



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THRU: Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Vella Karman, Interim Homeless Strategy Officer

DATE: December 22, 2020

SUBJECT: Homelessness Update

This memorandum provides updates on citywide homeless services, including program alterations and expansions to address community needs related to COVID-19. Updates on communication activities, public space management, and strategic coordination efforts are also included. Topics addressed in this memorandum include:

- 1. Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) Program**
Homelessness prevention during COVID-19
- 2. Homeless Outreach Street Team and Community Health Paramedics**
Service area map, outcomes, collaborations, outreach
- 3. Downtown Austin Community Court**
Onsite services and outreach; Expanded access to behavioral health services; ProLodge case management and rapid rehousing; Virtual dockets
- 4. COVID-19 Emergency Food Access**
Eating Apart Together (EAT)
- 5. Homelessness Priority Communications Team**
Communicating with people experiencing homelessness; Internal capacity building; External engagement
- 6. Coordination Efforts for Public Space Management**
Underpass cleanups; Violet Bag Program expansion; Violet KeepSafe Personal Storage Facility; Creek cleanups; Parkland update
- 7. Motel Conversion Strategy and Domestic Violence Shelter**
Property acquisition and operation; Property management solicitation
- 8. ProLodge Operations**
COVID-19 emergency response operations; Services, housing programs and exits
- 9. Homelessness Strategy and Systemwide Coordination**
Homeless Strategy Officer; Strategic planning and partnerships
- 10. Homelessness Funding Update**

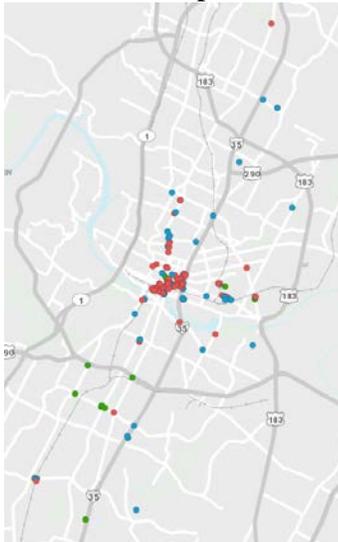
1. Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) Program

The RENT (Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants) program continues to work towards homelessness prevention by providing needed assistance to households at risk of eviction due to financial challenges related to COVID-19. The RENT program has assisted 3,375 households to date, 63% of which are extremely low-income households earning less than 30% of the area median household income. The program has distributed \$9,152,498 with a median of \$1,100 in rental assistance provided per household. The program’s eviction prevention services, such as increased landlord/tenant mediation and legal representation in court proceedings, will be crucial tools ensuring that Austinites don’t face the mounting wave of evictions that have been predicted; contracts will be in place for these eviction prevention services before the end of December. The RENT program will prove to be impactful in the City’s efforts to prevent families from moving into homelessness.

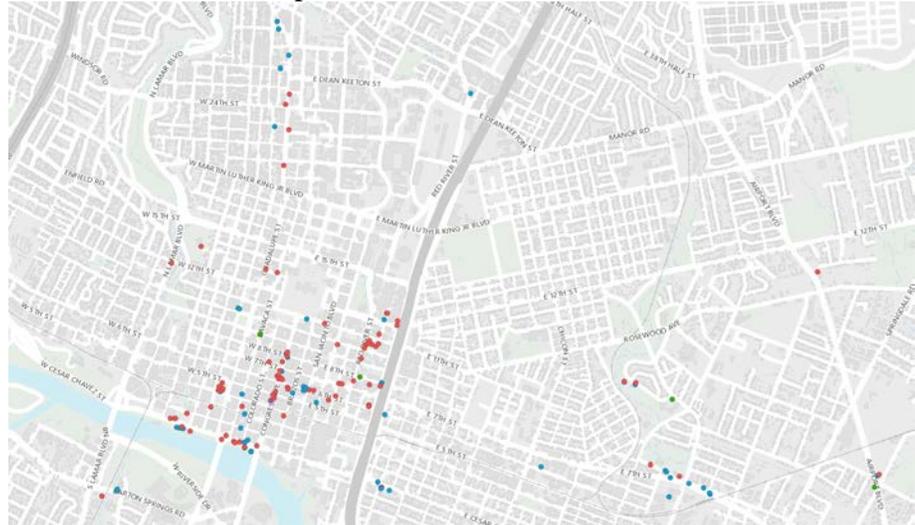
2. Homeless Outreach Street Team & Community Health Paramedics

The Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) has continued to operate throughout the pandemic and has expanded services to include basic needs and educational materials related to COVID-19. The focus of HOST remains in the downtown and west campus areas, but HOST has also continued to respond to requests outside of HOST’s jurisdiction. HOST collects data regarding services provided, outcomes of interactions, and location of where services are provided. A summary for October and November including areas of engagement, types of interactions, and outcomes has been provided as well as a description of recent collaborations and outreach activities. Maps below reflect outreach and engagement encounters during a one-month period (November 2020).

