



Homeless Opportunities Plan

City of Chico
September 22, 2020

Summary – Looking Ahead

The City Council has requested staff to

Develop a
comprehensive plan,

**To alleviate the
impacts of
homelessness on the
City,**

By discussing
opportunities that
could **improve public
health and safety,**

**Through connecting
persons experiencing
homelessness to
supportive services
and case managers.**



This plan lays out an **aggressive approach toward combatting street homelessness** that will require unprecedented leadership, teamwork and accountability on the part of the City Council, City staff and service providers.

Summary – Looking Ahead

The **City of Chico** can make **positive changes** in the lives of its residents through

- a combination of system improvement and expansion,
- implementation of innovative practices and
- stronger partnerships.

PROCESS and OUTCOME

- City Council to provide direct feedback,
- Allow vital public input and feedback, and
- Affirm the path forward to facilitate staff to move forward!



Plan Assumptions

- Any opportunity provided, or action taken, must be done with compassion, integrity and dignity.
- To effectively reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness, the capacity of the Homeless Crisis Response System needs to grow across all intervention types.
- Solving homelessness is not a one-size fits all approach; ending homelessness is a multi-tiered approach and must support the Continuum of Care.
- Strategies, Goals and Actions must focus on getting the highest number of persons into shelter/housing and connected to services that will improve their opportunities for sustained housing and improved health outcomes.
- Using the 2019 PIT numbers, the Continuum has a deficit of 258 shelter beds during the pandemic and 207 pre pandemic (the gap).

Why are we here Today?

- A Homeless Crisis Response System identifies those experiencing homelessness, prevents homelessness when possible and links people with housing quickly and provides supportive services when needed.
- The Homeless Opportunities Plan (the Plan) captures and elaborates on a multi-faceted approach to service analysis, delivery, options, and response to create a lasting impact and change for those experiencing homelessness and supports the Homeless Crisis Response System.
- Although key stakeholders have contributed to the development of this call-to-action, the City would like the opportunity to engage in a community-driven review and input process designed to build ownership of the plan and its priorities, articulate common goals and ensure a cross-agency alignment.



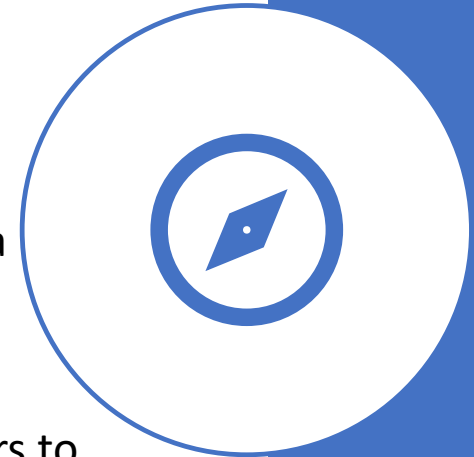
Guiding Principles of the Plan

PRINCIPLES

- Accountability.
- Valuing the voices of persons with lived experience.
- Improving shelter and housing options through evidence-based approaches.
- Ensuring a strong system of care that prioritizes communication and collaboration.

To accomplish the goals of the Plan, the following strategies can be implemented to build a strong Homeless Crisis Response System:

1. Implement a systems-level approach to homeless planning-all partners on board.
2. Increase mobile outreach and engagement-service providers, target team & volunteers to share in a team approach.
3. Leverage community resources to reduce homelessness and impact outcomes.
4. Increase the production of/access to permanent solutions, and primarily affordable housing.
5. Improve the performance of the existing system.



Evaluation of Effort, Thus Far

- The Butte Countywide Continuum of Care is the local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for persons experiencing homelessness.
- The Continuum of Care calls for a variety of intervention types as successful components of the Crisis Response System. Solutions should include a viable option for sanctioned camping and safe parking.
- The City previously discussed nine project sites with potential of serving as sanctioned encampments/safe parking locations. No action was taken at that time because the sites were not thought to be viable solutions.
- Information regarding the project sites is included on the following two pages.

