

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: May 5, 2020

TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Sharon M. Tso   
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No.: 20-014-S33  
Assignment Number: 20-03-0334

  
Richard H. Llewellyn, Jr.  
City Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: Alternative Homeless Shelter Options

**SUMMARY**

On March 17, 2020, Motion (Koretz - Huizar) (CF: 20-0147-S33) was adopted, relative to the Coronavirus emergency. The Motion instructs the Chief Legislative Analyst and City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report with actions necessary to acquire and site tiny homes, trailers, container homes, or other alternative housing and shelter options to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness will have shelter or housing. In addition, the Motion instructs the Bureau of Engineering (BOE), CAO, and all other affected departments to identify actions necessary to expedite the completion of all remaining A Bridge Home (ABH) sites. We note that BOE has submitted a separate report dated April 1, 2020 to this Council File.

Since this Motion was introduced, significant actions have been taken by the City, County, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and State to fund and establish shelters for unsheltered homeless individuals who are at-risk of Coronavirus. The State has deployed 535 trailers to the City for use in response to COVID-19. Of these, 310 trailers will be deployed at City recreational sites. The remaining 225 trailers are deployed to support first responders and response efforts of other cities in the County. The City, County, and LAHSA are administering Project Roomkey, a program to provide motel/hotel rooms for homeless individuals who are vulnerable to severe illness if infected with Coronavirus, and the City is establishing safe parking in the Skid Row area for recreational vehicles (RVs). Further, the City is continuing to complete the remaining ABH sites. Detailed information for these programs as of April 24, 2020 are included later in the report, but note that new beds are being opened on a daily basis.

The City has actively reviewed alternative shelter options over the last three years, including trailers, tiny homes, and container homes, and has pursued viable opportunities as they arise. An update on the feasibility of implementing these options is included in the Discussion section below.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council note and file this report.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact as a result of the recommendation in this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since the introduction of Motion (Koretz – Huizar), the City’s action to address homelessness as part of its response to the Coronavirus emergency has focused on options that can be activated immediately. By March 20, 2020, eight (8) shelters were opened, and 50 portable toilets and 307 handwashing stations were placed throughout the City.

The State has allocated supplemental Homeless, Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program (HHAP) funds to help local jurisdictions provide safe shelter for persons experiencing homelessness, and the Governor issued Executive Orders that allowed greater flexibility in using State funds designated to address homelessness.

Further, the City has used these and other resources to establish shelter facilities at recreation facilities, to implement the Project Roomkey program to shelter persons experiencing homelessness in hotels and motels, and to initiate a new program to support recreational vehicles (RVs). In addition, City staff have investigated various shelter facility types, which are not ideally suited to an emergency response but described later in this report for reference.

### **State Action to Assist Persons Experiencing Homelessness**

Motion (Koretz – Huizar) was introduced in March prior to the Governor signing SB 89 which appropriated \$1.1B in emergency funding to respond to the Coronavirus crisis. Of this emergency funding, \$150M was allocated by the Governor to address homelessness in order to protect the public health, “flatten the curve,” and slow the spread of COVID-19, as follows:

- \$100M directly to local governments for shelter support and emergency housing to address COVID-19, and
- \$50M to purchase travel trailers and lease rooms in motels, hotels, and other facilities in partnership with counties and cities to provide immediate isolation-placements throughout the State.

These funds and a related Executive Order (detailed below) were approved by the Governor so that vulnerable homeless residents can be moved into shelter; regulatory barriers for establishing shelter would be removed; and trailers and hotels would be secured to provide immediate shelter options for those most at risk.

Of these \$150M State emergency Coronavirus funds, which are supplemental HHAP funds, the City was provided approximately \$19.3M, the County approximately \$10.6M, and the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, managed by LAHSA, approximately \$10.96M.