HOST GIS Map



Downtown/West Campus/ East Austin



Map Legend: Types of visits

Nov.

General Outreach and Engagement Visits (red)	92
Targeted Outreach and Engagement Visits (blue)	74
Requested Outreach and Engagement Visits (green)	14
Total Persons Experiencing Homelessness Engaged	254*

*The visits in the rows above may include engagement services for more than one person; this figure represents the total number of individuals served in November.

Outcomes

HOST aims to serve some of the most vulnerable in the community to meet their needs, while also lessening the stress on our public safety response system. HOST tracks diversions from psychiatric hospitals, jails, and visits to the emergency room to measure this outcome. The tables below include the data for October and November of 2020 for diversions as well as number of visits. The “Visits” table reflects unduplicated individuals served during the first two months of this fiscal year. The row for the “Needs Met” includes services such as conducting Coordinated Assessments, linkage to mental and physical health services, peer support services, referrals to the DACC Intensive Case Management program, provision of clothing, food, bus passes, and other basic needs.

DIVERSIONS		
	Oct.	Nov.
Psych Hospital	3	4
Jail	8	9
ER Visit	34	26

VISITS		
	Oct.	Nov.
Unique Clients (new for each month)	108	89
Contacts	191	212
Needs Met	250	202

HOST Collaborations – HOST recognizes a lot of work is done best through collaboration with partners and other stakeholders, and proactively seeks opportunities for coordination.

- PARD & HOST GIS Pilot began and currently underway
- Assisted with launching Violet KeepSafe Storage program as a referral source
- Routine collaboration with Travis County Sheriff’s Office, Constables Office-Precinct #3, APD Patrol, EMS-CHP, Integral Care-PATH, and APH on referrals from Council Members’ Citizen Assistance Forms (CAFs)
- Coordinated with Central Health to deliver Medical Assistance Program (MAP) cards to Sobering Center for some that are experiencing homelessness
- Weekly coordination & outreach with CommUnity Care Street Medicine team
- Weekly participation with EAT Initiative
- Routinely collaborate with ECHO, Veterans Affairs, CARE, LINC Austin, EMS-Physician Assistant for encampment intervention
- Participation in UT Dell Medical School Research Project

Significant HOST & Community Health Paramedic (CHP) Outreach Activities

- Assisted with Cold Weather Shelter Notification
- Assisted with referrals from Council Member offices and City leadership

EMS CHP Updates Related to Homelessness – CHPs provide direct support for individuals experiencing homeless. The following are some highlights of their work in November.

- **ProLodges:** Working with ECHO and CommUnity Care – Healthcare for the Homeless (HCH) on screening a high-risk cohort of individuals experiencing homelessness from the ProLodge waitlist, referrals and outreach who meet the CDC definition of high risk for morbidity and mortality if they contracted COVID. There are additional points and housing

funding specific to these folks. ECHO is completing the Coordinated Assessments, CHP and HCH are reviewing for inclusion and CHP is locating those without phones via outreach.

- **St. John’s COVID-19 Testing Site Encampment:** Internal City referral, outreach & engagement provided.
- **Significant Observation:** Six people sheltering at ProLodges are in hospice care.

3. Downtown Austin Community Court

Onsite Services and Outreach

As noted in previous updates, Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) has continued to offer access to walk-in triage case management services to provide individuals experiencing homelessness with information on COVID-19 and safety planning, access to resource navigation and basic needs, and help facilitate connection to other essential services. From March 16 through December 3, 2020, DACC has had 6,409 interactions with individuals through triage case management. Requests for triage case management services have grown since the beginning of COVID-19, reflected in the table below which includes the average number of individuals served per day, by month.

DACC Triage Case Management Services per Day, by Month in 2020									
Month	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Daily average of individuals accessing services	22.25	16.3	24.1	34.2	37.35	37.8	44.33	51.32	47.56

To accommodate the increased need for services, DACC temporarily relocated to Terrazas Branch Library on August 17, 2020. DACC assigned an additional case manager to triage case management since moving to Terrazas to ensure all individuals seeking walk-in services can access help on a daily basis. DACC has also worked proactively since moving to Terrazas to facilitate more frequent outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness near and around this library through the Homeless Outreach Street Team and DACC case management staff.

Expanded Access to Behavioral Health Services

On December 3, 2020, the City Council passed Resolution 20121203-048, directing support for a partnership between DACC, HOST, and Integral Care to expand behavioral health services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Subsequently, the City Council approved item 20121210-019 on December 10, 2020 which authorized negotiation and execution of an agreement with Integral Care for behavioral health services integrated with primary care through the HealthCare for the Homeless Health and Wellness Center. The housing-focused and person-centered case management services through this agreement closely mirror the approach of DACC’s Intensive Case Management (ICM) Program, which had a waitlist of 225 individuals as of December 7, 2020.

