



NEWS RELEASE
City of Chico
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*****MEDIA ALERT*****

UPDATE ON HOMELESS OPPORTUNITIES

(Chico, CA – November 23, 2020) The City of Chico would like to provide an update on the challenges and progress that the local crisis response system has made with respect to identifying and implementing possible sheltering options for persons experiencing homelessness.

- City staff, in coordination with the staff of the True North Housing Alliance, the County of Butte and Safe Space Winter Shelter, are actively searching for a viable location for a short-term navigation center. To date, dozens of potential project sites have been visited and explored, yet each has fallen short of the standard requirements for an emergency shelter. Sites that meet the following Emergency Solutions Grant Program criteria set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development continue to be evaluated as they become available:
 - *Structure and materials* – The shelter building must be structurally sound to protect residents from the elements and not pose any threat to health and safety of the residents.
 - *Air quality* – Each room or space within the shelter must have a natural or mechanical means of ventilation.
 - *Water supply* – The shelter’s water supply must be free of contamination.
 - *Sanitary facilities* – Each program participant in the shelter must have access to sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, are private, and are adequate for personal cleanliness and the disposal of human waste.
 - *Thermal environment* – The shelter must have any necessary heating/cooling facilities in proper operating condition.
 - *Illumination and electricity* – The shelter must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and support health and safety. There must be sufficient electrical sources to permit the safe use of electrical appliances in the shelter.
 - *Sanitary conditions* – The shelter must be maintained in a sanitary condition.
 - *Fire safety* – There must be at least one working smoke detector in each occupied unit of the shelter. The fire alarm system must be designed for hearing-impaired residents. There must also be a second means of exiting the building in the event of fire or other emergency.
 - ADA-accessible interior and exterior
 - Interior sprinklers
 - +/- 20,000 square feet interior space (COVID-19 spacing requirements/square footage per occupant)
 - Within a reasonable distance/travel time to public services and transportation
 - Not in a runway clear zone/clear zone

City staff desires to further their outreach to the community to determine if there are any potential facility options that the public may be aware of that have not come to City staff’s

attention, which include the required standards. If you are aware of any available sites, please contact Suzi Kochems, Chico's Homeless Solutions Coordinator.

- City staff is working through some mitigation efforts to potentially establish a legal camping environment that could accommodate up to 40 tent sites and 30 tiny houses/pallet shelters. At this time, the City is seeking a service provider to operate the two programs at the project site, and also establish program standards and protocols for participation.
- The True North Housing Alliance has secured a contractor to begin the construction project at the Torres Shelter to expand shelter capacity by 50 beds, though there may be a delay in implementing this project as a result of COVID-19.
- City staff are regularly engaging in discussions with State of California representatives in an attempt to gain insight about future grant funds for capital development and/or operations sustainability. Any funding awarded to the City would likely be contracted to a non-profit for service provision; therefore, the City is hoping that our service provider network is capable of expanding to meet the needs and funding availability.
- County staff, in cooperation with Safe Space Winter Shelter, the Jesus Center and the True North Housing Alliance, continue to operate Project Roomkey, which provides motel/hotel rooms to persons experiencing homelessness as a noncongregate shelter option to assist in the efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 across a highly vulnerable population. Funding for Project Roomkey is provided by FEMA. Funding is authorized on a month-by-month basis and it is anticipated that the state/federal government will terminate this funding in the near future. The vulnerable persons residing in Project Roomkey units will be released back out to the streets if they do not have access to an emergency shelter bed, shared living opportunity, or more permanent housing solution.
- The Chico City Council authorized \$20,000 in outreach and engagement funding for local non-profits to engage in outreach efforts with unhoused persons living in the parks, greenways and public areas. It is expected that outreach workers will be trained in trauma-informed care, de-escalation tactics, adverse childhood experiences, and have some homeless case management experience. Service organizations interested in providing outreach/engagement, and who have the capacity to provide such services, should contact Suzi Kochems for more information.
- The County, the Butte Countywide Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC), the City of Chico, and area service providers will be leveraging multiple funding sources to bring a variety of opportunities to the unsheltered population. It is anticipated a plan for the multiple funding sources will be developed by mid-January.

For media inquiries, please contact Suzi Kochems, Homeless Solutions Coordinator, at (530) 288-7811 or Lynda Gizzi, Public Information Officer, at (530) 896-7204.

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