



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: April 6, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY (DISTRICTS: 3 & 5)

OVERVIEW

San Diego continues to struggle with an on-going crisis of homelessness with an estimated 22,000 people experiencing homelessness at some point throughout the year, including 8,102 individuals who were counted on one night during the 2019 Point-in-Time count. The social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have only increased the threat of displacement, evictions, and homelessness, especially for low-income households and communities of color. The costs of homelessness are unacceptably high as research has closely linked even a brief experience of homelessness to worse health, education, and economic outcomes.

The situation is particularly acute in North San Diego County, where the eight cities across the region and various service providers each deploy resources and programs within their respective service areas. In response, the elected leaders of these cities have come together to coordinate a regional approach and collaborate with the County to provide a greater level of outreach and support to unhoused individuals and accelerate pathways to stable, affordable, and service-enriched housing. This approach is trauma-informed, aligned with evidence-based models, and part of a broader, housing-first framework that includes homeless prevention, increasing the supply of suitable rehousing opportunities, and providing coordinated outreach and wrap-around services.

Today's action develops a North County pilot program to deploy an integrated team that will work in partnership with the staff in various cities to increase the level of outreach, assessments, and connections to wrap-around services and suitable housing opportunities for those experiencing homelessness. The team will be comprised of at least 10 outreach staff (primarily highly qualified social workers, such as LCSWs, though the need for housing navigators should also be assessed). Appropriate administrative, data analytics, and supervisory staff will support the outreach team.

Each outreach staff will be deployed across a consistent geography to develop trust and build relationships with homeless individuals through repeated interactions. The outreach staff will be

SUBJECT: PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

able to transport clients and will have access to flexible discretionary funds to provide for incidentals such as clothing, food, help obtaining identification, and short-term motel vouchers as part of the engagement process. This proposal seeks to be collaborative in nature and provides these resources in coordination with cities and service providers to augment and expand the existing network of homeless outreach services.

This program will also significantly improve the quality of real-time data on homeless individuals available in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The current usage of HMIS is not universal and we know many individuals are not being recorded in the data properly. All County outreach staff will utilize a standardized approach to logging clients into HMIS, which will provide program staff and policymakers with a more comprehensive picture of the homelessness crisis.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND AND SUPERVISOR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

1. Find that the proposed actions are not a project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378 and is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed actions may have a significant effect on the environment.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to create a plan that incorporates the following and report back in 90 days:
 - a. Develop an integrated team to work in partnership with North County cities and service providers to provide homeless outreach, assessments, and connections to services and housing opportunities. The integrated team should include at least 10 outreach staff, primarily comprised of highly experienced and qualified social workers, such as LCSWs, though the plan should also assess the potential role for housing navigators. The integrated team should also include appropriate administrative, data analytics, and supervisory staff.
 - b. Develop a plan for accessing office space, both at existing County sites and through partnership arrangements with local community based organizations, that can be utilized as meeting space for clients and outreach workers.
 - c. Engage key stakeholders throughout the process of developing the plan including the local cities, services providers, and impacted individuals.
 - d. Identify key outcome metrics and develop an evaluation framework for assessing program effectiveness.
 - e. Identify additional opportunities for the County to work in partnership with North County cities and service providers to support homeless prevention, homeless outreach, housing navigation, and development of suitable rehousing opportunities.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to determine the funds necessary to implement this program and refer that amount to budget.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the County of San Diego's Fiscal Year 2020-21 Operational Plan. If approved, this request will result in estimated annual costs of \$1.5

SUBJECT: PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

million beginning in Fiscal Year 2021-22, that will be referred to budget to establish appropriations and identify a funding source. The impact to net General Fund cost and staff years will depend on the final program design.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

San Diego continues to struggle with an on-going crisis of homelessness with an estimated 22,000 people experiencing homelessness at some point throughout the year, including 8,102 individuals who were counted on one night during the 2019 Point-in-Time count. The same 2019 count identified 1,540 homeless individuals in the North County region, though this likely undercounts the true scale of the crisis.