Call to Action

Each parcel researched had issues that rendered the parcel cost prohibitive or not a viable solution.

However, one parcel did stand out as a possibility for a legal camping/parking solution: the BMX property, off MLK.

BMX Site at MLK: This site is owned by the City and has the necessities to serve as an appropriate site but has minor ingress and egress issues that can be resolved without impact. Sewer, water and electric connections exist but will need to be evaluated for capacity issues and likely upsized on site.

In order to utilize the site, a commitment to continue to support BMX Youth activity must be concluded. This would require us to support an existing effort underway to create the BMX relocation at the airport site. If the MLK site is not utilized for sheltering needs, the City should renew the BMX lease in place.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Staff is requesting the use of one-time funds to complete the new location and preserve the BMX site as a potential option for future efforts.

Future efforts may include a low-barrier navigation center with legal camping/parking where persons experiencing homelessness could transition to once available. Further study of these options is necessary.

Camping/ Parking

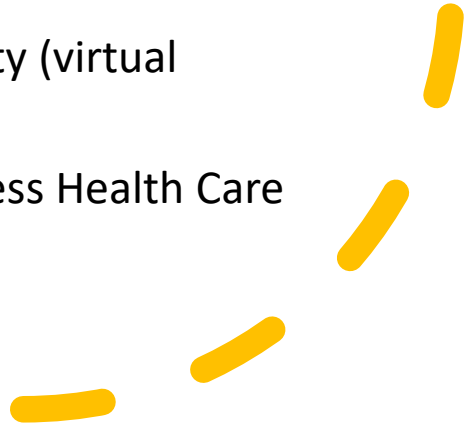
A service provider considering such a step forward would utilize both staff and volunteers to cover the project site 24/7. Such administrator would develop program guidelines that govern the program and its operation to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines, Public Health & Safety guidelines and best practices.

Potential sources of revenue for program:

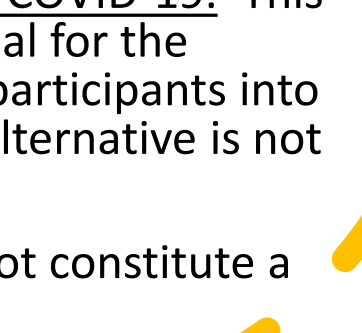
- Private donors
- City, for non-profit endeavor located at low-barrier navigation center adhering to guidelines; additional analysis necessary for other locations

City Partners in the Crisis Response System: Resources Provided

As significant existing partners in the Crisis Response System, the following organizations will share information about their programs, services and plans for assisting the homeless population. This overview of existing services sets the framework for what services are presently provided and what service gaps exist in our response system.

- Joy Amaro, Executive Director, True North Housing Alliance-Emergency Shelter
 - Laura Cootsona, Executive Director, Jesus Center-Renewal Center, Sober Sheltering and Transitional Housing
 - Deanna Schwab, President of the Board, Safe Space Winter Shelter
 - Leslie Johnson, Executive Director, Chico Housing Action Team-Housing Opportunities
 - Butte County DESS and HHOME Branch-COVID, CoC and Housing Options
 - Debbie Villasenor-Housing Consultant, Butte County (virtual presentation)
 - Doug Guillon, Public/Private Collaboration, Homeless Health Care Facility
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Immediate Opportunity #1: True North Housing Alliance & Safe Space

- True North and Safe Space are collaborating on a short-term, low-barrier navigation center (Gov. Code 65660) that will comply with the Public Health order and provide some relief for those persons that are illegally camping or are exiting Project Roomkey.
 - Project developer has identified location and can open November 1st upon obtaining the necessary funds to provide necessary operations.
 - This short-term opportunity appears available for a period of 5 months to one-year while a long-term solution to emergency shelter is developed at a different location.
 - Low barrier navigation centers are allowed “by right” per Government Code Section 65662 as long as the center complies with operational requirements under the Government Code.
 - The low barrier navigation center will provide 160 emergency shelter beds (peri-COVID-19) and 300 beds post-COVID-19. This increase in shelter beds will improve the potential for the Continuum of Care to release Project Roomkey participants into a shelter bed if permanent housing or another alternative is not readily available.
 - City funds provided supporting such action do not constitute a project. (GC 65662(b)).
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Short-term Opportunity #1

