



Sanctioned Encampment Strategy Land Options

City Council Work Session

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Overview



- Best Practices
- Locations
- Public Safety Review

Background



- On May 6, 2021, Austin City Council adopted Resolution No. 20210506-070, directing the City Manager to provide information and analysis regarding possible sanctioned encampments for people experiencing homelessness in the City of Austin.
- On May 14, 2021, staff provided the initial memo, with additional reports to follow by June 1st and July 1st.

Encampment Photo – Denver, CO



Key Practices & Considerations



- **Basic infrastructure**
 - Water and Electricity
 - Hygiene: Restrooms and Hand-Washing Stations (permanent or mobile)
 - Waste: Trash, Hazardous Materials
 - Lighting
 - Pest & Vector Control
- **Additional suggested services**
 - Laundry Facilities
 - Storage Space
 - Meals and Safe Food Distribution
 - Accommodations for pets
 - Access to transportation, proximity to other services/amenities
- **Staffing:** 24/7 inclusive of operations staff and security personnel
- **Services:** Basic needs and a focus on exit to permanent housing
- **Consider:**
 - Uniform tents/individual shelters
 - Timeline for demobilization



Initially Analysis Locations

- Staff reviewed over **70 city-owned properties** for suitability as a sanctioned encampment location.
- These sites are managed by an array of city departments for a variety of purposes. Preliminary prospects include locations managed by:
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Austin Housing Finance Corporation
 - Public Works
 - Austin Resource Recovery
 - Austin Water Utility
- The initial round of site analysis has been completed using the criteria noted in the initial report.



Initially Analysis of Locations

- This is an initial analysis of properties owned by the several city departments.
- Staff will be working with each council district.
- Community engagement
- All will be reviewed by the Law department.
- We are looking for suggestions about other properties.
 - Public and private properties.
- We have more work to determine feasibility.



Locations – Initial city-owned land options under review

- Walter E. Long 11455 Decker Lake Rd
- John Trevino 9501 FM 969
- Walnut Creek Sports Park 7800 Johnny Morris Rd
- Given Recreation Center 3811 E. 12th Street
- Fleet Service Yard, 8401 Johnny Morris Road
- Colony Park land
- 3511 Manor Road
- Tannehill Lane
- Onion Creek Metro North
- 7720 ½ Kellam Rd
- 5400 E. William Cannon, Decommissioned WWTP
- FM 812 at FM 973
- Eco-Park at FM 973
- W. Slaughter and 8908-8916-9006 Cullen Road
- Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center 2609 Gonzales St
- South Austin Recreation Center 1100 Cumberland Rd
- Roy G Guerrero 400 Grove Blvd
- 6700 Bolm Road District Park
- Edward Rendon Dellgado Pavilion
- 4800 - 4906 Bolm Road
- Levander Loop
- 1311 Tillery Street
- Gus Garcia 1201 E Rundberg Ln
- 7211 N IH35
- 7309 N IH 35
- Mary Moore Searight 907 W. Slaughter Ln
- Lakeline Neighborhood Park
- 12101 Anderson Mill Road



Locations – Initial city-owned land options under review

- 10900 FM 2222 (WWT)
- Commons Ford Park 614 N. Commons Ford Rd
- Walnut Creek/Havens
- Northwest Recreation Center
- Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park East 3rd Street
- Duncan Park 900 W. 9th Street
- San Beach on Cesar Chavez
- Patterson Park 4200 Brookview Rd
- Bull Creek Park Lakewood Dr
- Ryan Drive Warehouse
- Circle C
- Dick Nichols 8011 Beckett Rd
- 11800 FM 1826
- 9513 Circle Drive
- 4905 Convict Hill Rd
- Norwood Tract
- Austin Recreation Center

Public Safety Review



- Austin Fire Department (AFD) is providing information addressing fire code, prevention, and safety information regarding encampments and outdoor safety.
- Adhering to these guidelines will help minimize the risk to life and property in addition to providing proper access in case of an emergency.
- These regulations are intended to be integrated with camping regulations established by City of Austin Parks and Rec Department.