Governor Newsom also signed an Executive Order N-32-20 on March 18, 2020 providing flexibility to local governments to spend their current homelessness funding on immediate solutions tailored to combatting COVID-19. Funds targeted for flexibility include the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and both the original and supplemental HHAP grants. The Executive Order also suspends environmental requirements for HEAP, HHAP, and SB 89 funds in relation to COVID-19 and homelessness.

#### City Actions with State Funds and Resources

The following shelter interventions are being prioritized by City staff as the most feasible options to address and prevent Coronavirus among homeless individuals because they can be quickly established while adhering to fire, life, and safety concerns.

1) 42 Shelters at City Recreational Sites

The Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) identified 42 locations that could serve as sites for the placement of RV trailers received from the State. As of April 27, 2020, the City has established 24 emergency shelter sites with 1,027 beds for homeless individuals at RAP sites. The remaining 18 sites are being assessed and/or prepared for use. Each trailer has a kitchen and bathroom, and the City is responsible for site operations. The sites are designed to adhere to personal distancing guidelines.

2) Motel/Hotel Rooms (Project Roomkey)

The City, County, and LAHSA have collectively allocated \$39.3M in State emergency homeless funding for Project Roomkey. Project Roomkey's purpose is to secure motel/hotel rooms for unsheltered homeless individuals at-risk of Coronavirus. Vacant motel/hotel rooms are currently in abundance due to the severe downturn in tourism. As of April 24, 2020, 2,806 rooms at 27 sites are expected to be operational Countywide. Twelve of these sites are located in the City, with 962 rooms. These rooms will shelter homeless individuals who are 65 years of age or older and/or have an underlying health condition that would result in prolonged hospitalization if they were to contract the Coronavirus.

In addition to Project Roomkey, the County is also using motel/hotel rooms to quarantine those that have tested positive for COVID-19, and isolate those who are awaiting test results.

3) RV Safe Parking

The City is working to establish an RV Safe Parking program on a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)-owned property south of Skid Row near Maple St. and 16th Street. General Services Department (GSD), Real Estate Services and the City Attorney are working with Caltrans to determine the level of environmental testing necessary to move forward with the site.

#### Other Alternative Shelter Options

Over the last three years, the CAO, with assistance of BOE, Building and Safety, the Fire Department, LAHSA, and other departments in the ABH working group have investigated

alternative options to provide shelter to persons experiencing homelessness, including using trailers, tiny homes, and container homes. The Motion also mentioned that vacant megastore properties may provide opportunities. Below is list of options determined to be infeasible during this crisis due to health and safety regulations, in part beyond the City's control, and the excessive time needed to develop these sites.

- Tiny Homes

This housing type was deemed infeasible due to health and safety standards. Tiny homes cannot meet City building and safety requirements, which are basically the same as regular structures, such as the following: having a secured foundation; separate electrical panels; HVAC; and setbacks. In addition, because tiny homes do not have fire sprinklers they do not meet State fire code requirements, and therefore, the City does not have final authority.

- Container Homes

At this time, container homes are a viable alternative shelter option for homeless individuals, however, development of these housing types takes a minimum of eight (8) months, and potentially up to 24 months; and are not ideal for an emergency response. Note that the City is using container homes for ABH sites and permanent housing developments.

- Large Vacant Megastores

City staff has previously looked into leasing closed mega-stores. These properties offer either large indoor space that could be used as shelters or large parking areas that could be used for trailers or other portable shelter options. Despite various efforts property owners did not respond to the City's inquiries. In addition, given that the physical condition of these properties vary greatly and many may require remediation and/or construction, these sites are typically not feasible as part of a crisis response. These properties, however, could be part of a longer term strategy to develop facilities including affordable housing. GSD has advised that they have been in contact with individual Council offices to begin developing a list of potential sites.

#### Update - A Bridge Home Program

In FY 2018-19 the Council and Mayor established the ABH program to address the homeless crisis affecting all residents and stakeholders, including the estimated 27,000 unsheltered homeless individuals in the City. The ABH program was designed to develop approximately 50 to 100 shelter beds in each Council District Citywide with case management, and a connection to a permanent housing solution. To date, 2,273 crisis and bridge housing beds in 30 facilities are in operation or under construction in 14 Council Districts.

