

City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2021
FROM: OFFICE OF HOMELESS SOLUTIONS WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS AND PUBLIC SAFETY WORKSHOP, INCLUDING THE RIVERSIDE HOMELESS INITIATIVE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

ISSUES:

Conduct a workshop on homelessness and public safety and approve the proposed Riverside Homeless Initiative Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Riverside.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

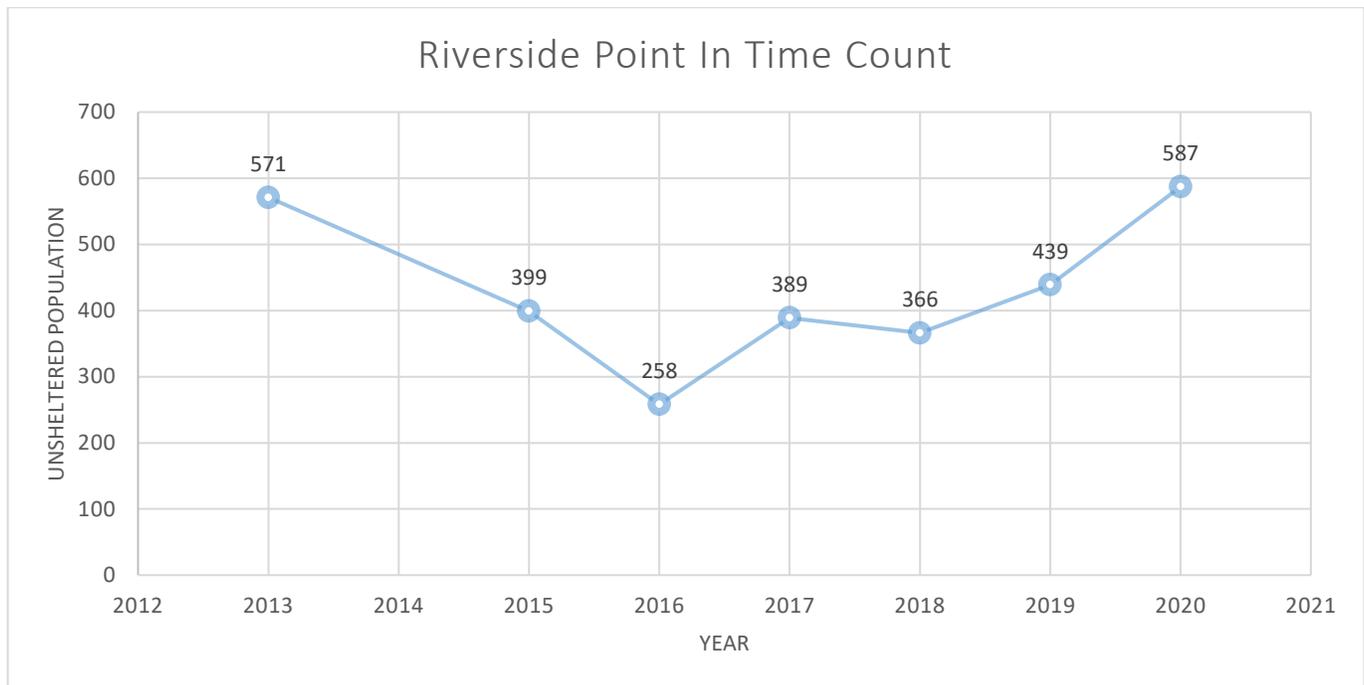
That the City Council:

1. Conduct a homelessness and public safety workshop;
2. Conceptually approve a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the Riverside Homeless Initiative between the City and County of Riverside;
3. Direct the Public Safety Committee to discuss the prohibition of unauthorized patient drop-offs within the City of Riverside; and
4. Lobby the state legislature to invest in State Hospitals and Correctional facilities to meet the needs of California's population.

BACKGROUND:

The top causes of homelessness among unaccompanied individuals are (1) lack of affordable housing, (2) unemployment, (3) poverty, (4) mental illness, (5) substance abuse, and (6) unplanned events such as an illness, death of a primary income earner, divorce, or disability.

Annually the City, in partnership with the County of Riverside, conducts a Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to count unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. In the last three years, the City has seen an increase in its unsheltered homeless population. In 2020, the City of Riverside's unsheltered homeless population was 587, a 34% increase from the previous year and representing 27% of the County's Homeless PIT Count. Below is a breakdown of the Homeless PIT Count over the last eight years.



