



# City of Culver City

## Staff Report

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**CC - ACTION ITEM: (1) Discussion of the City's Policies and Programs to Address Homelessness in the City; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.**

**Meeting Date:** March 28, 2022

**Contact Person/Dept:** Helen Chin/City Manager's Office

**Phone Number:** 310-253-6022

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes  No

**General Fund:** Yes  No

**Public Hearing:**  **Action Item:**  **Attachments:**

**Commission Action Required:** Yes  No

**Public Notification:** (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (03/23/2022);

**Department Approval:** John M. Nachbar, City Manager (03/23/2022)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council (1) discuss the City's policies and programs to address homelessness in the City; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND**

At the February 28, 2022 City Council meeting, Council Member Eriksson asked to agendize a discussion about providing safe paths of travel for students and children walking to and from school under freeway overpasses and near unsheltered people living in encampments. Mayor Lee and Council Member Fisch agreed to hold an overall discussion about the City's policies and programs, and other potential policies and programs, to address homelessness, which received support from the City Council to place on a future agenda.

### **DISCUSSION**

Since the formation of the Homelessness Ad Hoc Committee in 2004 (renamed the Advisory Committee on Housing and Homelessness in 2021), the City has made increasing investments in staff time and capital and operating funds to address and prevent homelessness. Recognizing that

homelessness is the result of multiple systems failures, the City has continued to invest in numerous programs to address the root causes of housing and homelessness, including adopting the Plan to Prevent and Combat Homelessness in 2018 ( 2018 Plan) (Attachment 1).

### *The Need for Coordinated Efforts Across Levels of Government*

To better understand the impacts and limitations of the City's programs, it helps to contextualize Culver City within the greater Los Angeles County region, a city system within a larger county system. Homelessness is a regional, statewide, and national issue. The full eradication of homelessness requires a coordinated structural response across federal, state, and local governments to fully address how the lack of living wage jobs, affordable housing, and affordable health and mental health care, as well as the factors of youth aging out of foster care, and incarceration, can lead people toward housing insecurity and potentially into homelessness. Homelessness also disproportionately impacts Black, brown and indigenous and other already marginalized communities.

Once someone falls into homelessness, another intricate network of services must come together in a coordinated fashion to help lift them out of this state. Since Culver City is part of Los Angeles County's Continuum of Care (CoC) for homelessness services, the City is reliant and dependent on Los Angeles County (County) for some aspects of countywide welfare and social services, such as outreach and mental health care. Additionally, since the City has regulatory authority over land use, City leadership has had the foresight to continue investing in housing programs within the City's power to address housing and homelessness within its boundaries.

### *City Policies and Programs*

The City's 2018 Plan solidified and focused the City's efforts on concrete goals and actions. Since the City is part of the CoC, the goals and actions outlined in the Plan are aligned with the County's action plan and strategies. While the City relies on County Health Departments to provide health and mental health services, the City is building out and investing in the infrastructure to prevent people from falling into homelessness and to support people who are currently experiencing homelessness within City boundaries. This is not an exhaustive list of the City's programs, but meaningful highlights include:

- Formation of the Advisory Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ACOHH), an appointed body of City residents and representatives from the business and supportive service community whose goal is to identify and advocate for solutions to end homelessness and methods and means for improving the quality of housing and life for all individuals.
- Construction of Upward Bound House in 2009 to house unsheltered families and children.
- Adoption of permanent rent control and tenant protections in 2020.
- Investment in two rounds of an emergency rental assistance program for people experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- Enactment of the eviction moratorium to support tenants from eviction due to financial hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Acquisition and future rehabilitation of two motels in the City to provide 76 units of interim and supportive housing.
- Development of a mobile crisis intervention program to meet the behavioral and mental health

needs of the City's entire community.

- Development of a Safe Parking program for unsheltered people living in vehicles.
- Continuation of emergency motel voucher and rapid rehousing programs.
- Continued investigation of Venice and Virginia parking lots for the development of modular interim and permanent supportive housing.
- Continued development of current and future affordable housing programs and policies.
- Continued and expanded homelessness outreach and engagement through St. Joseph Center and City teams to build rapport for service connection.

Additional information on programs in place for the current fiscal year, and for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year can be found in the Community Development Department Housing Division annual work program (Attachment 2) and the strategies for the programs can be found in the 2018 Plan.