#### Attachments:

- 1 Motion (Koretz - Huizar)
- 2 ABH Status Chart

72-BB

MOTION

The City has declared a shelter crisis in Los Angeles to help address the needs of more than 36,000 homeless City residents, of which more than 27,000 are unsheltered and forced to live on the streets. Along with the crisis declaration, the Council and Mayor established the A Bridge Home (ABH) program to develop temporary shelters across the City. While the goal is to find permanent housing for all homeless residents, ABH sites are designed to be "no-barrier" shelters that provide a wide range of critical services that address the immediate needs of homeless individuals and families, including case management, housing navigation, mental health services, and life skills.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has only made this crisis of homelessness all the more dire. The City must take additional action to provide shelter and housing for persons experiencing homelessness. A wide range of options may be available, such as tiny homes, trailers, and container homes, that could be rapidly put into place to provide the shelter and housing needed. The City should be identifying locations to place this housing, such as closed mega-stores and large vacant parcels.

Further, increased efforts should be made to expedite construction of the remaining ABH sites to ensure that they are open and available to provide shelter immediately.

I THEREFORE MOVE that Council determine, as provided in Government Code Section 54954.2(b)(2), and pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the City Council, that there is a need to take immediate action on this matter and that the need for action came to the attention of the City subsequent to the posting of the agenda for today's Council meeting;

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Chief Legislative Analyst and City Administrative Officer to report with actions necessary to acquire and site tiny homes, trailers, container homes, or other alternative housing and shelter options to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness will have shelter or housing; and

I FURTHER MOVE that the Bureau of Engineering, City Administrative Officer, and all other affected departments identify actions necessary to expedite the completion of all remaining A Bridge Home sites.

PRESENTED BY: Paul Koretz  
PAUL KORETZ  
Councilmember, 5<sup>th</sup> District

SECONDED BY: [Signature]

ORIGINAL

MAR 1 7 2020

<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>CD Number of Beds</b>	
<b>Construction Completed (13 Projects) 973 Beds</b>		
1920 W. 3rd St.	1	28
1920 W. 3rd St. (Families)	1	13
Gardner Library	4	30
Aviva Family and Children's Services	4	42
5965 St. Andrew Pl	8	100
2817 S. Hope St (County Partnership)	9	100
ABH Pacific Sunset	11	154
Veterans Administration West LA Campus	11	100
1533 Schrader	13	72
1214 Lodi Place (YWCA) Phase 1 3rd Floor	13	64
1214 Lodi Place (YWCA) <b>Phase 2 3rd Floor</b>	13	60
El Puente (formerly El Pueblo Lot 5)	14	45
Downtown Women Center (DWC)	14	25
2316 E. Imperial Hwy (Watts)(County)	15	100
122 W. 8th St. (Public Health Clinic)	15	40
<b>Facilities Under Construction (14 projects) 1103 Beds</b>		
7700 Van Nuys (DWP Storage Main. Yard)	2	100
13160 Raymer St.	2	85
7621 Canoga Ave	3	75
Los Feliz A Bridge Home	4	100
La Cienega Motel Site	5	54
Van Nuys Orange Line Station (Aetna)	6	70
Sylmar Armory	7	85
4601 S. Figueroa (2)	9	30
La Fayette Park Triangle	10	70
1819 S. Western Ave.	10	15
1426 Paloma St.	14	120
Civic Center	14	99
515 N. Beacon St (San Pedro)	15	100
828 Eubank Ave. (Willmington)	15	100
<b>Facilities Under Feasibility Review (4 projects) 197 Beds</b>		
318 S. Alvarado St.	1	TBD
3061 Riverside Dr. (2)	4	82
CD 9 Site	9	TBD
1420 Paloma St. <b>Part 2</b>	14	70

**Total Beds**

2228