Individuals on DACC’s ICM waitlist and HOST referrals will be prioritized for this program, addressing an immediate unmet need. DACC has entered into contract negotiations with Integral Care, including communication with Downtown Austin Alliance as they are funding half of the

program. Meaningful performance metrics will be included in the agreement, services are expected to begin toward the beginning of 2021.

Protective Lodge (ProLodge) Case Management and Rapid Rehousing

On August 27, 2020, City Council approved Agenda Item 20200827-15, authorizing the addition of 5.0 grant-funded DACC Clinical Case Managers and 1.0 grant-funded DACC Clinical Case Manager Supervisor. The grant funds (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD's Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus, or ESG-CV CARES Act funding) for these staff and housing assistance expenses will ensure access to financial assistance and housing-focused, person-centered case management for individuals currently sheltering at ProLodges to help them achieve long-term stability and prevent their return to homelessness. The supervisor position and two case management positions have been hired and recently completed the onboarding and training process, and the remaining three case management positions are currently in the interview phase of the hiring process. At the beginning of December, staff were able to begin accepting referrals and are currently serving nine ProLodge residents. It's anticipated that fifty individuals will be housed in the first year of the program, and a hundred will be housed over the two-year grant period.

Virtual Dockets

DACC is working to implement accessibility to virtual dockets for individuals experiencing homelessness. This process will mirror the current virtual docket system both Austin Municipal Court and DACC have in place currently, with the addition of the ability to access virtual dockets onsite at DACC through a tablet, and with additional technical support as needed. This system is expected to be implemented and operational within the first few months of 2021.

4. COVID-19 Emergency Food Access

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach organizations in Austin reported urgent concerns regarding food access for people experiencing homelessness. It was noted fewer pedestrians and drivers were offering money or food to people experiencing homelessness, restaurant dining rooms weren't accessible, and homeless service providers were adjusting services to account for safety precautions to adhere to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, which resulted in a reduction in operations and in some cases ceasing services all together. This changing landscape of the pandemic negatively impacted food access for people experiencing homelessness. As the existing food response system mobilized to address community-wide needs for food support, the plans did not account for the needs and abilities of people experiencing homelessness.

The Homeless Services Division developed a cross-departmental team of City staff organized with community partners to develop a two-pronged food delivery approach that leveraged City of Austin resources to procure, organize, and store food while Travis County Constables Precinct 3, churches and nonprofits delivered meals to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Since April 9, 2020, the Eating Apart Together (EAT) Initiative has distributed more than ten thousand meals each week to Austin's homeless community during the emergency response to COVID-19. In addition, the organizational and logistical structure created by the EAT Initiative has led to the distribution of thousands of non-food supplies, facilitated partnerships among government and non-government organizations, and helped people experiencing homelessness minimize travel around the city during the pandemic, ensuring basic needs could be met while helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

As the health and economic impacts of the pandemic continue, so does the demand for food and resources provided through the EAT Initiative. Community partners are interested in continuing providing food, water and other resources to people living unsheltered as it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the entire Austin community.

The City of Austin can build on the knowledge and relationships created through the EAT Initiative to facilitate, plan and develop more robust collaborations across community organizations and initiatives to address ongoing food needs for those experiencing homelessness.

How EAT Works

The Eating Apart Together Initiative consists of two types of food purchases and modes of distribution: (1) bags of shelf-stable food delivered to encampments by community partners and volunteers, and (2) ready-to-eat meals provided to homeless service providers and volunteer organizations for distribution to people experiencing homelessness. This effort has allowed Austin's community partners to maintain and, for some, increase food access operations during a time mired in interruptions to supply chains and service delivery due to the impact of the pandemic.

In 34 weeks of operation, this network comprised of multiple City of Austin departments, Travis County Constables Precinct 3 and community organizations has provided more than 626,000 meals. This is alongside additional resources distributed throughout the community, including more than 10,000 masks, almost 30,000 gallons of water and rolls of toilet paper, 2,200 pairs of socks, 5,000 pounds of pet food, and thousands of toiletries and menstrual products.

In October 2020, the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) created a video telling the story of the EAT Initiative that can be seen on the [EAT webpage](#). The EAT video shows the power of what can be accomplished when the Austin community works together for the common goal of meeting the resource and interpersonal connection needs of our neighbors experiencing homelessness at a time of great need.

5. Homelessness Priority Communications Team

The Homelessness Priority Communications Team within the Communications and Public Information Office continues to focus on developing shared and consistent values-based language and messaging while communicating directly with people experiencing homelessness and communicating to the general public regarding services provided by the City of Austin.

