



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember
Donald Rocha

SUBJECT: BRIDGE HOUSING COMMUNITIES **DATE:** August 28, 2017

Approved Dom Rocha Date 8-28-17

PH

RECOMMENDATION

1. Consistent with Recommendation 1 in the memo from Councilmembers Jimenez, Davis and Khamis, eliminate all vacant City owned property from the list of potential Bridge Housing Communities (BHC) sites.
2. Direct staff to identify additional sites that could host a BHC pilot project, as follows:
 - a. Staff should attempt to identify commercial or industrial sites, consistent with Recommendation 1 in the memo from Councilmembers Jimenez, Davis and Khamis.
 - b. Staff should also renew requests to other public agencies—specifically the County, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Valley Transportation Authority, and Caltrans—to identify underutilized lands in their inventories for potential use as a BHC site, consistent with Recommendation 2 in the memo from the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers Jones, Peralez and Arenas.
3. As suggested in Recommendations 4 and 5 in the memo from the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers, direct staff to return to City Council in 60 days with the list of potential BHC sites and seek Council direction as to whether to proceed with a BHC pilot project on three or fewer sites. In order to frame this decision for the Council, staff should provide the following items:
 - a. A prioritized list of sites in order of viability and readiness for development.

- b. A detailed community outreach plan, which should include:
 - i. Recommendations 4bi, 4bii and 4biii from the memo from the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers as well as Recommendation 2 from the memo by Councilmember Nguyen.
 - ii. A proposal for the creation of a Homelessness Task Force to provide a forum for discussion of the Bridge Housing issue as well as other potential housing policy initiatives, such as a safe parking program or a program to fund accessory dwelling units to house certain at-risk populations, such as single mothers and their children, foster youth, the elderly and veterans (similar to Recommendation 3 in the Jimenez, Davis and Khamis memo.)
 - c. A recommendation as to whether the benefits of a BHC pilot program outweigh the opportunity cost of the resources and staff time necessary to implement it (similar to Recommendation 3cii in the Jimenez, Davis and Khamis memo.) In making this recommendation, staff should give an account of the funding that is currently set aside for the BHC project, and identify other potential homelessness programs or projects that it could be used to support.
 - d. A comprehensive timeline for future work on BHCs. The timeline should show how long the outreach process and potential task force process would take and should also estimate when the Council would be able to approve a final BHC project and when that project would be up and running.
4. Revise the original evaluation criteria for potential sites as described in Recommendation 6 in the memo from the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers.

ANALYSIS

Over the past few weeks I have heard many strong opinions on this topic, both from District 9 residents and from homeless advocates. Siting homeless housing is never an easy undertaking. It can incite strong emotions on many sides: from advocates who have a deep commitment to relieving the suffering of the homeless, to residents who have fears about the future of their neighborhood, to homeless folks themselves who just want a place to lay their head at night. On a topic this difficult where opinion is splintered between so many different interests it could be easy for the Council to splinter as well and deliver a divided decision that would deepen divisions in our community. My hope is that we don't succumb to division and make a sincere effort to come together around a consensus approach.

With this memo, I have attempted to lay out what I think a consensus might look like. I've combined elements from the three other memos that my colleagues have put out on

this item. Similar to the approach in the memo from the Mayor and his cosigners, I propose that we direct staff to identify additional opportunity sites and bring the issue back to the City Council for a decision on whether to proceed with a Bridge Housing pilot.

When we make that decision, I think we should consider very carefully whether Bridge Housing is the best and most efficient investment of staff time and resources. Each site will only yield 20 units, and I can say confidently from my experience with this issue so far that we will need to do a tremendous amount of work and outreach with the community to get even one site off the ground. In Recommendation 3c, I propose that we ask staff to provide their opinion as to whether the opportunity costs of pursuing this effort outweighs its potential benefits. I also ask them to identify what other homelessness programs or projects we could fund instead of Bridge Housing. My intent to set up a clear decision-point for the Council as to whether we want to proceed with Bridge Housing or whether we want to spend the money set aside for it on another program.

If we do decide to go ahead with a Bridge Housing pilot, the community engagement and outreach process will be critically important. Under Recommendation 3b, I've included outreach ideas from all three of my colleagues' memos and asked staff to return with more fully developed plans based on each idea.

Outreach on this issue is so critical that I think the differences in outreach between districts so far has something to do with the different opinions on the Council. In a few districts, word of which sites were under consideration for bridge housing filtered out into the neighborhood in a haphazard way instead of through an intentional outreach process. Locating homeless housing is a difficult task under the best of circumstances, but it is made even more difficult when we fail to communicate clearly with residents.

As a consequence of how this proposal was rolled out, the outreach has been uneven between council districts. In Districts 2, 9, and 10, intense community interest has resulted in meetings with hundreds of residents, which in at least two separate cases overflowed the rooms booked to hold them. In some other districts, no outreach has been conducted at all. These differences between districts put many of us on the Council in very different positions as we think about next steps on this issue.

As I mentioned before, it is my hope that we will be able to come together on this issue. We may be facing different levels of engagement in each of our districts and we may be at different points in the outreach process, but I think our only hope of a positive outcome on this issue is to move forward with a united approach.