



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

File #: 22-079

Board Meeting Date: 1/25/2022

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Ken Cole, Director, Human Services Agency
Subject: Declaration of a Shelter Crisis in the County of San Mateo

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the declaration of a shelter crisis in the County of San Mateo, State of California, pursuant to Government Code section 8698.2.

BACKGROUND:

The Human Services Agency (“HSA”) oversees homeless programs and services for the County of San Mateo. In addition, HSA spearheads the planning, implementation, and coordination of the homeless crisis response system for the County, which includes serving as the Lead Agency for the San Mateo County Continuum of Care, a collaboration of local stakeholders promoting a communitywide commitment to end homelessness.

In July 2016, after eliciting input and feedback from County leadership and community partners, HSA published the Strategic Plan to End Homelessness (“Plan”), which presented strategic goals towards achieving the County’s objective of a functional zero level of homelessness. Since the publication of the Plan, the County and its community partners have implemented a number of strategic programs and initiatives to ensure that the homeless crisis response system can rapidly connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to shelter and permanent housing.

Addressing homelessness continues to be a high priority for the County, given the significant health and safety impacts on people who are unsheltered, which have been compounded due to the COVID -19 pandemic. While permanent affordable housing is the foundational answer to homelessness, shelters are a critical piece of the homeless crisis response system. Shelters provide safe temporary living accommodations and intensive on-site support services to assist people experiencing homelessness with finding and moving into permanent housing. The County and its community partners are working on strategies to expand shelter capacity as well as increase how many people each shelter can serve and help move into housing.

The Board of Supervisors declared a shelter crisis on December 4, 2018, which remained in place

until June 30, 2021.

DISCUSSION:

Even with County, City and community efforts, recent data shows that there continues to be a shelter crisis and a need for increased shelter capacity to minimize threats to the health and safety of persons experiencing homelessness.

The results of the County's 2019 One Day Homeless Count found that 1,512 persons were experiencing homelessness on the night of the count, including 901 without shelter and 611 in shelter programs. This represented almost a 21% increase from the overall number of persons experiencing homelessness in the count in 2017.

Data from calendar year 2021 shows that homeless outreach programs served 1,272 people in San Mateo County who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness continue to be at higher risk of physical and mental health issues than those who are housed, due to their lack of a safe place to live, support systems, and health and other services, among a variety of other health and safety-related challenges. These same issues can, in turn, also significantly increase an unsheltered person's risk of serious complications from COVID-19. Therefore, with the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of unsheltered persons within the County continues to be compromised, especially as the community continues to experience variant-related surges.

The health and safety of people experiencing homelessness in the County is threatened by a lack of housing and shelter, and the County affirms its commitment to addressing homelessness and enhancing the shelter and housing supports available to those in the County living without shelter or housing.

Therefore, a shelter crisis exists in San Mateo County.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form. The resolution contains the County's shelter crisis declaration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this proposed Resolution, and no additional Net County Cost (NCC) is being requested.