Communicating with People Experiencing Homelessness

Website

The austintexas.gov/homelessness website maintains up-to-date information for key audiences: people experiencing homelessness, service providers, and community members. The site includes information about City efforts on homelessness as well as information for those experiencing homelessness on how to stay safe and meet needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

Homeless Texting Alert

Since establishing the Homeless Texting Alert earlier this year, there have been six texts sent to inform the homeless community of service changes, flooding, and cold weather risks. The team continues to gather phone numbers and add users to the list as requested.

COVID-19 Flyers

The homelessness communications team continues to distribute 2,000 COVID-19 educational flyers weekly through the EAT Initiative's food access/basic needs bags and existing City and community channels.

Field Guide

In partnership with staff from the Office of Design and Delivery the homelessness communications team has developed the framework for a printed resource to help people navigate their way through unsheltered homelessness. Focused on maintaining health, safety, and security while going through the process of seeking housing, the guide will contain information from service providers in and out of the City. The team is collecting content, testing materials, and will begin prototyping for testing in the new year. Our neighbors experiencing homelessness have expressed a need for this product, and staff are working to produce a tool that contains evergreen information able to withstand the outdoor elements.

Internal Capacity Building

Values-Based Communication Training

To improve the safety and health of people experiencing homelessness, the homelessness communications team continues to develop a training on values-based communication, having completed the first pilot of the curriculum. When it is complete, it will be made available to multiple departments to prepare staff in the field to compassionately and effectively communicate the City's current posture (which aligns with the CDC) about people camping in public spaces.

External Engagement

Homelessness in Austin – Informational Series

As part of the Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, the Homeless Communications Priority Team organized a series of conversations about what's happening in Austin to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring. Featuring leaders from local homeless-serving organizations, the three conversations were broadcast on ATXN and Facebook Live at noon on Monday 11/16, Wednesday 11/18, and Friday 11/20.

Conversations included:

- **Understanding the Crisis and How We Got Here:** Featuring leaders from Austin Public Health, SAFE, Integral Care and LifeWorks; moderated by Kathryn Flowers of Dell Medical School.
- **What's Happening – Programs in Action:** Featuring leaders from ECHO, The Other Ones Foundation, Homeless Outreach Street Team, The Office of Sustainability; moderated by Judy Maggio of Austin PBS.
- **Innovations and What's on the Horizon:** Featuring leaders from Mobile Loaves and Fishes, Family Eldercare, UT School of Pharmacy and the City of Austin; moderated by Taylor Cook of the Design Institute for Health.

Videos of the conversations can be viewed at the Homelessness [Get Involved](#) webpage.

Fiercely Focused Video Series

As part of ECHO's partner spotlight series known as *Fiercely Focused*, the City's homelessness communications team worked with ECHO to create a video showing the value and impact of the Eating Apart Together (EAT) Initiative, available to view on the [EAT webpage](#).

COVID-19 Communications Support

The communications team continues to support the Homelessness COVID-19 Task Force in the Emergency Operations Center, and the Joint Information System working together on media inquiries, interview preparation, and general communications needs regarding homelessness during the pandemic emergency response. Providing weekly COVID-19 updates to community stakeholders, the team informs service providers on changing services, quarantine and isolation facilities, the Eating Apart Together Initiative, and other aspects of the City of Austin COVID-19 response.

6. Coordination Efforts for Public Space Management

Underpass Cleanups

As was addressed in the August 20, 2020 [Memorandum to Mayor and Council](#), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) maintains highway bridge infrastructure throughout the City for safety. As the City and TxDOT have worked in partnership, the need arose for the City to manage underpass cleanups, as the City is better equipped to provide outreach and services to individuals impacted by these efforts. Additionally, this provides the City the opportunity to conduct work as part of the City's overall Clean City Strategy and align efforts with the City's Violet Bag Program. These cleanups are intended to make areas safer for all Austin residents, especially individuals that may be living in these areas. Information was provided regarding efforts and the new path forward to address concerns, previous Council guidance, and improvements to overall practices and services to residents. In addition to the Violet Bag Program Expansion and Storage Facility program listed below, staff are improving signage including more information and translation of all materials into Spanish, and training is being provided for all City and contract staff working closely with vulnerable populations. Monthly processes have been improved with regard to outreach, reporting, increased partnership with social service providers, and regular scheduling of cleanups on set days to lessen the environmental impact. All changes and efforts prioritize the City's commitment to removing debris and trash while respecting the integrity of any vulnerable population. The Underpass Cleanup efforts are continuing in accordance with the schedule and contract.

