

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Leadership Council for the City of San Diego Community Action Plan on Homelessness

From: Implementation Team

Date: August 3, 2020

Subject: Summary of Activity for the Meeting of July 21, 2020

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The third meeting of the Leadership Council for the City of San Diego Community Action Plan on Homelessness (Action Plan) was held on July 21, 2020, via teleconference.

This memorandum summarizes the discussion that occurred, questions raised, and actions taken.

**The members of the Leadership Council are identified in the table below.**

Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer and Councilmember Chris Ward were not in attendance.

City of San Diego	Mayor	Mayor Kevin Faulconer
San Diego City Council	Councilmember serving on the Regional Task Force on the Homeless	Councilmember Chris Ward
County of San Diego	County Supervisor serving on the Regional Task Force on the Homeless	Supervisor Nathan Fletcher
San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC)	President and Chief Executive Officer	Richard C. Gentry
Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH)	Chief Executive Officer	Tamera Kohler
Philanthropic Organization	Lucky Duck Foundation	Peter Seidler
Individual with Lived Experience	Voices of Our City Choir	John Brady
Business Representative	SDG&E	Mitch Mitchell

**The members of the Interagency Implementation Team are identified in the table below.**

All members attended.

San Diego City Council	Chief of Staff for Councilmember Ward	Molly Chase
City of San Diego	Chief of Homelessness Strategies & Housing Liaison	Keely Halsey
San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC)	Senior Vice President Homeless Housing Innovations Division	Lisa Jones
Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH)	Chief Executive Officer	Tamera Kohler

**The agenda included the following main topics:**

- Activity on Community Action Plan Three-Year Goals
  - Operation Shelter to Home
- Activity on Community Action Plan Foundational Strategies

- Client-Centered Homeless Assistance System
- Increase Production of/Access to Permanent Solutions
- Decrease Inflow
- Future Project Updates – Actioning Foundational Strategies
- Voices of Lived Experience – Creating Client-Centered Homeless Assistance System

The Implementation Team produced a document with policy statements related to the agenda for the Leadership Council’s review and discussion during the meeting. The discussion and input from Leadership Council members on the policy statements is intended to help guide staff as they develop action items related to the Action Plan’s goals and foundational strategies. The policy statements can be found in Attachment A and are referenced throughout this memo.

### **Activity on Community Action Plan Three-Year Goals**

The Leadership Council received an update on the activities at Operation Shelter to Home (OSTH). The planning in response to COVID-19 led to the implementation of OSTH. As this initiative was implemented, the Action Plan’s three-year goals helped inform the development of the Housing Navigation Team that supports OSTH with the goal of increasing exits to housing. The OSTH project was established to address the public health needs of the City’s sheltered and unsheltered population at the onset of COVID-19, but staff kept a focus on housing outcomes throughout development and implementation to ensure that the City is still working toward meeting its Action Plan goals.

Specifically, OSTH is directly impacting the goals to end veteran homelessness, prevent and end youth homelessness, and reduce unsheltered homelessness. Since its implementation, OSTH has housed more than 300 individuals, and more than 600 individuals have been matched to a housing resource through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and are moving through the system toward housing.

#### **End Veteran Homelessness**

OSTH provided an opportunity to improve the utilization of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. Through coordination with local, regional, and federal leaders, including leaders from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and operational staff, barriers around how the VASH program historically operated were addressed, which led to a dramatically higher utilization rate of VASH vouchers. In six to eight weeks, 168 VASH voucher intakes were completed, 39 veterans have been housed, and 129 veterans are moving through the system toward housing. In addition, 68 veterans have been matched to Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) Rapid Rehousing program(s), and seven have been housed through SSVF.

#### **Prevent and End Youth Homelessness**

When the addition of Transitional Age Youth (TAY) beds at Golden Hall was suspended due to COVID-19, those case management resources were redirected toward OSTH, specifically to TAY residents at the Convention Center. The LGBT Community Center and San Diego Youth Services are providing targeted case management services to the TAY population at the Convention Center.

