



AGENDA REPORT

Community Development

DATE:	May 2, 2023
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Lina Velasco, Director of Community Development Jesus Morales, Housing Manager Michelle Milam, Crime Prevention Manager
SUBJECT:	Homelessness Strategic Plan
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	There are no costs related to adoption of the Homelessness Strategic Plan (HSP). All Home provided a \$50,000 grant to support development of the HSP.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	November 2, 2021
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	Homelessness is an urgent crisis in the City of Richmond, and it has increased in scope and visibility since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help guide the city and stakeholder efforts to address unsheltered homelessness in the City of Richmond, the City has been working on the development of a Homelessness Strategic Plan (HSP). The Draft HSP will be presented for Council consideration and adoption and information regarding current and planned programming in support of the City's unhoused residents.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	ADOPT the draft Homelessness Strategic Plan; and RECEIVE a presentation of current and planned programming in support of the City's unhoused residents – Community Development (Lina Velasco/Jesus Morales 510-620-6649).

DISCUSSION:

On November 2, 2021, the City Council approved a competitively bid \$100,000 contract with The Center for Common Concerns, Inc., dba Homebase, to assist the City in developing a Homelessness Strategic Plan (HSP or Plan). A portion (\$50,000 of the \$100,000) of the HSP was paid by All Home, a regional non-profit that works across regions and sectors to advance coordinated, innovative service delivery and build coalition-supported momentum to challenge the long-standing systems that perpetuate homelessness. The City is funding its portion using funds from the Planning division's budget.

The City's consultant, Homebase, assisted in the community engagement and development of the draft Plan. The goal of the Plan is to guide the City on strategies and goals to address the challenges posed by the ongoing issue of providing housing for the substantial number of unhoused residents in the city. Homebase reviewed multiple data points to get the background on the homeless population in Richmond. They also conducted meetings and interviews with various stakeholders including neighborhood council representatives, business owners, housing and service providers, community organizations, health service providers, the Steering Committee, the Homeless Task Force, City staff, and unhoused residents; held a virtual community forum; and administered a youth survey to gather input on the Plan.

Per the 2022 Point In Time Count (PIT), the number of unhoused residents increased significantly in Richmond, CA. However, due to technical concerns on the PIT, the Contra Costa County conducted another PIT on January 25, 2023. The information from the January 2023 PIT will not be available until June-July 2023. Nevertheless, City staff expects that it will show there has been an increase in the number of the unhoused population in Richmond. Consequently, the Plan uses data from the 2021 PIT for discussion and background information keeping in mind that although the numbers of the unhoused population may change, there are still challenges that need to be addressed to provide resources to assist this vulnerable segment of the population.

Summary of Draft Homelessness Strategic Plan

The Plan drafted by Homebase has five primary sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Scope of Homelessness in Richmond, 3) Advancing Equity, 4) Overarching Consideration for Effectively Addressing Homelessness, and 5) Goals and Action Steps. The Plan will help guide the City's efforts to address homelessness in the city by identifying the root causes and the scope of homelessness in Richmond, CA, including a perspective of the problem from those with lived experience. The Plan also outlines five goals and action steps the City can focus on for the implementation of the Plan.

In the Introduction section, the Plan provides a summary of the PIT from the 2021 count and why the 2022 PIT data is excluded in their analysis. This section also discusses current initiatives, programs, and services offered by the City of Richmond and other

support services provided by the Contra Costa County Continuum of Care (CoC) administered by Contra Costa County Health Services' Health, Housing, and Homeless Services Division (H3).

The Scope of Homelessness in Richmond section discusses and provides demographic information on the unhoused population in Richmond. Homelessness disproportionately impacts Black/African American and Indigenous people, undocumented immigrants, people with disabilities, and people with criminal histories. It is important to note that while Black/African Americans make up 18 percent of the general population in Richmond; unfortunately, they compose 57 percent of the population experiencing homelessness. Adults also comprise the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Richmond at 85 percent of the total unhoused population. This data speaks to the structural and institutional causes of homelessness in Richmond and the impact these inequities have had. The section on Advancing Equities further discusses the need to dismantle deeply entrenched systems that have led to inequitable decision-making processes and uneven distribution of benefits and burdens and the need to focus attention and resources on those people and places where needs are greatest to ensure that decisions, policies, and practices produce gains for all.

The section on Overarching Considerations for Effectively Addressing Homelessness provides feedback from those that are currently experiencing homelessness and/or those with lived homeless experiences.

The last section, Plan, Goals and Action Steps, provides several short-term and long-term goals and action steps that the City needs to implement to address the needs of the unhoused population. The goals are:

1. Improve quality of life for unsheltered individuals and communities.
2. Create temporary supportive housing (such as transitional villages and safe parking sites) and expand and sustain permanent supportive and affordable long-term housing.
3. Expand prevention and crisis programming.
4. Improve economic pathways for unhoused and recently housed individuals.
5. Build capacity, collaboration, and accountability within agencies working to address homelessness and the system of care as a whole.