Violet Bag Program Expansion

Austin Resource Recovery continues to increase the footprint of the Violet Bag program, with thirty-one sites currently operational. The program provides violet-colored trash bags and carts to individuals at encampments with a high-volume of trash-related issues and then coordinates collection, with all sites receiving at least daily service. ARR worked closely with Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) and EMS to expand to new sites including Buford Tower and the Airport/Koenig right of way. ARR is also in the final stages of hiring employees and purchasing equipment that will be dedicated to the Violet Bag program. We expect to have this team fully operational in January of 2021. ARR has responded to 1,055 service orders regarding encampment issues between February 1, 2019 and December 3, 2020. Current Violet Bag sites include:

- Highway 71/Menchaca
- Highway 71/I-35
- Highway 71/Burleson
- Highway 71/Montopolis
- Highway 71/South Lamar
- Highway 71/Westgate
- I-35/Airport Boulevard
- I-35/6th
- I-35/7th
- I-35/8th

- I-35/Cesar Chavez
- Terrazas Branch Library (2x per day service)
- 183/Anderson Square
- 183/Anderson Mill
- 183/Cameron
- 183/Payton Gin
- 183/Burnet
- 183/Fairfield
- 183/Georgian
- 183/McNeil-Spicewood Springs
- 183/North Lamar
- 183/Oak Knoll
- 183/Ohlen
- 183/Pond Springs
- Pleasant Valley/Cesar Chavez (near IBC Bank)
- 7th Street/Gonzalez
- Pleasant Valley/Riverside Drive
- Menchaca/Slaughter Lane
- Buford Tower
- Airport/Koenig Lane

In October 2020, Austin Resource Recovery and Public Works launched a monthly, self-cleaning pilot at two sites: Highway 71/Packsaddle Pass and Highway 183/Cameron Road. The pilot serves to encourage encampment residents to help with trash and debris removal. ARR continues to work with internal and external partners to increase awareness and participation. The three-month pilot will conclude in December with results reported back to City Council in early 2021.

Violet KeepSafe Personal Storage Facility

In 2020, the City of Austin and Austin Resource Recovery launched the Violet KeepSafe Storage program, a transitional storage service that helps people experiencing homelessness keep their possessions safe while navigating their way around the community and out of homelessness. Inspired by programs in other communities, the Office of Design and Delivery collaborated with the Austin Homeless Advisory Council (AHAC) and members of the Austin community to develop the current program housed at the former HealthSouth parking garage.

The Storage Center provides clients with an assigned violet cart with locks available to hold important documents, meaningful keepsakes, and bulky personal items, lightening the load for appointments with service providers or potential employers. Staffed by people with lived experience of homelessness, the City plans to partner with community organizations to extend the capacity, reach, and impact of storage across Austin. As of December 2020, there are approximately ninety clients utilizing this program.

Creek Cleanups

The Watershed Protection Department secured an emergency contract for cleanups in creeks after the set contractor for FY 2020 discontinued services due to COVID-19, effective June of 2020. The contract was for a one-time clean-up of 6 high priority sites. These sites posed health and safety risks to both the general public and the environment. Therefore, immediate action was needed to mitigate the safety and environmental risks associated with the trash, hazardous materials and debris at the sites. A contract was executed and was brought before Council on October 1, 2020 for ratification at the first available opportunity.

Location	Tons Removed	Date Completed
Rundberg/Rutland area	25.85	August 17, 2020
2301 E. Riverside Drive/Wickersham	20.10	August 28, 2020
W. Braker Lane – 10301 Eubank Drive	39.92	September 10, 2020
1122 ½ Old San Antonio Rd/Slaughter	37.56	September 18, 2020
Hwy 35 @ Hwy 71 Pond behind IRS	43.55	October 15, 2020

Total 198.98 tons

Parkland Update

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) is working to identify and respond to people experiencing homelessness on parkland. PAR has one staff member and support from Park Rangers dedicated to this task. An update on the process was provided to the [Parks and Recreation Board on September 23](#). PAR implemented a geographic system that incorporates 311 calls and tracks staff visits to sites. PAR is also working to document the resources and City staff time required to vacate an encampment on parkland.

7. Motel Conversion Strategy and Domestic Violence Shelter

City staff have been pursuing a [Motel Conversion Strategy](#) for the past several months, with an initial goal of investing in 300 units of bridge shelter and/or permanent supportive housing (PSH). The Office of Real Estate Services (ORES), Austin Public Health (APH) and the Housing and Planning Department (HPD) work collaboratively to identify and assess potential properties for acquisition and converted operations.

City Owned Properties

In April 2020, the City closed on a property located at 2711 S. IH-35 [District 3]. Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was used for this purchase. After minor renovations and repairs were completed, the City began temporarily using this property as part of the COVID-19 emergency response operations. Since August, it has been operating as a Protective Lodging facility (ProLodge) for high-risk individuals in need of non-congregate sheltering during the pandemic. Once temporary ProLodge operations cease, this property will transition to a bridge shelter for individuals to stabilize and receive assistance moving into permanent housing. City staff are working with community partners to potentially designate a certain number of rooms/beds in this facility for medical respite. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council explains [medical respite](#) as “short-term residential care that allows individuals experiencing homelessness the opportunity to rest in a safe environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services. Medical respite care, or recuperative care, is offered in a variety of settings including freestanding facilities, homeless shelters, nursing homes, and transitional housing.” It is for “persons experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury on the streets but are not ill enough to be in a hospital.” Local healthcare data demonstrate a significant need for this type of resource in our community and it is in short supply.