Due to the COVID pandemic, the Homeless PIT Count was not conducted in 2021. The next Homeless PIT Count will be conducted in January 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During Fiscal Year 2020/2021, the City received 4,445 total calls for service related to homelessness, representing the single largest topic received by the City's 311 services.

Over the course of fiscal year 2020/2021, the Office of Homeless Solutions conducted the following:

- 954 guests were served at the Riverside Emergency Shelter and Pallet Shelter Village.
- Housed 74 formally homeless individuals.
- 117 housed clients received case management to ensure clients achieved housing stability and self-sufficiency.
- Assisted 1,374 households with emergency rental assistance to prevent homelessness
- Completed the development of 56 affordable housing units, including 6 Housing First units.
- 478 affordable housing units are in the pipeline for development, which 199 are Housing First units.
- Total of 185 beds available at the Riverside Emergency Shelter, Family Shelter, and Recuperative Care Program.
- Creating 51 new beds at the Homeless Service Campus on Hulen Place.
- Housing Search: Identified available housing units on the open market, as a critical component to quickly producing permanent supportive housing opportunities for the City's rental assistance programs.
- Landlord Incentive Program: Recruited available housing units for individuals approved through the City's Rental Assistance Program and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Programs.

- Riverside at Work Program: Provided temporary employment for three homeless individuals at the Riverside Access Center.
- Office of the Mayor
 - The Mayor's leadership and outreach to faith-based communities have identified resources and assets that lead to the potential production of Housing First units throughout the City like the completed Grove Community Church housing project, St. Michael's Housing Project (under construction) and the La Sierra Seventh Day Church (closing on financing).
 - The Mayor's Office proposed amendments to the City's code regarding the square footage for emergency sleeping cabins. Additionally, the Mayor's Office coordinated a private donation effort to purchase a number of the Pallet Shelters for the Riverside Village Shelter. This resulted in a successful pilot year led by the Office of Homeless Solutions and City Net, with funding for subsequent years identified and allocated to continue operations.
 - The Mayor was instrumental in advocating for direct allocations of funding from the state, including Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) 2 and 3 funding resulting in millions of dollars for the city to use for solving homelessness as well as provide residents with housing and rental assistance.
 - The Mayor's Office was instrumental in facilitating the private donations for the Salvation Army to pilot the First Impressions Program. This program employs the homeless to clean up litter on our freeway entrances and exits.
 - The Mayor co-authored a letter with the City Council to successfully advocate for the implementation of Laura's Law by the County of Riverside.

During FY 2021/22, the Office of Homeless Solutions has completed or is currently underway with the following homeless related activities:

- Recruitment for the Homeless Solutions Officer position.
- Collaboration with the County on addressing homelessness in the Santa Ana Riverbottom
- Procured two additional outreach workers through Step Up on Second.
- One Nurse Outreach Worker (NOW) has started and been assigned to the Homeless Street Outreach team.
- Rehabilitating 2800 Hulen Place for the creation of 28 mental health bridge housing beds.
- Rehabilitating 2881 Hulen Place for the creation of 23 bridge housing beds.

DISCUSSION:

During the City Council meeting held on July 13, 2021, Councilmember Perry requested staff to schedule a Workshop on Homelessness to discuss the following and start a plan of action to address homelessness that involves our residents, businesses, and other elected leaders.

Items for discussion:

1. Review the status of our municipal code ordinances. Potential changes can be assigned to the Public Safety Committee.
2. Review current laws and state statutes, including case law that restricts enforcement.

3. Review current court decisions, including the 9th Circuit case out of Idaho which restricts the enforcement of the City's camping ordinance. This review should also include the requirements placed on the City when clearing encampments and removing shopping carts left in the public right of way that contain personal property.
4. Hear from the Riverside Police Department and the Public Safety & Engagement Team (PEST) regarding their experience and frustration involving this issue.
5. Review the statewide voter initiatives such as Proposition 47 and the impact they have on the City.
6. Invite a representative from the Sheriff's Department to share the mandates placed upon them involving the jail population and their protocol for booking and releasing individuals from their custody.
7. Review the current status of bail as a means of being released from custody.
8. Receive an update on Emergency Treatment Services (ETS) and the progress of returning their clients to their point of origin.
9. Receive an update on the diversion center planned for the old juvenile hall site located on Magnolia at Harrison.
10. Review how mental health funding obtained from the State is received at the local level. In other words, describe the path it takes from Sacramento to Riverside.
11. A few have begun conversations with State Legislators. The City Council needs to be updated and act on a plan that can be shared with Legislators and their constituents. This may include new legislation and/or evaluating other alternatives for us to pursue.