Public Safety Review



- Camp locations must be within 2000 feet of permanent Fire Department water supply.
- Designated individual camp sites must be within 100 feet of access areas that can be reached by an AFD Brush Truck
- No camping in high wildfire-risk areas
 - Austin contains many areas that are designated as high risk for Wildland Fires and Wildland Urban Interface fires. The associated hazards of these activities when combined with dry conditions create an unsafe and unacceptable risk for life and property.
- Proper spacing, no camping within 20 feet of buildings, structures or critical infrastructure (exposed gas mains, cellular towers, water towers)
 - By increasing the spacing between camps and structures, the likelihood of fire spread is greatly reduced and creates a safer environment for encampment occupants and the general public. Camp sites should be spaced with a minimum distance between structures of 20 feet. This includes spacing between tents from one camp site to the next.
- No camping in areas considered drainage or creeks, as they could flood or be overrun with water during heavy rains
 - Flash flooding is a very real danger in a drainage area. While it may seem like a creek might not rise up suddenly, during Hurricane Harvey, Shoal Creek flooded up on to Lamar Boulevard, rising well beyond the banks that are popular camp spots.
 - During heavy rains, flood controls push excess water down drainages that normally do not see high waters.
- No structures other than membrane tents shall be allowed without proper permits. The use of building materials in camping structures is prohibited.
 - The use of building material in camping structures creates additional dangers and fire load.
 - Plywood, particle board, and dimension lumber are construction materials; assembling construction materials requires a permit.
 - The use of pallets not only creates a fire hazard with their fast burn rate, heat release rate, and collapse hazard when stacked, they also create an obstacle for exiting an area.
 - The primary concern is life safety for persons experiencing homelessness, who are building structures without exit considerations, fire loading, and collapse hazards, which creates significant life safety concerns.

Public Safety Review



- Cooking and open flames should only be permitted in designated areas
 - Fires shall be contained within a suitable fire ring or non-combustible container, BBQ Pit or cooking appliance (*IFC 307.4.1*)
 - If charcoal or wood cooking takes place a container for disposal of ash and hot coals must be provided.
 - Fire extinguishers must be provided for all cooking areas and throughout the camping complex
 - High wind should be considered if cooking in unprotected areas, fire spread from blowing embers or hot coals can be extremely dangerous
 - Cooking fire in an approved container must be 20 feet from structures (*IFC 3104.15.6*).
- No fires within 25 feet of combustibles (*IFC 305.1*)
 - There must be a minimum of 25 feet of clear space around a fire so that other materials, buildings, or vegetation will not catch on fire.
- Fires shall be completely extinguished before leaving the immediate area and never left unattended (*IFC 307.5*)
- No accumulation of combustibles (*IFC 304.1*)
 - Any over accumulated combustible items will act as fuel and contribute to the size of an uncontrolled fire. Examples include but are not limited to propane, gas cans, construction material, plastics, pallets, furniture, mattresses and tires. All efforts must be made to limit the amount of combustible material in any camping area.
- No heating devices, stoves, grills or other cooking appliances inside of or directly next to tents or other makeshift structures (*IFC 3104.15.6*)
- No propane stored or allowed on site except when approved for designated cooking areas (*IFC 3104.16.2*)
 - Propane or other fuels under pressure can explode, and should be stored away from living and sleeping spaces.
- Generators use should be prohibited (due to carbon monoxide poisoning concerns)(*IFC 3104.19*)
 - Fuel storage is a major concern (*IFC 5704.4, 5704.3*)
- Vehicle use and storage should be limited, vehicles should be contained to parking areas and limited to one vehicle per resident
- No smoking in or around tents and properly disposing of smoking materials (*IFC 308.1.2, IFC 310.7, and IFC 310.8*)



Collaborating Departments Review

- Property Owners/Collaborators reviewing property for future operational plans (development, solicitation processes, agreements/leases, etc.)
- Legal/Financial constraints specific to each the property
- Alternative opportunities beyond known COA properties

Next Steps



June 2, 2021, a second staff report will be provided to Mayor and Council.

The City of Austin is committed to pursuing long-term solutions to homelessness and will remain focused on existing initiatives and ambitious efforts to expand permanent housing options in our community.