In October 2020, the City closed on a second property, located at 7400 N. IH-35 [District 4]. This property is also initially being used as a temporary protective shelter for individuals at high risk for COVID-19. After guests have exited to safe housing options and ProLodge operations cease at this location, the building will transition to bridge shelter or PSH.

Process and Timeline for Motel Property Identification, Assessment, and Acquisition

Motel property identification, assessment, and acquisition is a shared responsibility of ORES, APH, and HPD. The process for identifying and assessing motel properties is as follows:

- ORES identifies motel properties which are for sale and that match criteria defined by the Motel Conversion Strategy.
- ORES, APH and HPD assess motel properties, using criteria defined by the Motel Conversion Strategy, and make a determination on whether the motel properties are a good fit based on the parameters established for the Motel Conversion Strategy.
- APH and HPD collaborate on operations and funding for motel properties and jointly decide on whether to proceed with acquisition. The availability of funding for (1) the purchase and operations and (2) the identification of an operator are key factors in the decision-making process.

The process and timeline for acquisition is as follows:

- When APH and HPD approve a property for acquisition, ORES begins the acquisition process which includes signing a Purchase and Sale Agreement (“Agreement”) that provides the City the ability to purchase after a review period.
- The Agreement typically includes 90 days for due diligence and review. The due diligence performed typically includes title review, property and environmental inspections, and a property valuation appraisal.
- The Agreements typically include an option to extend an additional 30 days, if needed, for a total of 120 days.
- An additional 30 days is commonly required to close on the purchase, subject to City Council approval, totaling 150 days from signing the Agreement to closing. Council approval to purchase the property may occur at any time prior to closing. Closing on the property is contingent on the assessments performed during the due diligence period.

Operations and Services

The City will be contracting with qualified entities to operate these facilities and provide appropriate services. In the case of bridge shelter, operations and services are often provided by a single nonprofit agency that has partnerships with other service providers to support coordinated access to resources for their clients. In the case of permanent supportive housing, best practice dictates a separation between property management and supportive services. Often, one agency provides and coordinates supportive, wrap-around services and a separate organization provides property management for the building and the tenants. City staff are working to secure the components necessary for successful operation of the facilities, once purchased and converted to this new purpose. This process may include a competitive solicitation for property management companies experienced in affordable housing and/or project-based facilities.

Domestic Violence Shelter

In addition to properties acquired through the motel conversion strategy, ORES is working with APH to identify a property suitable for sheltering families and individuals fleeing domestic violence. City Council approved funding for acquisition and operation of a new shelter in the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget process, and work on this project is well underway. Austin Public Health will be issuing a competitive solicitation for a well-qualified operator of this facility in early 2021.

8. ProLodge Operations

Emergency Response Operations & ProLodge Services

Protective Lodging facilities (ProLodges) were established to provide a safe, temporary sheltering option for asymptomatic high-risk individuals lacking an adequate place to access hygiene resources and socially distance from others. Operation of these non-congregate shelters falls within

the structure and authority of the Austin/Travis County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and follows the formal incident command and reporting structure for emergencies and disasters recognized by federal, state and local governments. While these facilities are not exclusively designated for persons experiencing homelessness, it is reasonable to expect that the majority of housed individuals have space at home to safely self-isolate and socially distance from people outside of their household, and people without homes have the greatest need.

Although well-coordinated with the City's broader homelessness efforts, ProLodges are part of COVID-19 emergency response operations, fall under the EOC and are separate from regular activities and programs serving our community's homeless population. This distinction is critical for maintaining complete and accurate documentation and reporting for emergency response purposes. This includes but is not limited to funding requirements and limitations, chain of command structure, and continuity of operations for public health and safety.

Five ProLodges are currently operational, where over 530 people have accessed protective shelter for different periods of time, and over 280 people have exited to various locations. ProLodges are staffed with reassigned City and County staff members, temporary staff, and through a short-term contract with Front Steps, authorized by City Council in July 2020. Security is provided 24/7 and only ProLodge guests, operational staff, and non-profit partners providing onsite services are allowed on property. Guests are encouraged to remain in the safety of their room and to only leave for essential activities. Staff provide written notice and explain the shelter rules, expectations and services offered with each ProLodge guest moving into a room.

Meals are delivered outside each guest room door, three times a day. Wellness and symptom checks are conducted twice a day. Linens and personal items are laundered and trash is picked up outside each room. All rooms have a telephone, television, and wi-fi. Masks are required and social distancing protocols are maintained at all times.