Possible Services Available at the New Navigation Center

- Shelter (8 pm to 8 am)
- Nightly Registration
- Day sheltering (8 am to 8 pm)
- Meals
- Housing Navigation/CES Entry
- Nighttime Security-interior and perimeter
- Showers, Toilets & Laundry
- Property Storage
- Employment Resources
- Life Skills Classes
- Vocational Training
- Substance Abuse Counseling
- Support Groups (AA, NA)
- Staffing will include: Shelter Operations Team, Shelter Supervisor, Case Managers, Day Monitors, Volunteers and Exec Director

Immediate
Opportunity #2:
True North
Housing
Alliance/Torres
Shelter

The True North Housing Alliance operates the Torres Emergency Shelter and is able to provide beds for 160 persons (outside of COVID) per night. The organization is prepared to add another 50 beds should funding be made available, pending Building/Planning approval.

The need to provide a shelter bed to every unsheltered person in the last full point in time count stands at approximately 400 emergency shelter beds .

The combination of a new Navigation Center in conjunction with an increase in Shelter beds at Torres would provide 90% of the CoC's current emergency shelter bed need currently.

Costs for Immediate Opportunities #1 & #2

The Short-Term Navigation Center will provide 160 emergency shelter beds during the pandemic and 300 post pandemic. **Costs for a 5-month period: \$657,967**

The Torres Emergency Shelter has the potential to provide 50 additional beds for a total of 210 beds post pandemic. **Gap funding necessary for this development: \$300,000. Additional planning and environmental review is necessary before progressing.**

Potential sources of revenue to support Immediate Opportunity #1:


- CDBG-CV1- (CIP 66000 included in 2020-21 budget approved in July by Council)
- CDBG-CV2, CV3
- City of Chico

GOAL: Promote Navigation Centers

In order to centralize services and coordinate an array of supportive services, the City supports development of a permanent Low-Barrier Navigation Center project. Such project should include up to 200 non-congregate shelter beds. Such project may include exterior space to develop a campground/parking areas for temporary use by persons experiencing homelessness and lack of other adequate shelter.

The City will collaborate with a shelter provider as an Administrator on a low-barrier navigation center, and comply with any Public Health orders in affect, to provide on-going opportunities for non-congregate emergency shelter beds and potentially tent/vehicle camping to address the unsheltered homeless demand identified in the latest full point in time count. Through such project, all persons residing will have a bed available to them in a permanent location.


Low-barrier navigation centers are allowed “by right” per California Government Code Sections 65660 *et seq.*, in areas zoned for mixed use and nonresidential zones permitting multifamily uses, and when in compliance with operational requirements.



GOAL: Promote Navigation Centers (Cont'd)

Services and amenities to be provided will be the same as at the Short-Term Navigation Center. Operational requirements under Gov. Code remain same.

The following tasks need to be realized for such a project:

- **Site Acquisition:** existing structure/facility (45,000 sq. ft. or larger)
 - **Site Renovation:** Developer to control and renovate facility
 - **Operational Agreement:** entity with capacity to serve large population of individuals at one location to act as site operator
 - **Accommodations/Facilities:** Possible utilization of portable showers, toilets, laundry and storage units transferred from prior Navigation Center
 - **Funding:** Requires commitment of funding to ensure sustainability and to ensure that solutions promote housing persons experiencing homelessness, and the public health and safety
 - **Code Compliance:** Ensuring compliance with required planning, entitlement, and other necessary codes
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Estimated Operational Costs for a Permanent Opportunity

