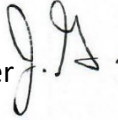




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager 

**DATE:** May 12, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Update on Efforts to Increase Homeless Shelter Capacity

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The City's efforts to address homelessness in our community combine proven long-term housing solutions, connecting unsheltered people with immediate emergency resources, and enforcement of city ordinances aimed at keeping all Austinites and visitors safe. The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on intensified efforts to provide emergency shelter options in Austin.

Austin ECHO (Ending Community Homelessness Coalition) estimates there are over 5,000 people experiencing homelessness in this community; fewer than 900 of those individuals currently receive some form of shelter. Clearly, there is a critical need to increase shelter space. Austinites seeking to comply with reinstated local and state prohibitions on camping on public property urgently need a safe place to sleep.

Per Council direction, as we complete the community's shelter system assessment, preliminary results demonstrate a need to increase our current number of beds available because there is an overall shortage of shelter beds. The Homeless Strategy Division staff will provide recommendations of the community's sheltering system in June. The vision and priorities for system improvement established through this process will be key to refining our strategies.

I have directed staff to work diligently and assertively with community partners – public, private, and faith-based - to identify opportunities and resources for additional long-term shelter. As a first step in this effort, the City will create space for an additional 130 people at the Northbridge and Southbridge shelters by shifting rooms from single to double occupancy.

While these and other efforts to create permanent shelter capacity are underway, the City will provide immediate relief by establishing one or more temporary sheltering facilities. The first of these will be at the City-owned Marshalling Yard, which is expected to provide up to 300 additional beds for a period of approximately one year. The Marshalling Yard is located on Airport Commerce Drive near the intersection of U.S. 183 and TX 71. A portion of this 70,000 square foot building will be utilized for sheltering purposes.

The City will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) today to secure a nonprofit social service provider to operate a temporary shelter at a portion of the Marshalling Yard. Funding in the amount of \$9.142 million of unencumbered homelessness funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Investment plan will be used to support this immediate sheltering effort.

We recognize that the community may have questions. To provide information and answer those questions, the City's Homeless Strategy Division will host a series of virtual community information sessions on the City's shelter plans at the Marshalling Yard.

Increased access to shelter is just a part of the City's overall efforts to scale the response system to address homelessness. Other elements of this system include:

- Targeted prevention to help people on the brink of homelessness remain in their homes;
- Street outreach teams to connect people to services and meet basic needs;
- Rapid Rehousing, which provides case management and assistance with rent, usually for around a year;
- Permanent supportive housing - deeply affordable rental apartments with robust wrap-around services for people living with a disability who have experienced chronic homelessness
- Access to other supportive services such as mental health, recovery services, primary care, employment, and benefits access; and
- Other affordable housing options.

In addition to emergency shelter, the City of Austin and its community partners are committed to helping 3,000 Austinites get back into housing. As part of this ambitious goal, the City is working to increase the number of Austinites that can be housed in PSH from just over 1,000 to 2,500 by the end of 2024. PSH capacity has already been increased by about 500 clients served, and another 1,000 units are in the development pipeline. Among the projects that will open soon are:

- **Balcones Terrace** is being developed by Foundation Communities and is expected to open in July. The project will have 50 units of dedicated PSH as well as 73 other deeply affordable units.
- **Espero Austin at Rutland** is a 171-unit project created through a partnership between Caritas of Austin and the Vecino Group. The new construction development will have 101 units set aside for people exiting homelessness.
- **Pecan Gardens** will be a PSH project for older adults that will be created through a partnership between the City of Austin and Family Eldercare. With renovation starting this month, the development will provide 78 studio units.

As a City, we remain committed to an approach that prioritizes reducing and ultimately ending homelessness in Austin. By working simultaneously on creating a continuum of support - from prevention to emergency shelter to permanent supportive housing - we can build a system that ensures homelessness in Austin is rare, brief and non-recurring for adults, youth and families in our community.

cc: CMO Executive Team  
Adrienne Sturup, Director, Austin Public Health  
Dianna Grey, Homeless Strategy Officer, APH Homeless Strategy Division