Integral Care has been contracted to provide onsite behavioral health and support services, including case management, emotional support and counseling, connection to benefits and appropriate services, connection to community organizations, medication assistance, employment services, transportation support and assistance with basic needs to support mental health, physical health, stability and wellness. Beginning in January 2021, Integral Care will continue offering these services through a Travis County contract supported by federal CARES Act Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funding. CommUnity Care offers mobile healthcare services onsite certain days a week and helps connect people to other resources.

ProLodge Exits and Housing Programs

Consistent with National Incident Management System protocols for emergencies and disasters, planning for demobilization of operations is critical during early phases of a response. As is true of all shelters activated during an emergency declaration, operations are temporary in nature and last only as long as required to address the immediate threat to public health and safety. It has been a top priority to ensure the health and safety of all ProLodge guests and to facilitate exits to housing destinations that allow for social distancing as long as COVID-19 is actively spreading in the community.

The City has coordinated with multiple housing programs to assist guests with locating and moving into housing— and more rapid rehousing programs are expected to begin in the next several weeks. To date, 107 individuals have exited the ProLodges into housing through these locally and federally funded programs.

Existing housing programs through the Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) and through Austin Public Health's contract with Integral Care were revised during the summer months to prioritize ProLodge guests. New housing programs have been made available through CARES Act grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The City of Austin has received two rounds of HUD funding for the Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus (ESG-CV) and those funds have primarily been allocated to two rapid rehousing programs. These grants last until September 2022 and allowable expenses include housing location services, case management and up to a year of financial assistance.

- DACC has established a new ESG-CV funded rapid rehousing program for \$1.9 million annually, with a goal of serving 100 individuals. Multiple staff have been hired, trained and began enrolling new clients from ProLodges the first week of December.
- Caritas is working with partner agencies to begin a new ESG-CV funded rapid rehousing program, prioritizing ProLodge guests and others at risk of or impacted by COVID-19. Council authorized this contract on December 10, 2020 in an amount not to exceed \$7.5 million and services are expected to begin in early 2021. Negotiations for annual funding amounts and performance goals are being finalized.

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) also received two rounds of HUD ESG-CV funding and determined distribution amounts for each local community. ECHO coordinated with the City of Austin and oversaw the competition process for local grant awards.

- The first allocation for Austin/Travis County was approximately \$1 million, awarded to Family Eldercare for rapid rehousing. They quickly hired and trained staff and began serving ProLodge guests earlier this fall. To date, they have served close to 65 individuals.
- The second round of approximately \$2.8 million was competed in November and is being awarded to multiple agencies this month for rapid rehousing programs starting in early 2021.

ProLodge Guest Data:

- 216 individuals within 201 households (including both two-person households and one-person households) are currently staying at ProLodge shelters
- 107 individuals have moved into housing, which includes several months of financial assistance and ongoing case management
- 136 households are enrolled in a housing program and working with a case manager
- 65 households are working on safe exit options and awaiting housing program enrollment
- New guests will be entering the ProLodges and impacting these numbers, which change daily
- Overall, guest demographics include 32% female, 67% male, 1% trans female or trans male (1% refused to answer or data not collected)
- Overall, guest demographics include 2% American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 35% Black or African American, 60% White (3% refused, doesn't know, not collected or blank)
- Overall, guest demographics include 20% Hispanic/Latino, 78% Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino (2% refused to answer, data not collected, don't know or blank)

We continue to monitor community indicators for positive cases, hospitalizations, ICU beds, and deaths due to COVID-19, as well as the introduction of vaccination resources into Austin/Travis County and across the U.S. It is understood the evolving situation may impact emergency operations at ProLodges and across other areas. Due to the current high rate of virus transmission, all five ProLodges will remain operational into the beginning of 2021 and for the foreseeable future.