While these are Culver City efforts, they are performed in close collaboration with local and regional partners. Staff works closely with the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative office, the westside cities through the Westside Cities Council of Governments, and in coordination with staff from the City of Los Angeles Council Districts 11 and 5. The City's efforts are developed in alignment with larger regional and local strategies and pursued in lockstep, as much as possible, with neighboring jurisdictions, as homelessness and the impacts of homelessness are regional.

There are other housing options and programs staff has begun to review and research but have not yet funded or implemented. These include such options as pallet housing, a type of shelter for unhoused persons as they transition out of homelessness and into more permanent housing (Sample shown in Attachment 3). Representatives from the organization Pallet Shelters made an informational presentation at the joint City Council and ACOHH Meeting on April 19, 2021. No motion was made to pursue the program. Several Southern California communities such as Banning, Riverside, Redondo Beach and North Hollywood have installed pallet facilities. The pallet shelters being utilized in southern California that staff has reviewed are approximately 64 square feet and may contain one or several beds. According to staff research, the expected median stay is three to six months.

There are also housing approaches that could be explored further, such as Direct Housing (Housing First), which advocates supplying social services with housing accommodations, without preconditions and barriers to entry (such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements). Such programs include providing rental assistance or master-leasing units for the highest users of emergency and homeless outreach services. The ACOHH has discussed this type of approach in the past.

#### *Interim and Supportive Housing/Project Homekey*

The City continues to respond to the homelessness crisis by investing in the acquisition of two motels on Sepulveda Boulevard for the purpose of creating 76 housing units for people experiencing chronic homelessness. The City was recently notified that it was awarded \$26.7 million in State funds from Project Homekey. These housing units will be the first interim and permanent supportive housing units ever created in Culver City and will be one of few such projects on the westside of Los Angeles County. While the motel reuse project is being implemented, the City will continue to move forward on the programs outlined above and in the 2018 Plan.

### *Ongoing Clean-ups and Education at the Ground Level*

Additionally, the City's overall investments include weekly clean-ups throughout the City, including the Washington Boulevard, Venice Boulevard freeway underpasses, and municipal buildings to remove debris from public rights-of-way where unhoused persons are currently living/sleeping, while also educating unhoused individuals of the benefits and importance of maintaining safe and accessible pedestrian walkways and building entryways. The St. Joseph outreach team also works with individuals who have set up tents on City property such as the Senior Center. At the March 28, 2022 Council meeting, in another agenda item, City Council will discuss the northside of Washington Boulevard and the City's potential steps to address the narrow sidewalk, to allow for a dedicated pedestrian path of travel if unhoused persons are encamped there.

The 2018 Plan also includes several targeted efforts of outreach to unhoused people. City staff, the Police Department's mental health evaluation team, and the City's contract provider St. Joseph's Center continue to provide outreach to people living in encampments throughout the City to offer services, education, and support. Soon the City will have a mobile crisis intervention program that can serve to provide additional and proactive support to people needing service connection. This degree of engagement is important to maintain trust and rapport between individuals and service providers. Once the motels are in operation, the trust-building with individuals will go a long way to ensure that enrollment into the housing programs proceeds smoothly.

### *Summary*

Considering all the above and understanding how the City's role is embedded within the County system, the City has been tackling the regional crisis and is limited by its role and authority as a local government agency. Culver City is one of 88 cities within the County system and is subject to the priorities and changes within County government. The complex nature of homelessness also poses a challenge of providing unique and customized care to individuals experiencing homelessness. It takes time, continued investment, and a coordinate structural response to enact the change and course correction needed to turn around the failed systems that have led people to fall into homelessness in the first place.

Culver City continues to demonstrate a commitment to caring for its most vulnerable residents by steadily investing in a localized infrastructure of services, programs, and supports. The City remains a vocal presence in regional discussions advocating for additional funding and provides feedback on informing strategies and programs to addressing homelessness.

Staff recommends the City Council discuss the above programs and City policies addressing homelessness and provide additional and specific direction to staff to reinforce existing efforts, change or revisit strategies or programs, or other areas of input to be studied and implemented.

### **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

There is no fiscal impact associated with discussion of this item.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- 1) 2022-03-28\_ATT1\_2018 Plan to Combat and Prevent Homelessness
- 2) 2022-03-28\_ATT2\_Community Development Department Work Plan on Housing and Homelessness
- 3) 2022-03-28\_ATT3\_Pallet Housing Information

**MOTION**

That the City Council:

1. Discuss the City's policies and programs to address homelessness; and
2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.