



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION **DATE: JANUARY 23, 2020**

FROM: OFFICE OF THE MAYOR **WARD: ALL**

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FROM HOMELESS SOLUTIONS OFFICER HAFSA KAKA TO THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION ON USING ALL AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS TO SOLVE HOMELESSNESS

ISSUE:

To direct staff on All American Conversations topic concerning homelessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Human Relations Commission:

1. Discuss and approve the topic for discussion for the All American Conversations based on the recommendation from Homeless Solutions Officer Hafsa Kaka.

BACKGROUND:

In the last Point in Time count, which is the federally mandated manual count of unsheltered homeless populations nationwide, Riverside documented 439 homeless individuals, a 19.9% increase from the prior year. In addition, Riverside and Alvord Unified School Districts have 122 students identified as living in shelters, cars, campgrounds, or hotels.

Riverside's councilmembers have reported that a large proportion of the calls that they receive are related to homelessness, and in calendar year 2018, over 4,000 calls regarding homelessness were made to 311. After four new council members were sworn in on December 3, the current approach to addressing homelessness was the first major update given to council by staff. That staff report is attached for additional context about how many city resources currently are dedicated to this issue.

In response to the homelessness crisis, in 2018 and 2019, City Council 1) passed Housing First, a policy that aims to bring unsheltered homeless indoors as the first step to putting them into housing where they are supported by intensive services, 2) created the Office of Homeless Solutions, the department charged with implementing the Housing First policy, and 3) created the Public Safety Engagement Team, a group tasked with maintaining quality of life for constituents by addressing encampments, debris and other side effects of the spiking homeless population.

One important aspect of a successful Housing First policy is an aggressive increase in affordable

and low-income housing units. City staff has been working hard to pursue housing, and is currently working on 15 projects that will result in 638 affordable housing units when complete. This is a wonderful start but our housing needs continue to grow. A serious barrier faced by housing developments, particularly multi-family units with set asides for formerly homeless residents, is resistance from neighborhood groups and individuals that are sometimes misinformed about the nature of Housing First and the requirements that must be met to move into these housing units.

The Human Relations Commission's Mission reads, in part, "...The Commission fosters mutual understanding and respect between people, encourages education and outreach...", and there is a great need for mutual understanding surrounding the topic of homelessness. An All American Conversation is a toolkit that is ready to be implemented, and there are several community partners that could be engaged in this topic.

On December 19, 2019 the Human Relations Commission approved a timeline and budget for the event as followed:

January – Topic is discussed and selected

February – Community partner(s) are selected, First planning Session

March – second and third planning session

April – event to take place on a date within the first two weeks of April.

Approved Budget is \$500 for this event.

DISCUSSION:

Staff recommends three different options for the All American Conversation topic:

1. A discussion surrounding the quality of life issue, and the ability to have effective and receptive dialogue with the NIMBY community, or businesses who oppose homeless programming yet are critical in seeking solutions.
2. A discussion surrounding the role that shelters play in moving people out of unsafe conditions and into the stable environment needed for mental health, physical, substance abuse and other treatment
3. A discussion surrounding Housing First policy and addressing common misconceptions about the tenancy requirements that are in place for low-barrier housing
4. A discussion surrounding a topic of the Human Relations Commission's choosing

Staff also recommends that decisions about the location and format of the event are decided once a community partner has been chosen.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact is associated with this item.

Submitted by: Edward Coronado, Assistant to the Mayor, Office of the Mayor