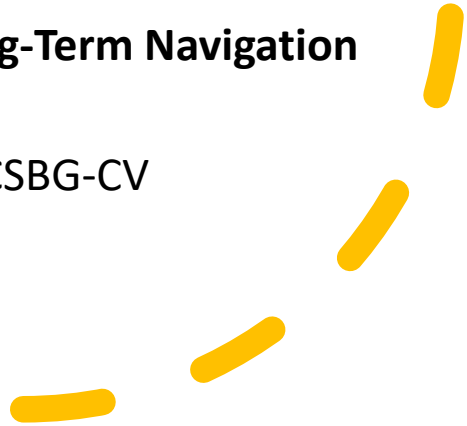
Assumptions: Additional evaluation would be necessary to identify site and details, as well as to engage in the appropriate entitlement and planning process.

Project Site Acquisition and Renovation: estimated at \$7 million

Estimated Annual Operational Costs include:

- Administrative and operational staffing, utilities/water, security, sanitization, liability insurance, meals, supplies, cots/furniture, IT, phones, etc.= \$1.5 million annually (roughly)
- One-time costs purchase of shade structure, picnic tables and benches for outdoor


Potential sources of Revenue to leverage for the Long-Term Navigation Center costs:

- HHAP, ESG, ESG-CV, CDBG-CV2, Project Homekey, CSBG-CV
 - City of Chico
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Goals Within the City's Reach

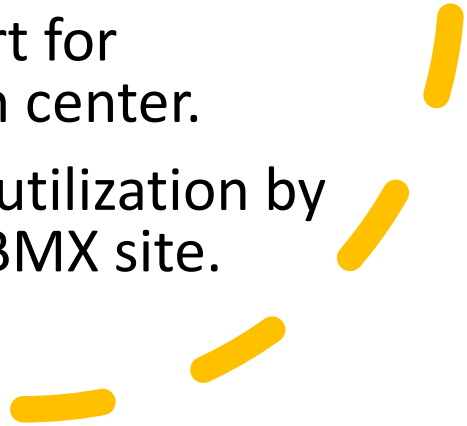
Below are four goals that are within the City's reach within three years:




- Decrease unsheltered homelessness by 50% through enhanced housing/shelter opportunities
- Establish enough shelter beds to provide temporary housing for all unsheltered homeless persons in the City
- Establish a Collective Outreach & Engagement Team-representative of each service provider organization within the Continuum
- Improve the City's public health & safety by enforcing codes and ordinances that provide for public protections

The Path Forward: RECOMMENDATIONS


Staff shall proceed with implementing the following:

- Legal Camping/Parking - Seek out Operator and finalize a site.
 - Work with True North to evaluate the feasibility of expanding shelter capacity at the Torres Shelter.
 - Provide funding to True North & Safe Space to facilitate their efforts to establish a navigation center increasing beds by 160 (during COVID).
 - Explore the viability of developing a site to include non-congregate shelter units and/or exploring a different location for the same.
 - Provide funding and additional support for development of permanent navigation center.
 - Preserve the MLK BMX site for future utilization by supporting completion of the airport BMX site.
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Path
Forward:
Action by
Council

The City Manager recommends that City Council take the following actions:

1. Appropriate \$600,000 from the General Fund to facilitate the completion of the new airport BMX location which would preserve the existing BMX location for an alternate future use.
 2. Appropriate \$100,000 from the General Fund for the required planning and environmental review of the old BMX location.
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Path
Forward:
Action by
Council
(Cont'd)

3. Appropriate \$657,967 from the General Fund to provide a grant to True North to facilitate their efforts to establish a Navigation Center.
4. Authorize the City staff to work with True North to evaluate the feasibility of expanding existing shelter capacity at the Torres Shelter.
5. Appropriate \$1 million from the General Fund, authorize and empower the City Manager to take all other actions necessary to implement the strategies, goals and recommendations herein, and to enter into agreements to reduce homelessness in compliance with City codes and policies and all County and State Public Health orders resulting from COVID-19.