SDHC was awarded 75 additional federal Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers, which help reunite children with their families and assist youth exiting foster care who experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. SDHC committed as many of the 75 additional FUP vouchers as needed for the TAY population at the Convention Center.

#### **Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness**

OSTH provided an opportunity to work with the County to improve the utilization of Project One For All (POFA) vouchers. POFA provides intensive wraparound services, including housing to individuals experiencing homelessness with serious mental illness. The County contracted with Mental Health

Systems (MHS) to provide services on-site at the Convention Center to actively identify individuals that may be eligible for POFA vouchers, thus increasing voucher issuances and utilization. Staff members are also in conversations with the County to consider broadening their eligibility criteria for POFA to maximize their service potential and better meet the needs of clients.

The Leadership Council commended the tremendous efforts of OSTH around mitigating the health impacts of COVID-19 and using the opportunity to improve systems, while keeping a focus on housing outcomes for persons experiencing homelessness.

### **Activity on Community Action Plan Foundational Strategies**

#### **1. Client-Centered Homeless Assistance System**

##### **Future State of Bridge Shelters**

The Implementation Team members provided an update on the demobilization strategies for OSTH. The project currently is funded to operate through October. Staff have been actively working on a demobilization and reactivation strategy, currently targeting a date as soon as September 30, 2020, to prepare for the next steps in serving the City's homeless population. Staff members are working with the County to determine what the capacity for congregate-care facilities will be to maintain public health standards while providing a reasonable level of occupancy to prevent significant loss of beds. Staff will utilize systems and technologies that are in place at the Convention Center that are working successfully to continue to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 post-OSTH and continue to seek guidance from the County as demobilization strategies are finalized.

*The Implementation Team prepared a policy statement for the Leadership Council's consideration that supports the reactivation of the City's shelter system and transition to longer-term pandemic management. The statement can be found in Attachment A. The Leadership Council did not request amendments to the statement but membership noted that enforcement of the preventative measures and attention to systems that support proper air quality will be important factors in the future state.*

OSTH provided an opportunity to better understand who is being served and what their needs are. Approximately 60-70 percent of the clients being served at the Convention Center have high needs. The City's outreach teams have also reported seeing more clients with high needs through their engagement efforts. As current residents of OSTH continue to move into housing opportunities, the number of clients who enter shelter with high unmet needs may continue to rise, specifically around behavioral health wellness and substance abuse treatment. The City and County are working jointly to identify and secure resources to meet the needs of clients and provide a continuity of services after OSTH is demobilized.

*The Implementation Team prepared a policy statement for the Leadership Council's consideration that supports the efforts to identify and secure a level of resources commensurate with client needs. This will further a key Foundational Strategy of the Community Action Plan to create a client-centered homeless assistance system. The statement can be found in Attachment A. The Leadership Council did not recommend amendments to the statement.*

#### **2. Increase Production of/Access to Permanent Solutions**

##### **Hotel/Motel Acquisition Project**

SDHC and the City are working to acquire properties to increase access to permanent housing solutions. The proposed acquisition supports a Foundational Strategy of the Action Plan by creating permanent supportive housing units that will be administered in a client-centered manner. To support this effort, SDHC and the City plan to submit an application for the State's Project Homekey grant.

*The Implementation Team prepared a policy statement for the Leadership Council's consideration that the Hotel/Motel Acquisition project fulfills a key goal of the Action Plan to provide additional housing opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness. The statement can be found in Attachment A. The Leadership Council did not recommend amendments to the statement.*

### 3. Decrease Inflow

#### Affordable Housing Preservation Study

The Implementation Team members provided an update on the Affordable Housing Preservation Study. On June 2, 2020, SDHC presented to the City Council a report, "Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego," which provides an analysis of rental housing in the City of San Diego and recommends 10 strategies to help keep thousands of rental housing units affordable for low-income families. The City Council accepted the report and referred it to the Land Use and Housing Committee (Committee). On June 24, 2020, the Committee directed SDHC to return to the Committee with a draft single-room occupancy (SRO) policy for discussion, and at a later Committee meeting, to recommend implementation strategies that include detailed policy options and best practices for recommendations two, four and five from the "Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego" report. Proposed amendments to the City's SRO Hotel Regulations will be discussed at the Committee's July 30, 2020 meeting.