In addition to the goals, the HSP identifies the following Priority Action Steps:

1. Create and fund a dedicated City staff position(s) to specifically address homelessness. (Action Step 5.3).
2. Identify funding and development partners for converting hotels and motels to service as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units. (Action Step 2.1)
3. Leverage and expand the Richmond guaranteed income pilot program that is currently under development by the Richmond Rapid Response Fund (R3F). (Action Step 4.2)

4. Ensure that essential living amenities such as water, sanitation, hygiene, and electricity are provided at least weekly to all encampments. (Action Step 1.1)
5. Secure commitment from a faith-based community partner to pilot the first Safe Parking Site in the Richmond Safe Parking Program. (Action Step 3.4)
6. Strengthen collaboration between the City, County, and community-based organizations to improve data collection, implement this Strategic Plan, provide services in the city, and apply for funding opportunities. The dedicated City staff person(s) would determine frequency and format of interagency collaboration, which could include systems level partner meetings, a local data workgroup, or direct service coordination. (Action Step 5.2)

Summary of Existing and Planned Programming in Support of Unhoused Residents

The City is already working on several action steps described in the Plan that began prior to the Plan development; however, these activities align with and continue to reinforce much of the feedback received during the community engagement process. Below is a brief summary of existing and planned programs in support of unhoused residents. To continue this work, additional City staff are required and will be brought to City Council in May/June 2023.

Street Outreach and Encampment Sanitation Services

For instance, Richmond has a contract with Rebuilding Together East Bay North, for the program, Safe Organized Spaces – Richmond (SOS) that provides services to encampments throughout the City, as directly by staff, including the Castro encampment. These services include providing portable toilets, site cleaning, garbage collection, drinking water, showers, employment opportunities, outreach, and referrals to other service providers including Coordinated Outreach Referral and Engagement (CORE). On March 28, 2023, the City Council approved a contract with SOS to continue providing these services through March 2024.

Encampment Resolution Funding

Richmond applied for and received a \$4.8 Million grant from the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH) to provide housing transition assistance and essential living amenities for residents at the Castro encampment. City staff also submitted an application on February 28, 2023, for Round 2 of the Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF-2) in the amount of \$8.1 million to address homeless encampments in Richmond, including encampments on Caltrans rights-of-way. City staff anticipates receiving notification if the City's application is awarded funding.

Rydin Road Flex Funds

The City Council approved a total of \$250,000 for short-term rental assistance to assist Rydin Road encampment resident's transition into alternative housing options when that

encampment was sunset at the end of September 2022. This program has been providing ongoing rental assistance since the sunset of Rydin Road and some residents are transitioning to the Housing First Program, described below.

Housing First Program and Short-Term Emergency Housing Assistance Program

In December 2022, the City Council approved \$425,000 for the Housing First Program, that would provide rental subsidies to unhoused residents for up to one year. Rydin residents are prioritized to receive assistance in this program. In addition, the Council approved \$100,000 for the short-term Emergency Housing Assistance Program. RCF Connects (RCF) was the selected consultant that will be administering the programs on behalf of the City. As of April 2023, RCF began assisting Rydin residents with rental assistance and wrap around services. To access these resources, residents may call (510) 234-1200.

HomeKey Program

The City staff is evaluating the feasibility of an acquisition and rehabilitation of a motel property that will provide permanent housing with supporting services for the unhoused and or those at high risk of losing their housing for the Round 3 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) of the Homekey Program. The Homekey Program is a State-funded initiative that is providing funding to create a variety of interim and permanent housing opportunities for the unhoused. The City has also been approached by a secondary group who is proposing to convert an office building into supportive housing units. City staff is reviewing the proforma and is evaluating its feasibility.

Coordinated Outreach Referral and Engagement (CORE) Services

The City has a contract with Contra Costa Health Services for CORE services, including a dedicated team for the Castro encampment and a shared team with the City of San Pablo, which is also on the City Council agenda this evening. This team is shared with three days dedicated to Richmond and two for San Pablo. City staff is looking at opportunities to expand CORE services within Richmond to provide more service days, including nights and weekends, and will bring an additional report to City Council with this request by June 2023.

CONCLUSION:

City staff is seeking City Council approval of the draft Homelessness Strategic Plan to begin additional implementation and align City resources. Adoption of the Plan will help focus staff resources and efforts on the actions identified in the Plan and demonstrate support for applications and activities undertaken. City staff continues to work closely with Contra Costa Health Services, local service providers, and non-profit housing developers to explore partnerships and collaborations to access funding opportunities to develop a variety of affordable housing options and services within Richmond in support of the city's unhoused residents.

NEXT STEPS:

Continuing this fiscal year, and as part of the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget, City staff will present requests that align with goals, and actions in the HSP, as well as continue to seek outside funding to implement actions identified in the HSP. City staff anticipates returning to the City Council in May/June 2023, with a funding request for a position that would be focused specifically on homelessness and a contract to expand CORE services. In addition, if a Homekey application is determined feasible, City staff will return to the City Council for adoption of a Resolution in support of the City's application.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Draft Homelessness Strategic Plan