

Lisa Driscoll

From: Daniel Barth <danielrichardbarth@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 31, 2021 6:17 AM
To: Lisa Driscoll
Cc: Mariana Moore; BK Williams
Subject: Recommendation to MXCAB for HTF, #36: Interim Shelter
Attachments: HTF#36.Interim Shelter.MXCAB.pdf

Thank you for your leadership to bring community participation to the MXCAB prioritization process.

It is hoped that the Housing Trust Fund (priority #36) dedicates a portion of the Fund to Interim Shelter approaches.

Attached is a document that summarizes the Interim Shelter approaches that would divert unhoused individuals from unsupported homeless encampments to safe, managed locations; state-compliant transitional villages; and a pathway to permanent housing.

It is not enough for H3 to reopen emergency shelters and expand Project Homekey. People who remain unsheltered will continue to seek survival on the streets, parks, creeks, freeways, and train tracks. Moving unhoused populations off city streets and into managed spaces is the only financially feasible short-term solution available.

Thank you, MXCAB members, for taking the time to review this recommendation.

Daniel

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Recommendation to MXCAB for Housing Trust Fund, Priority #36
Interim Shelter: Immediate, Cost-Effective Solutions to a Public Health Crisis

An alliance of seven housing justice and homeless services organizations in Contra Costa County have strongly urged the MXCAB to name housing priorities for Measure X funding that:

1. Comprehensively address affordable housing across the 3 P's (Protection, Preservation, and Production);
2. Explicitly name strategies for housing stability that counteract the looming threats of displacement amidst the phase out of eviction moratoriums set to expire this Fall; and
3. Offer integrated housing and homelessness intervention strategies.

The following brief summarizes two interim shelter solutions that are recommended to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing. Such approaches would complement current semi-congregate sheltering and Project Homekey transitional housing solutions.

The housing justice advocates strongly urge that the MXCAB funding priorities presented to the Board of Supervisors reflect a recommendation for a County Housing Trust Fund. Half of the funds allocated for a Housing Trust Fund would be used on preservation and anti-displacement as a preventive measure to marginal housing and homelessness.

Among these recommendations, the alliance of advocates recommends that the Housing Trust Fund dedicate a portion of the Fund for an interdepartmental grant program between the Department of Conservation and Development, the Health, Housing and Homeless Services (H3) Department, and the Contra Costa Housing Authority to ***prioritize interim shelter solutions that would divert unhoused individuals from unsupported encampments to safe, managed locations; state-compliant transitional villages; and a pathway to permanent housing.***

Overview of Need for Interim Shelter Approaches

Thousands of people in Contra Costa County are currently homeless. Contra Costa County Health Services (CHS) estimates that there are at least 1,000 unsheltered homeless people in Richmond alone. Most do not have even temporary emergency shelter options and live outdoors in homeless encampments. People living in unsupported encampments subsist day-to-day in squalid, unhealthy conditions, exposed to cold, rain and wind, crime and violence, lack of basic needs such as food and medical treatment, and lack of adequate sanitation and debris collection services, all of which are detrimental to public health and safety. Many are elderly and/or have underlying health conditions but lack access to medical care. CHS saw an 88% increase in the number of unsheltered homeless seniors age 62 and older in one year and the number of older adults in their seventies and eighties continue to grow at an alarming rate.

Prior to the pandemic, our county had shelter beds for less than 28% of the homeless population. The vulnerability index used by CHS to decide who got a shelter bed was literally "*Who is most likely to die out there tonight.*" After many months of closure, shelters are beginning to reopen, but the number of available beds must decrease dramatically due to distancing requirements.

Living on the streets or with chronic housing insecurity causes trauma and continuous deterioration of physical and mental health. A recent study found that homeless people are 23 times more likely to be murdered and 17 times more likely to commit suicide than people with housing. They are likely to live about 30 fewer years than they would if housed. Homeless youth aged 15-24 in San Francisco have a ten times higher mortality rate than their peers with permanent housing; all of these deaths were preventable.

Homelessness is a serious public health and safety issue and has a major negative impact on the quality of our city life. The conditions in which unsheltered people live impact the surrounding residential and business communities to a large degree. Homelessness is expensive, costing taxpayers millions of dollars in police, medical, and clean-up expenses. Homeless people make up about 33% of all emergency room visits, most of which could be prevented.

It is not enough for H3 to reopen emergency shelters and expand Project Homekey. People who remain unsheltered will continue to seek survival on the streets, parks, creeks, freeways, and train tracks. ***Moving unhoused populations off city streets and into managed spaces is the only financially feasible short-term solution available.***

Safely managed spaces can be established by developing transitional villages that provide temporary emergency housing and supportive services on a pathway to permanent housing. In this model, state-compliant emergency sleeping cabins and shared amenities are provided in a community setting in non-residential areas. Case managers and housing navigators work with residents to address any barriers they may have to obtaining permanent housing.