#### City of San Diego COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program

The Implementation Team provided an overview of the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program to the Leadership Council. The City Council allocated \$15.1 million for the program, which SDHC is administering. The program will provide up to \$4,000 per qualifying household to help pay past-due and/or upcoming rent. All applicants who meet the eligibility requirements will have the opportunity to be selected to receive assistance, but priority will be given to families with minor children and households with at least one person age 62 or older. Applications will be sorted and assigned numbers at random to identify the applicants who will receive help to pay their rent. Roughly 3,500 households can be assisted if every household receives \$4,000. SDHC is working with community-based organizations to provide application assistance to households who need help accessing and submitting the online application.

Councilmember Ward's office is going to continue to advocate for additional funding for the program, and has received more than 35 letters of support from community organizations.

The Leadership Council asked if plans are in place for households who will inevitably become unsheltered once the City's eviction moratorium expires.

This program provides a unique opportunity to learn how willing landlords are to work with their tenants who have arrears on repayment agreements and negotiations. The data collection that will occur through the operation of this program will be valuable to helping policy makers understand the impact \$15.1 million will have, and to better determine the unmet need. SDHC also administers the HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO Prevention and Diversion programs, which continue to provide services to households who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness.

### **Future Project Updates – Actioning Foundational Strategies**

#### 1. Housing Bond Update

The Action Plan calls for development of revenue sources to fund the number of units outlined in the Action Plan. The Homes for San Diegans Bond aligns with recommendations within the Community Action Plan, and the bond will be on the ballot in November.

*The Implementation Team prepared a policy statement for the Leadership Council's consideration that the Homes for San Diegans bond will develop the housing stock necessary to reduce homelessness in San Diego and advance the recommendations of the City's Action Plan. The statement can be found in Attachment A. The Leadership Council did not recommend amendments to the statement but the Mayor's Office noted that the Mayor had not yet taken a position on the measure.*

## **2. Housing Navigation Center and Coordinated Outreach Update**

The Implementation Team members provided an overview of the reimagined Housing Navigation Center and Coordinated Outreach program(s). The lessons learned from OSTH and the guidelines outlined in the Action Plan informed how the City's homeless assistance system should be enhanced. The reimagined Housing Navigation Center and Coordinated Outreach will work closely together to implement a systems-level, client-centered approach to serve persons experiencing homelessness. This approach will drive the strategic development and implementation of a streamlined, coordinated, client-centric, City Homelessness Crisis Response System. SDHC is uniquely positioned to effectively implement this vision for the Housing Navigation Center to address access to services across the spectrum of need from homelessness prevention to permanent housing placement, in alignment with the five "Key Strategies" of the City's Action Plan. System navigators will work with clients enrolled in the new outreach program, walk-in clients of the Center and within the shelter system and help navigate the client through the system until they are housed, leveraging resources of other providers and SDHC HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO programs. The system navigators will act as problem solvers to address any barriers the client may face toward housing while always considering the client's needs. The reimagined system will also actively gather client input that will inform decisions to ensure a client-centered homeless assistance system. A Request for Proposals for a neighborhood-based housing-focused Coordinated Outreach program is anticipated to be released the week of July 27, 2020, and will be a key component of this systems level approach.

*The Implementation Team prepared a policy statement for the Leadership Council's consideration that the enhancements to the City's system of housing navigation and coordinated outreach support key Foundational Strategies and immediate items for consideration detailed in the Action Plan. The statement can be found in Attachment A. The Leadership Council did not recommend amendments to the statement.*

## **Voices of Lived Experience – Creating Client-Centered Homeless Assistance System**

San Diego State University is conducting a survey to gather input from people experiencing homelessness in San Diego during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the efforts to gather input from persons with lived experience, the survey will be offered to clients at the Convention Center. Results from the survey could be utilized as a potential data point for future discussions to address client needs and enhance client-centered practices.

