




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: August 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Council Resolution No. 20170810-033: Temporary Shelter Activation

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) was assigned to lead the process of determining which City-owned buildings would be most suitable for use as temporary emergency shelters. This research is being conducted by several city departments, with special coordination including Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), Austin Public Health (APH), and the Office of Real Estate Services (ORES). To date, the following actions have been taken:

- Basic criteria for compatibility has been established based upon guidelines provided by HSEM, PAR service impacts, as well as Council Resolution specified compatibility
- Criteria was shared with other City departments for additional suggestions
- PAR and HSEM conducted a preliminary financial impact analysis

Shelter Evaluation and Operational History

In October of 2014, HSEM helped to identify facilities within the City that may have the capability of operating as an emergency shelter as part of the Capital Area Shelter Hub Plan (CASH-P). The CASH-P was initially developed as a sheltering plan for coastal residents evacuating to Austin during hurricane events. These shelters were intended to operate for up to two weeks, after which, temporary residents would return home or transition to a Mega Shelter.

In the recent past, sheltering has primarily taken place within PAR recreation centers, as these sites have been found to be most suitable for temporary sheltering. The sheltering types ranged from long-term sheltering that lasted 4 months, to overnight sheltering due to inclement weather, to temporary sheltering for a few hours during inclement weather. Drawing from these experiences, PAR can effectively operate temporary sheltering in conjunction with programming, as long as it does not exceed 5 calendar days. A longer sheltering term will result in the substantial cancelation of recreation center programs and activities at the shelter site. Furthermore, long-term sheltering will require additional city staffing, as well as specialized service coordination. Shelter operations require 24 hour logistical site support; therefore, shelter operations were not able to co-exist alongside normal recreation programming.

Site Recommendations

Although no facility currently identified meets all criteria, or is available without impact to current operations, some preliminary recommendations have been identified. The criteria developed to evaluate the most suitable locations included:

- Physical building suitability
- Proximity to mass transit options
- Socioeconomic factors
- Revenue impacts
- Existing contracts or agreements
- Nearby facility closures
- Planned construction or renovation projects

Taking these specific factors into consideration, the following facilities have been preliminarily identified for consideration (listed in alphabetic order):

- Austin Recreation Center
- Givens Recreation Center
- Gus Garcia Recreation Center
- Northwest Recreation Center
- Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center
- South Austin Recreation Center

In the next week, City staff will conduct further analysis to include, but not be limited to:

- Gather additional site recommendations and analyze against established criteria, which may include non-city facilities
- Map site suggestions against point-in-time homeless population counts
- Refine estimated costs associated with each proposed site
- Investigate additional details related to displaced service population and associated impacts

It is City staff's intent to thoroughly analyze all data and information resulting in a recommendation of five (5) possible temporary shelter options, with a specific emphasis on identifying locations both downtown and outside the downtown core.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

Cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Interim Assistant City Manager
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