



Housing and Homelessness Committee Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

**TO: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

DATE: APRIL 28, 2025

FROM: HOUSING & HUMAN SERVICES

WARD: TWO

SUBJECT: MODIFY THE SUPPLEMENTAL SENIOR RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO REMOVE THE SECTION 8 WAITLIST PARTICIPANTS REQUIREMENT, ASSIST MOBILE HOMEOWNERS WITH SPACE RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND ASSIST SENIORS IN SHELTERS WITH RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND REPROGRAM \$100,000 FROM THE HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM TO THE RIVERSIDE ACCESS CENTER EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

ISSUES:

1. Conceptually approve modifying the Supplemental Senior Rental Assistance Program to remove the Section 8 waitlist participants requirement, assist mobile homeowners with space rental assistance and assist seniors in shelters with rental assistance; and
2. Conceptually approve reprogramming \$100,000 from the Homeless Outreach Program to the Riverside Access Center exterior improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Housing and Homelessness Committee:

1. Conceptually approve modifying the Supplemental Senior Rental Assistance Program to remove the Section 8 waitlist participants requirement, assist mobile homeowners with space rental assistance and assist seniors in shelters with rental assistance; and
2. Conceptually approve reprogramming \$100,000 from the Homeless Outreach Program to the Riverside Access Center exterior improvements.

BACKGROUND:

On February 15, 2024, the County of Riverside has 1,535 seniors that are 62 years and older and are City of Riverside residents on the Section 8 wait list. Of the 1,535 registrants, 346 are 70 years and older. The County of Riverside has a Section 8 first level preference for veterans, widows of veterans, and those who are 70 years and older. The wait time for seniors 70 years and older can range from 6 months to one year.

According to Bankrate, in December 2023 the average Social Security Income payment is \$1,767.03. Per Apartments.com, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$1,782. Per livingcost.org, the cost of living for rent, utilities, food, and transportation for one person is \$2,345. To ensure that a senior can afford the cost of living in Riverside, they would need an additional \$577.97 (\$600 if rounding up) on top of their Social Security Income.

To ensure that seniors at or over 70 years old remain stably housed, staff recommended implementing a pilot Supplemental Senior Rental Assistance Program that would provide up to \$600 for up to 12 months of supplemental rental assistance payments for seniors while they are waiting for a Section 8 voucher to be issued or an affordable senior housing unit becomes available. If the maximum monthly payment of \$600 is provided for 12 months, 125 seniors at the age of 70 or older can be assisted with maintaining their housing. Staff would reach out to seniors on the Section 8 wait list to ensure that they are on affordable senior housing wait lists.

Eligible applicants must have a household income that does not exceed 50% of area median income (AMI), which is \$36,250 for a one-person household in Riverside County and must be paying more than 30% of their income towards rent. Applications from seniors at or over 70 years old with an income at or below 30% of AMI will be prioritized for rental assistance. If there are unencumbered funds after six months of operating the program and there are no applications pending for seniors at or over the age of 70 years old, staff will open the program to individuals 62 or older on the Section 8 wait list with incomes at or below 50% AMI and prioritize households with incomes at or below 30% AMI.

On April 23, 2024, the City Council approved a pilot Supplemental Rental Assistance Program to prevent seniors on the Section 8 wait list of becoming homeless. Shortly thereafter, staff marketed the program to 346 seniors who are 70 years and older and were on the Section 8 waitlist.

In October 2024, the Supplemental Rental Assistance Program was expanded to include individuals 62 or older and post cards were sent out to 1,535 seniors on the Section 8 waitlist.

To-date, the city has been able to assist 36 seniors through the Supplemental Rental Assistance Program totaling \$226,446.28 in expenditures and encumbrances leaving an available balance of \$673,553.72.

DISCUSSION:

Throughout the fiscal year, City departments and the Budget Office monitor and analyze all City funds for potential issues that require attention and mitigating action. For the second-quarter report, City departments analyzed the financial status of all funds and appropriations under their purview.

On April 8, 2025, the Finance Department presented to City Council on the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Second Quarter Financial Update and to approve the proposed mid-year budget adjustments to address a projected deficit. The following budget adjustments were recommended for Council approval as cost savings measures to help address the projected deficit.

1. **Senior Rental Assistance Program – HHS (-\$500,000):** Record a decrease of \$500,000 in the General Fund to account for the program being undersubscribed and to align funds with projected program needs. A total of \$900,000 was originally budgeted for this program; however, despite vigorous outreach, to date only 36 seniors have subscribed to the program, obligating \$211,895. Additional outreach is underway, but based on current results, the program only requires \$400,000 total to successfully meet its goals, allowing the remaining \$500,000 to be reallocated to other needs.
2. **Homeless Outreach (-\$100,000):** Record a decrease of \$100,000 in the Measure Z fund associated with homeless outreach efforts to reflect anticipated year end savings in professional services.

City Council removed the Senior Rental Assistance Program and Homeless Outreach Program mid-year budget adjustments and requested Housing and Human Services staff to present recommendations on modifying the Senior Rental Assistance Program to serve more seniors and the Homeless Outreach Program.

Senior Rental Assistance Program

To assist more seniors in the City of Riverside with housing stability. staff is recommending the following changes to the Supplemental Senior Rental Assistance Program.

1. Remove the requirement that applicants must be on the Section 8 waitlist.
2. Assist mobile homeowners in the City of Riverside with space rent for households with incomes between 50% of area median income (\$35,900 for a one-person household) and 80% of area median income (\$57,400 for a one-person household) who are paying more than 40% of their household expenses (rent, mortgage, utilities) on rent.
 - a. The MHET Rental Assistance Program (RAP) assists mobile homeowners who are paying more than 40% of their household expenses on rent. The typical subsidy is 10% of the rent. Households cannot make more than 50% of area median income.
3. Assist seniors at or over the age of 62 in the Riverside Emergency Shelter and Bridge Housing Program with up to 12 months of rental assistance.

Homeless Outreach

To-date, the City has four of the six budgeted Public Safety and Engagement Teams (PSET) fully staffed and one PSET Outreach staff that is paired with the Riverside Access Center Outreach staff. As a result of PSET not being fully staffed, there is \$100,000 in funding available in professional services that would normally cover the cost of encampment clean ups.

Staff is recommending reprogramming \$100,000 in Measure Z funds from Homeless Outreach to improving the exterior of Riverside Access Center located at 2880 Hulen Place with a new mural and paint and add exterior signage for the Riverside Access Center and Bridge Housing Program located at 2881 Hulen Place to create a friendly and accessible environment (Project), as Outreach has received feedback from the unhoused population that the Hulen Place area is not inviting. The Riverside Access Center's interior space is going to be rehabilitated using \$1,361,695 of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and \$178,155 of Measure Z funds. We believe the proposed Project will help create a welcoming environment for our vulnerable population and will result in more individuals wanting to go to the Access Center and accept services.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to these recommendations, as the budget remains intact per Council action. Staff will continue to monitor the budget and seek alternative citywide savings measures to offset the impact of not recording these specific budget reductions totaling \$600,000.

Prepared by: Michelle Davis, Housing and Human Services Director
Certified as to
availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachment: Presentation