)

Families in Transition provides temporary independent living in fully self-contained residential units that allow families to achieve self-reliance. Families have access to case management services, life skills and parenting training, client empowerment, mental health counseling, and family activities that take place in their home or at Matilda Cleveland. FIT assists a total of nine (9) families at any given time. The residential units are scattered throughout Oakland. There are currently no limitations on the length-of-stay.

Clifton Hall

Utilizing the State's Project Homekey program, the City acquired the Clifton Hall (a vacant California College of Arts dormitory) in December 2020 to provide 42 units of permanent housing for individuals experiencing homelessness and at-high risk of contracting COVID-19. The second floor will become the permanent home for a 20-household family shelter. The City anticipates commencing the program in the coming weeks, and there are no restrictions on the length-of-stay.

The aforementioned programs are determined to be sufficient alternatives to sleeping in a tent, make-shift structure, or shelter otherwise deemed to be insufficient for human habitation (e.g. abandoned building, freeway underpass, children's play structure). As noted, an offer of alternative shelter may not always be accepted, however, an offer to any of the programs outlined above shall satisfy the intent of Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S.

With that said, staff continues to explore the feasibility of implementing additional homelessness interventions, such as co-governed encampments, additional RV safe parking programs, scattered site models similar to existing transitional and permanent housing models, and the acquisition of the Inn at Temescal to house a homelessness program. In the event that new programs come online, offers to the new program may be deemed sufficient if it is determined that the alternative shelter (1) complies with the CDC's Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters, (2) provides reasonable accommodations for mental and physical disabilities, and (3) does not place encampment residents in greater risk to their health and safety than they experience in their current circumstances.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact or cost associated with this report and resolution as it is intended to solely provide clarification for the term "alternative shelter."

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No outreach was deemed necessary for the proposed policy action beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures because the proposed policy action is to provide clarification for a phrase used in a previously adopted resolution.

COORDINATION

The City's Human Services Department and City Attorney's Office contributed to the information presented in this report and resolution.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There are no economic opportunities associated with this report as it is intended to solely provide clarification for the term "alternative shelter."

Environmental: There are no environmental opportunities associated with this report as it is intended to solely provide clarification for the term "alternative shelter."

Race & Equity: There are no race and equity opportunities associated with this report as it is intended to solely provide clarification for the term "alternative shelter."

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Amending Resolution Number 88077 C.M.S. Requesting The City Administrator To Follow The Center For Disease Control ("CDC") Interim Guidelines On Homelessness And COVID-19 To Only Clear Encampments If Individual Housing Units Or Alternative Shelter Is Provided; Clarifying The Requirements For The Provision Of Individual Housing Units And Alternative Shelter.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Daryel R. Dunston, Homelessness Administrator, at 510-207-1221.

Respectfully submitted,

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