	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
North Coastal	293	471	764
North Inland	283	493	776
Total	576	964	1,540

The situation is particularly challenging in North San Diego County, where the eight cities across the region and various service providers each deploy resources and programs within their respective service areas. In response, the elected leaders of these cities have come together to coordinate a regional approach and collaborate with the County to provide a greater level of outreach and support to unhoused individuals and accelerate pathways to stable, affordable, and service-enriched housing. This approach is trauma-informed, aligned with evidence-based models, and part of a broader, housing-first framework that includes homeless prevention, increasing the supply of suitable rehousing opportunities, and providing coordinated, trauma-informed, outreach and wrap-around services.

Homelessness is driven by many social and economic factors. The regional shortfall of housing, especially affordable housing, paired with high rates of poverty has led to widespread housing insecurity for many residents of North San Diego County. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these conditions. While the solution to homelessness is ultimately housing and support services, for many people experiencing homelessness, the first step starts with trauma-informed, evidence-based outreach services to assist individuals in reconnecting with the suitable housing and support services. Today’s action provides critical support to communities in North San Diego County and creates a model for other regionally coordinated homeless outreach and rehousing efforts across the County of San Diego.

I. Unique North County Considerations

SUBJECT: PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

The North County region has many overlapping jurisdictions that make homeless coordination especially challenging. The region has eight cities (Carlsbad, Del Mar, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, Solana Beach and Vista), various unincorporated communities (Anza-Borrego Springs, Bonsall, De Luz, Elfin Forrest, Fallbrook, Harmony Grove, Palomar Mountain, Pala, Pauma Valley, Ranchita, Rainbow, Valley Center and Warner Springs), multiple law enforcement jurisdictions, four housing authorities, and three major hospitals operated by different entities. Despite these challenges, North County leaders have demonstrated an ability to work collaboratively across boundaries and sectors. This regional collaborative homeless approach can be a model for other regions in the county, including East County, which is currently developing a similar collaborative model.

II. Providing Trauma-Informed Street Outreach and Housing Navigation in North County

This program calls for the establishment of a street outreach team deployed across North San Diego County cities and the unincorporated communities to provide outreach and housing navigation, transportation to services and support, and collaboration with cities and service providers across the region. The approach will be trauma-informed, emphasizing understanding and compassion, looks at physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both clients and providers, and delivers tools to empower people on the pathway to stability. The outreach team will also take a “no wrong door” approach that is person-centered and seeks to connect the homeless individual with a variety of services and housing options to meet their specific needs.

Each outreach staff will be deployed across a consistent geography to develop trust and build relationships with homeless individuals through repeated interactions. The outreach staff will be able to transport clients and will have access to flexible discretionary funds to provide for incidental such as clothing, food, help obtaining identification, and short-term motel vouchers as part of the engagement process.

III. Critical Role of Data

In order to adequately respond to the homelessness crisis, we need better real-time data on the true scope of homelessness and the specifics of individual situations. The most comprehensive data is provided by the annual Point-in-Time count which provides a snapshot of homelessness on a single evening, but even this methodology likely significantly undercounts the true scale of the crisis. Further, the current usage of HMIS is not universal and we know many individuals are not being recorded in the data properly. This proposal will significantly improve the quality of data as all County outreach staff will utilize a standardized approach to logging clients into HMIS. This data will provide program staff and policymakers with a more comprehensive picture of our homelessness crisis to inform future strategies.

The outreach team will be supported by appropriate data analytics staff that should have access to the County’s Behavioral Health Services (BHS) and Eligibility Operations databases, including CERNER, to identify any existing BHS program enrollments and support program referrals to BHS. The team should also look to access and link data from the Community Information Exchange.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Section 15060(c)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines provides that activities identified in Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines are not subject to CEQA review. Section 15378 provides that administrative activities of governments that will not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment are exempt from CEQA review. The proposed action is administrative in nature as it authorizes staff to provide service-related supports. Therefore, the proposed action is not subject to CEQA review. In addition, it can also be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment by merely authorizing staff to increase homeless outreach and housing navigation and coordinate with cities and homeless service providers.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions support the Building Better Health, Living Safely and Sustainable Environments/Thriving initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan by increasing the availability of services for people experiencing homelessness in the unincorporated areas.

Respectfully submitted,



JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District



TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Supervisor, Third District

ATTACHMENT(S) N/A

SUBJECT: PILOT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED

Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:

January 28, 2020 Addressing Immediate and Ongoing Solutions for Homeless Throughout Unincorporated Communities of San Diego County.

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:

N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:

N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:

N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):

N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Supervisor, District 5 and Supervisor, District 3

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

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