9. Homelessness Strategy and Coordination

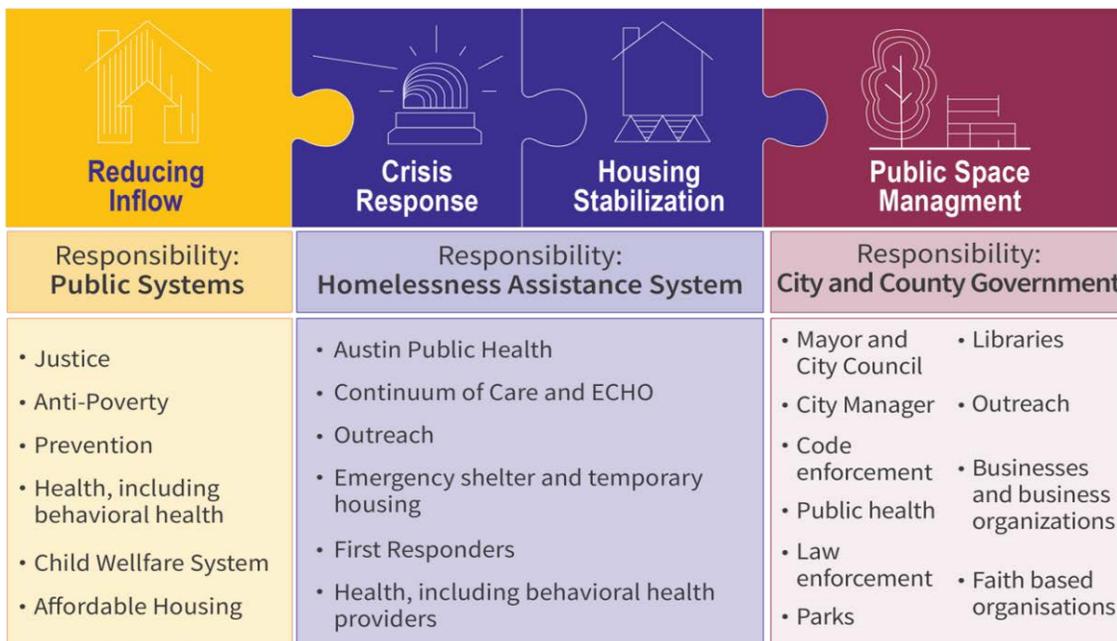
Homeless Strategy Officer

Austin Public Health is in the final stages of hiring a Homeless Strategy Officer, who will report to the Director of Austin Public Health and will head the new Homeless Services Division. The Officer will be filling additional staff positions in the coming months and coordinating cross-departmental and community-wide initiatives. The Homeless Strategy Officer will participate in the Homelessness Leadership team, working closely with the City Manager’s Office, as well as with Department Directors and designees across the City of Austin organization. This division will coordinate with internal and external partners to prevent, address and end homelessness in our community.

Strategic Planning and Partnerships

As the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency has affected virtually every aspect of our lives, the pandemic has also affected homeless services and operations throughout the community. Continued strategic planning and implementation of COVID-19 homeless response activities is occurring under City leadership, ECHO leadership and with guidance and recommendations from Matthew Doherty, contracted consultant and national expert on homelessness. City staff are intentionally leveraging these partnerships and learning opportunities, building capacity, and forging stronger systems to support data-based decisions, programs and operations throughout the broader homelessness response system.

On October 19th, City staff across multiple departments provided a comprehensive homelessness update during the [Public Safety Committee Meeting](#), presenting on various aspects of ongoing work and new or expanded initiatives for Fiscal Year 2021. The newly adopted framework (below), introduced through the [Investing for Results](#) report developed by Barbara Poppe & Associates, anchors service coordination and collaboration for City staff and key partners.



Developed from [Arnold Ventures Issue Briefs](#)

The P3 (Public-Private Partnership) Homelessness Task Force, convened by City and ECHO leadership, has identified the collective initial priority of increasing capacity to provide successful rapid rehousing interventions in the community. According to the [Investing for Results](#) report, “Rapid rehousing is the single most effective intervention to end homelessness as measured by both the total number of successful exits from homelessness and the percentage of successful exits as a proportion of all exits. Pathways and service strategies that work in combination with rapid rehousing, such as emergency shelter and outreach, lead to a near 75% success rate for all COA RRH-enrolled households.” P3 partners are building out the following areas of focus:

- Strengthening existing efforts
- Securing and deploying investments
- Strengthening data informed decision making

A more comprehensive update with specific action items, metrics and timeframes will be shared in early 2021.

10. Homelessness Funding Update

The City Council appropriated \$73.4 million specifically for homelessness in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget, and the City has spent \$42.3 million. Of the remaining \$31.1 million categorized as “unspent” in the homelessness budget:

- \$20.9 million is already committed to finish the Council-approved programs dedicated to addressing homelessness
- \$5.8 million was invested in the City’s COVID-19 response
- \$4.0 million has been obligated for housing, including for people experiencing homelessness

In addition to the funding dedicated to homelessness, the City spent an additional \$44.7 million on COVID-19 response efforts including homelessness prevention and homeless services. Overall, the City has spent \$87 million on homelessness which is more than what was originally appropriated under the homelessness budget and is dedicated to spending all funding designated for homelessness efforts.

The City continues to align efforts with the Action Plan to End Homelessness and strives to meet the evolving needs of our neighbors experiencing homelessness and the community at large. City leadership plans to bring a broader discussion regarding community-wide efforts to address homelessness at a Council Work Session scheduled for early 2021, likely to include an introduction to the Homeless Strategy Officer, as well as goals and metrics for this year. CMO and departmental leadership welcome any input, suggestions, or questions about ongoing efforts to effectively end the experience of homelessness in our community.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
CMO Executive Team
City Department Directors and Assistant Directors
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