Another interim shelter solution is a scattered sites model in which a number of hosts (such as churches or community centers with parking lots) provide space for a small number of vehicle or emergency sleeping cabin dwellers.

Safe off-street parking and cabin communities – in both scattered site and convergent models – can take hundreds of people off the street and address problems of neighborhood disorder, homelessness, and the lack of safety net resources.

The ultimate goal of these interventions is permanent housing and the ability to remain housed. They bridge the gap between precarious life on the streets and stable permanent

housing. In many cities around the country, transitional villages have proven to be a critical component of their continuum of care.

These interim shelter solutions offer safety, stability, and a cleaner, healthier environment, as well as a pathway to permanent housing, for a fraction of the cost of other alternatives. They provide basic needs such as safe and stable shelter, food, water, and hygiene, as well as a sense of community, purpose, dignity, and hope. For each resident, a personalized service plan based on individual need, and focused on procurement of housing, may include medical and dental care, housing assistance, help applying for benefits and health insurance, employment counseling, job training or job placement, financial literacy counseling, and mental health and substance abuse services.

Some of the advantages of these strategies over other alternatives are:

- They could be up and running in a very short time frame.
- They cost far less than other types of shelter.
- Emergency cabins can be assembled in a weekend, compared to years for new housing.
- Many homeless people face barriers to using traditional shelters, and there simply isn't enough shelter space or affordable housing for everyone.
- Public interest in transitional villages is high. Volunteers across the country participate in building these villages.

Transitional Villages **Community Living in Non-Residential Areas**

The proposed transitional village model would most closely resemble the one developed by the Low Income Housing Institute in Seattle, which has helped hundreds of residents transition into permanent housing and find employment with a much higher success rate and lower cost than traditional shelters. Rather than providing a simple collection of emergency sleeping cabins, the villages are intentional communities in which residents share responsibilities. The empowerment-based model fosters personal investment in its success, leadership and organizational growth. A primary goal is to have a positive impact on the immediate neighborhood.

A state-compliant emergency sleeping cabin is a relocatable hard-sided structure that is occupied during a local declaration of shelter crisis. Each single-occupant cabin will be either 8' x 10' or 8' x 12' (the size of a small bedroom), with a real residential locking door, a functioning window, heat, electricity, and a bed. Larger units and/or a permitted loft may accommodate additional occupants. Each unit will be equipped with a smoke alarm, CO detector and fire

extinguisher. Additional furnishings and an outside storage unit will be added to each unit as funds or in-kind donations permit.

Cooking and bathroom facilities will be provided in communal spaces and shared, much like in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing. Refrigerated storage will be provided for safe storage of food. Toilet and bathing facilities will be sufficient to process the anticipated volume of sewage and wastewater to maintain sanitary conditions. Potable drinking water will be provided. Villages may include gardens, picnic tables, workshops, and micro-businesses run by residents.

Transitional villages can be scaled to any size, and if necessary, can be developed incrementally in stages, with expansion occurring as fundraising milestones are reached. While a permanent location would be ideal, villages can also be located on a temporary basis (for example, on a site that is slated for future development), because all components are designed to be relocatable.

In addition to safe and stable shelter, it has been proven that case management and supportive services are crucial to successful housing placement for most unsheltered people, and these will be primary program components. A desire for permanent housing and willingness to accept the necessary services will be requirements for residents of the villages.

Transitional Village Implementation

Anticipated steps for development, establishment, and operations of a transitional village:

Adopt an ordinance

- Declare a county-wide shelter crisis and pass an ordinance to incorporate Emergency Housing Building Standards Appendices X and O, as adopted by the State of California for Emergency Housing Buildings And Facilities (Note: The City of Richmond has already passed such an ordinance.)

Secure a Site

- Define site criteria
- Search for and visit potential sites
- Assess site feasibility
- Negotiate site acquisition
- Conduct neighborhood outreach (non-residential areas only considered)

Site Preparation

- Obtain permits
- Make site improvements as necessary (eg. ground cover, utilities, fencing, lighting)
- Procure water tanks if no water source
- Procure materials for cabins, security building, community tent or building
- Procure toilets, washing stations, cooking facilities, refrigeration

Management and Operations Plan

- Document site and program operations standards for security, enforcement, evacuation, accessibility, fire prevention, etc, appropriate for health, welfare and safety
- Outline goals and plans for connections with community resources, and plans for ongoing community engagement

Village Infrastructure

- Design village layout for cabins, community buildings and amenities
- Arrange "build days" for cabins and community structures
- Procure and arrange furniture, bedding, heaters, smoke detectors, etc.
- Set up office/security building with computer, phone and other equipment
- Arrange for garbage and recycling service

