



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

**TO: HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION** **DATE: December 19, 2019**

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

**SUBJECT: Direct Staff on All American Conversations Topic, and Approve Timeline and Budget**

## **ISSUE:**

To direct staff on All American Conversations topic and approve timeline and budget.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Human Relations Commission:

1. Direct staff on the topic for discussion for the All American Conversations
2. Direct staff on the timeline for the All American Conversations
3. Approve a budget of no more than \$500 for the planning and execution of All American Conversations

## **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 Alvorad 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.

### **DISCUSSION:**

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

1. 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
2. A discussion surrounding Housing First policy and addressing common misconceptions about the tenancy requirements that are in place for low-barrier housing
3. 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.

A recommended timeline for the event is below:

January – community partner(s) selected, first planning session

February – second and third planning session

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

Finally, staff requests approval of a \$500 budget for the event. This is the budget that was used to implement the 2017 All American Conversation.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact of this item if approved is \$500.

Submitted by: Liz Pinney-Muglia, Policy and Program Coordinator, Office of the Mayor