The Implementation Team provided a recommendation to leverage the valuable resources that exist in the Voices of Lived Experience and HEAL networks to garner input from persons with lived experience on both existing and future initiatives, and create a communication pathway for these networks to bring challenges, issues or recommendations to the Implementation Team. This supports the Action Plan's Foundational Strategy to create a client-centered homeless assistance system. The RTFH Board also created an ad hoc committee to focus on racial disparities in unsheltered populations, which will be led by individuals with lived experiences. This will also help guide ongoing work of the Action Plan.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will occur in mid-to-late October, depending on most members' availability.

### **Reactivation of the City's Shelter System and Transition to Longer-Term Pandemic Management**

Congregate care facilities such as those in the City's shelter system serve an essential need in homelessness care and COVID-19 response. A critical next step in serving the City's homeless population is the reactivation of the City's shelter system in a manner that observes public health guidance to prevent the spread and effects of COVID-19 and incorporates multiple mitigation strategies (e.g., screening, cleaning, testing, etc.) to maximize shelter opportunities. This balance of considerations is critical: the reactivation plan should provide a reasonable level of occupancy to prevent significant loss of beds at the facilities. Providing care in congregate settings provides an opportunity to manage certain risks, employing such measures as have been developed over the current course of the pandemic, and incorporating County public health resources. The risks to individuals living in unsheltered environments not suitable for human habitation are difficult to manage without connections to proper sanitation, education, and health care, and the other features that shelters and their supportive environments provide.

### **Behavioral and Substance Abuse Treatment Resources for Shelter Clients**

To effectively support the clients and staff of the City's shelter programs, the City and County should identify and secure a level of resources commensurate with client needs. Specifically, this will require drawing upon the expertise and resources of the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency, its Behavioral Health Services Department, and the community-based providers with which it contracts to provide services. These resources are needed to address behavioral health wellness and substance abuse treatment for residents and provide critical high-level skilled resources to both residents and shelter staff. This will ensure a safe environment supported with client-centered resources and will further a key Foundational Strategy of the Community Action Plan—to create a client-centered homeless assistance system.

### **Hotel-Motel Acquisition Project**

The proposed acquisition of hotels, motels, or other properties to create permanent supportive housing units supports a key goal of the Community Action Plan—to provide additional housing opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness. These new housing opportunities will be created in a manner that supports client quality of life and sustainable tenancies by ensuring supportive services are available on-site and tailored to meet client needs. This project leverages the strong partnership of the City and San Diego Housing Commission to provide funds for acquisition, rehabilitation if necessary, and operations, and further leverages the resources of the County to provide supportive services for residents to help ensure their long-term stability and success.

## **Housing Bond**

The Homes for San Diegans bond measure is a data driven approach to develop the housing stock necessary to reduce homelessness in San Diego. If approved by voters in November, the \$900 million measure will advance the recommendations of the City's Community Action Plan on Homelessness and is outlined as a critical component to producing the permanent supportive and affordable housing units that are needed to achieve the goals adopted by the City. The funds generated and leveraged by the bond are the foundation of the significant investment the City must make in the serving thousands of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

### **Enhancements to Housing Navigation and Coordinated Outreach**

Enhancements to the City's system of housing navigation and coordinated outreach support key Foundational Strategies and Immediate Items for Consideration detailed in the Community Action Plan:

- Implement a Systems-Level Approach to Homelessness Planning,
- Create a Client-Centered Homeless Assistance System,
- Decrease Inflow Through increased Prevention and Diversion,
- Improve the Performance of the Existing System,
- Increase Access to Permanent Solutions, and
- Advance Service Provider driven, Housing Focused Outreach practices

Advancement of these projects involves action by City decision-makers in September and October as a reimagined Housing Navigation Center, or Homeless Response Center, and a Coordinated, Neighborhood- Based Outreach program. These projects have been, and will continue to be, informed by the lessons learned as part of Operation Shelter to Home. They are also projects that advance key recommendations and foundational strategies of the Community Action Plan. These projects will align with each other as major components of an integrated, client-centered systems-level approach.