



Memorandum

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Councilmembers Sergio Jimenez, Dev Davis, Johnny Khamis

SUBJECT: Actions related to the AB2176: Bridge Housing Communities (BHC)

DATE: August 25, 2017

APPROVED

DATE

08/25/2017

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Accept the staff report, but eliminate all vacant City owned property from the list of potential BHC sites and consider a single pilot site on commercial or industrial property away from residential areas.
2. Direct the City Manager's Office and Housing Department to create a comprehensive community outreach, education, and engagement strategy on homelessness.
3. Direct the City Manager's Office and Housing Department to form a Citywide task force on homelessness with the following parameters:
 - a. Scope:
 - i. Feasibility and cost-benefit of the general concept of temporary housing facilities for individuals in the pipeline to receive permanent housing;
 - ii. Eligibility criteria for individuals to be housed in a temporary housing facility;
 - iii. Facility design and amenities;
 - iv. Safety and security requirements;
 - v. Access to onsite and offsite services and resources;
 - vi. Potential funding for accessory dwelling units to house at-risk single mothers and their children, foster youth, the elderly, and veterans;
 - vii. Feasibility of a voluntary safe overnight parking program for homeless individuals who are employed or nearly employed. The program should be offered to businesses or churches in industrial areas near transportation that are at least 500 feet away from residential neighborhoods;
 - viii. Feasibility of sanctioned encampments;
 - b. Composition:
 - i. The taskforce would be comprised of, but not limited to, community members and leaders from each Council District, homeless advocates, non-profit service providers, and County representatives.
 - c. Time Frame:
 - i. The taskforce will report back to Council no later than February 2018.

- ii. Upon review of the findings from the taskforce, Council shall make a recommendation as to whether the benefits of a temporary housing facility pilot program outweigh the cost of the resources and staff time necessary to implement it and if necessary redirect funds to other projects.

ANALYSIS

The community has made it very clear that the vacant City owned properties evaluated by the Housing Department are not viable locations for Bridge Housing Communities (BHC).

Residents have expressed a genuine concern and desire to address our homeless crisis and find solutions to house our most vulnerable residents. However, that solution must come from the community, and it must have the least amount of impact possible on our residential communities. Although we appreciate the Housing Departments efforts to evaluate sites for BHC's the process thus far has lacked clarity, details, and community input. Narrow efforts focused only on site selection have left residents with more questions than answers.

Moving forward, we must create a mechanism that will guide the Housing Department on how to best keep the community informed, engaged and active in working towards solutions to our homeless crisis. An extensive outreach and engagement plan will allow our residents to remain informed and provide input. A Citywide task force will guide the Housing Department in creating a more complete and comprehensive plan for temporary housing facilities. The taskforce will make recommendations on key questions, including who will live in the temporary housing facilities, what services will be provided, what security measures will be implemented, and how impacts on the surrounding community will be avoided or mitigated. The concept of a Citywide taskforce is not new to San Jose. The Mayor's Gang Taskforce, the High Speed Rail Community Working Group, and the Diridon Good Neighbor Committee have all successfully informed City policy on important issues.

Temporary housing facilities for homeless individuals have the potential to take many people off the streets and place them in safe, sanitary conditions while they wait to be permanently housed. There is no doubt that this is a noble effort that fills a need in our community. Yet, because this concept is so new to San Jose, we must keep exploring other options and remain cognizant of the cost-benefit analysis of each proposed solution. Safe parking, accessory dwelling units, and sanctioned encampments are not novel ideas in the battle against homelessness, but we must evaluate these ideas and determine what impact they might have and if they will work in our City. Furthermore, if we take the proper steps to evaluate a project and conclude that the staff time and cost outweigh the benefits, then we must stop in our tracks, redirect our efforts and resources to more appropriate and effective solutions.

Our homeless population is vast and diverse, as are its needs. There is no "one size fits all" solution to this problem. The root causes of homelessness are decades in the making, from the defunding of mental health institutions by the Federal government to the ever-rising cost of living in the Bay Area. Because the problem we face is immense and complicated, we should be innovative and resilient in our approach.