The City recognizes the efforts being made to address homelessness throughout the region. The focus of this workshop is to discuss the long-term barriers to addressing homelessness and how we can collectively address these barriers.

The City and County of Riverside departments invited to present at the Homeless Workshop include the Housing & Homeless Committee Chair Edwards, Office of Homeless Solutions, Riverside Police Department, City Attorney's Office, and Riverside University Health Systems – Behavioral Health. Presentations will be followed by questions and answer sessions. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department will also be present for a question and answer session.

Riverside Police Department (RPD) & Public Safety and Engagement Team (PSET)

In 2019, the City of Riverside created the PSET – a multi-department approach designed to maintain order in public spaces while also providing homeless individuals with a pathway out of homelessness. Team members specialize in providing resources and assistance while also addressing issues of unlawful panhandling, camping, abandoned personal belongings, and vagrancy. PSET is funded with local Measure Z funding.

The team is made up of members from the Riverside Police Department, Code Enforcement, and City Net Homeless Street Outreach. Additional team members that periodically participate in PSET include the Justice Team Outreach (substance abuse counselors), Riverside University Health Systems, County of Riverside Probation, CalTrans, California Highway Patrol, BNSF Railway, Union Pacific Railroad, Riverside County Transportation Commission, Riverside County Flood Control, and DBI (trash removal service).

During the homeless workshop, RPD and PSET will discuss the following reoccurring issues typically encountered when trying to assist the homeless:

- Substance Abuse
- Lack of shelter bed space
- Recidivism
- Cite denial process
- Need for streamline processes
- Need for Behavioral Health Clinician in the field

Recently, the City Council approved the creation of 20 Park and Neighborhood Specialists (PANS) to patrol city parks, park facilities, and adjacent neighborhoods to ensure safe and proper usage of parks, public spaces, and adjacent neighborhoods. PANS will also enforce various municipal codes and regulations related to the use of public parks and park facilities. They will work in collaboration with street outreach teams to connect homeless individuals with homeless-related assistance programs and resources. The City has begun the PANS recruitment process.

City Attorney's Office (CAO)

During the Homeless Workshop, the CAO will address the Riverside Municipal Code, the current state of the law in California as it relates to bail, the effect of statewide voter initiatives in California that have impacted quality of life, patient drop-offs and court decisions that have addressed homeless encampments.

Riverside University Health Systems (RUHS) – Behavioral Health

During the Homeless Workshop, RUHS Behavioral Health will be presenting on the following topics as it relates to homelessness.

- Behavioral Health Funding, State and local levels
- Behavioral Health Campus at Harrison, Recovery Village update
- RUHS Medical Center: Emergency Psychiatric Services
- Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment System
- Arlington Recovery Community, Substance Use Disorder Residential and Sobering Center
- Residential Behavioral Health Services, Locked

Homeless Forum – Regional Collaboration

In October 2019 and January 2020, the City convened the Homeless Forum - a dialogue to invigorate regional conversation to advance effective solutions to the challenge of homelessness. It served as an opportunity to identify what strategies work, to learn what other agencies were doing, highlight funding opportunities, gather resources, discuss how to connect people across the region and commit to do what could be done to help each other.

On March 30, 2021, the City convened the Homeless Forum, which highlighted the sub-regional partnerships made since inception, provided updates as it related to COVID-19, and needs assessment to move the momentum of addressing homelessness in the near future. The sub-regional efforts included the following cities:

Northwest Region:

- City of Riverside
- Corona

- Eastvale
- Jurupa Valley
- Norco

Southwest Region:

- Canyon Lake
- Lake Elsinore
- Menifee
- Murrieta
- Temecula
- Wildomar

Central Region:

- Moreno Valley
- Perris

Central West:

- Hemet
- San Jacinto

Pass Region: Lead – Western Riverside County of Governments

- Banning
- Beaumont
- Calimesa

Common needs identified among the cities include shelter, mental health services, and housing. Staff is in the process of scheduling the next Homeless Forum to discuss how state and federal resources can be used to meet the needs within each subregion.