Staffing

- Executive Director of managing entity
- Operations Manager
- Village Administrator
- Resident Managers
- Housing/Resource Navigators
- Case manager(s)
- Shuttle driver

Governance

- Develop formalized governance structure, which will include working with residents to implement site/program operations, resident expectations of conduct, resident rights and responsibilities, and a resident and community grievance policy

- Residents participate in the adoption and enforcement of policy, assist with security and property maintenance (including the adjacent neighborhood block), and share experience and expertise with their peers

Resident Selection

- Determine criteria
- Develop referral and application process

Services Plan

- Case managers and housing/resource navigators assess residents' needs and formulate personalized service plans to address any barriers to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing
- Services will be based on need and may include medical and dental care, housing referrals and assistance such as filling out applications, assistance applying for benefits such as SSI or veterans' benefits, assistance applying for health insurance, employment counseling, job training or job placement, mental health services, legal advice, financial literacy counseling, addiction treatment, and other services needed to assist them in reaching their goals
- Case manager and housing/resource navigator will meet with the residents on a regular basis to ensure that they are engaging in the activities required to address any obstacles to obtaining housing and that their needs are being met in terms of issues such as medical care, etc.
- All residents will be required to be on a waiting list for permanent housing
- Navigator will perform community outreach to business owners, realtors, landlords, housing developers and other service providers to build strong relationships and identify new and existing opportunities to better assist residents in accessing resources, employment, supportive services, and housing opportunities

Scattered Sites

Secure Off-Street Safe Parking in Neighborhoods

As residents continue to become homeless and vehicle dwellers increasingly become located and disbursed from curbsides, the need for secure locations will increase. In the scattered sited

model, churches, nonprofits, cultural facilities, government buildings, and social service centers with parking lots provide temporary space for one to four vehicle-dwelling households per site. Qualified program candidates are vetted and matched with appropriate host sites as household guests. In exchange for off-street access, the households provide stewardship of the property and adjacent neighborhood streets.

Trash removal, handwashing and drinking water, portable toilets and RV wastewater disposal, electrical power, and access to nearby mobile showers are provided. A case manager works with the guests to address their housing needs. Liability insurance is provided by the managing entity. A 3-party contractual agreement is drafted between the household, host, and managing entity.

The managing entity provides a mobile engagement team for daily monitoring and liaison support to ensure that the household's presence at the host's site is favorable to all parties. Additional on-site support is provided as needed. This tailored, intensive process will provide an interim step for dozens of households until sustainable mid- and long-term housing arrangements are secured.

Scattered Sites Implementation

The first step in implementing a scattered sites program would be to pass enabling legislation at the county level. (Note: The City of Richmond has already passed the necessary ordinance.) Then selection of a managing entity and outreach to potential hosts can commence.

Once a host has agreed to participate in the program, the following procedures are followed:

- The host will be interviewed by the managing entity to establish what amenities are already present on the site and what types of situations they can accommodate (such as families, older adults, chronic health conditions, etc.), and to gather information that will assist in selecting one or more households that are likely to be compatible with the host and the immediate surroundings.
- Interested vehicle dwellers will be interviewed to determine their needs in terms resources, supportive services, and the functionality of their vehicles.
- The host applies for a permit, if required.
- A 3-party contractual agreement between the host, the household guest, and the managing entity is drafted for an initial 30-60 day stay. This agreement will outline the responsibilities of all parties. (Note: after the probationary period, the host may choose

to extend the arrangement and revise the agreement in a monthly renewable contract, detailed and enforced in accordance with any further specifications the host may have.)

- The household receives coaching to prepare them for the responsibility and to promote accountability in their role as steward of the host's property. They are also assisted with meeting any compliance requirements related to the vehicle.
- The host site is prepared for the arrival of the household guests. Depending on the site, this may include installation of a portable toilet and handwashing station, procurement of a drinking water storage tank, support for wastewater disposal, access to electrical power, provision of liability insurance, and anything deemed necessary by the host.
- Once the guests have been settled at the site, a service provider will visit on a regular basis to provide the resources needed such as drinking water and trash removal. Portable toilets will be serviced by the rental company.
- A Case Manager and Housing/Resource Navigator will meet with the guests on a regular basis to ensure that they are engaging in the activities required to address any obstacles to obtaining housing and that their needs are being met in terms of issues such as medical care.
- A Housing/Resource Navigator will actively seek potential housing opportunities for the guests and assist with preparing the guests to qualify for housing.

Homelessness is a major crisis of our times. The urgent housing crisis and worsening economic conditions will continue to drive more people out of their housing and into first-time homelessness. People who are currently homeless suffer needlessly every day with insufficient responses to their practical needs. Our county needs immediate and effective solutions, and interim shelter will be a critical step for many along the continuum from homelessness to permanent housing.