Five-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness Objectives

On June 28, 2021, the Housing & Homelessness Committee discussed goals for Year 2 and provided input on potential activities to align with those goals.

On August 17, 2021, the City learned that in order to be eligible for funding through the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program (HHAP) 3 grant from the State, grantees had to have a homeless action plan in place by June of 2022. Twenty percent (20%) of the grant funds would be provided upfront to grantees to develop their homeless plan and cover other eligible grant-related costs.

On August 23, 2021, the Housing & Homelessness Committee conceptually approved the following six objectives proposed for the Five-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness (Homelessness Plan). These objectives are based upon the Housing & Homelessness Committee's previous discussions and conversations with staff:

1. Prevent homelessness.
2. Increase availability and effectiveness of shelter beds.
3. Increase housing production with a focus on affordability.
4. Build a coordinated regional infrastructure.

5. Increase the availability of services, with a focus on physical and mental health and substance abuse.
6. Expand public awareness and education about homelessness and housing.

The Homelessness Plan's proposed objectives shown in Attachment 1 envisions a workplan and possible deliverables that could correspond to each objective. These items in the work plan might fall within the purview of the Housing & Homelessness Committee or the Public Safety Committee. Staff will work with each committee chair to ensure that all topics are addressed at the appropriate committee as the Five-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness is prepared. Committee meetings would delve into each objective, providing the public an opportunity to engage at every step along the way.

Memorandum of Understanding Riverside Homeless Initiative

On July 26, 2021, the City Manager, Mayor, Riverside County Executive Officer, and Senator Roth met to discuss homelessness within Riverside County and the City of Riverside. The partners recognized the pervasive challenge that mental health and substance abuse disorders present for those individuals experiencing homelessness and recognize the importance of regional collaboration to equitably address local issues of homelessness and related programming needs that include street outreach, emergency shelter, mental health and substance abuse programs and permanent supportive housing.

To establish a common understanding of the challenges facing the community with regards to homelessness and mental health and substance use disorders, the City drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Riverside Homeless Initiative (Attachment 2). The MOU spells out standards, terms, and conditions by which the City and County will collaborate and strategically organize resources and efforts to make a collective impact on mental health and substance use disorders in the community.

The summary of the MOU terms are as follows:

- Outcome 1: Availability of Alternatives. Rapidly increase effective alternatives to incarceration for individuals who are experiencing homelessness, who commit crimes, who may be a danger to themselves or others, or who have drug addiction and/or behavioral health issues.
- Outcome 2: Legislative Support. Influence State legislation that strengthens the ability of local governments to assist individuals with drug addiction and/or behavioral health issues who also may be experiencing homelessness.
- Outcome 3: Funding Advocacy. Effectively coordinate to obtain State and Federal funding for increasing local and regional capacity to beneficially assist individuals with drug addiction and/or behavioral health issues who also may be experiencing homelessness.
- Outcome 4 - Reinforcement of Local Responsibility. Put into place local and regional ordinances and other mechanisms to reinforce local responsibilities for individuals with drug addiction and/or behavioral health issues who also may be experiencing homelessness.

Staff is requesting the City Council to conceptually review and approve the draft MOU. Upon finalization of MOU review by the County, the MOU will be brought back to the City Council for final approval at a later date.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to **Strategic Priority 2** – Community Well-Being and **Goal No. 2.2**, collaborate with partner agencies to improve household resiliency and reduce the incidence and duration of homelessness.

The item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – The City is conducting this workshop to discuss the development of a plan of action to address homelessness that involves our residents, businesses, and other elected leaders that create community trust.
2. **Equity** – The City’s homeless programs continue to be supportive of the City’s racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, identity, geographic, and other attributes of diversity and is committed to advancing the fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, and equitable distribution of services to ensure every member of the community has equal access to homeless programs and resources.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Riverside is a prudent steward of public funds and ensures responsible management of the City’s financial resources while implementing homeless programs.
4. **Innovation** – Riverside continues to identify gaps in its homeless system of care, to direct homeless resources to address the community’s changing needs, and prepares for the future through collaborative partnerships.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Riverside is committed to funding homeless programs that ensure housing stability and self-sufficiency.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Michelle Davis, Housing Authority Manager
Certified as to availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by: Kris Martinez, Interim Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Five-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness Objectives
2. Memorandum of Understanding for the Riverside Homeless Initiative
3. Presentations