

Recommendations for City Ordinance to Address Homelessness and its Impacts on Chico

To further address people living in places not meant for human habitation and the impacts on the local community, the following draft ordinances are recommended for consideration and adoption by the Chico City Council. These recommendations are intended to address some of the sources of costs borne by the City in its attempts to address homelessness and people living in public spaces.

Charitable Feeding Operations in Public Spaces of Chico

In 2019, AB 2178 was signed into law in California to define how charitable feeding organizations can safely distribute whole, uncut produce, or prepackaged, non-potentially hazardous foods to the needy. The bill provides counties the authority to permit a “limited-service charitable feeding operation” (LSCFO) as a nonprofit charitable organization.

While AB 2178 gave authority to counties, nothing prohibits municipalities from requiring the permitting of limited-service charitable food operations operating within in cities. Food and safety regulation is outside the authority of the City of Chico, but the operation of entities within the city is not. Therefore, the City of Chico may be able to require compliance with the Act for formal and non-formal entities distributing food within the City.

This recommendation would require efforts by for-profit, non-profit, and citizens to receive permits provided by the City of Chico to engage in charitable feeding operations on City property. Feeding operations confined to private or non-city property would be exempt from requiring a permit. Permit costs would be minimal (\$10 annually). The City would direct permit holders to Butte County to receive detailed health and safety instructions regarding exactly what kind of food may be distributed to protect the safety of individuals and the community. The City would require permit holders to identify the location, days, and times of feedings so that duplication of effort would be reduced and so that externalities of potential bad actors could be covered and corrected. Those engaged in feeding operations outside of their designated times would have their permits revoked and could be subject to additional penalties at the discretion of the City.

The benefits for regulating charitable feeding operations are many. First, it protects the health and safety of the City by making sure that only sanitary and properly prepared foods are distributed. Second, it reduces the potential for discarded trash and uneaten food to be left in public spaces. Third, because the distributor is identified as to the time and location of the feeding, City costs for the collection of trash and refuse left behind can be assigned to the distributor and recouped.

Data Collection for Entities Providing Homelessness Housing and Assistance

The Strategic Plan identifies the critical role data collection and analysis plays in understanding the true nature of homelessness in Chico. Data collection and analysis provides an opportunity for the City to examine how homelessness is currently being addressed, what is working and by what measures, and consider new ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in its efforts.

The need for the City to understand what activities are engaged in and what impact they have on the community is well established. Last year, the City Council requested the Butte County Continuum of

Care to report on its activities to reduce homelessness. Because the CoC relied on its own data, specified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the reporting held little value to the City and provided no explanation as to whether its activities and the activities of the projects it funds in Chico were of any value in reducing the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

While the City empowers community-based non-profit organization to provide housing and services to those experiencing homelessness, to conduct outreach, and to engage in other services, more needs to be done to determine if these activities are accomplishing the goals for which they were intended. As already recommended, the City should take efforts to capture its own activities and expenses at addressing homelessness. It should also require community-based efforts to collect specific data and report it to the City.

This recommendation would require community-based efforts engaged in activities intended to address homelessness and poverty reduction to regularly collect data on its activities and report this data to the City. The City should require, as a condition for approval of conditional use permits, the collection and reporting of such data that the City identifies.

Examples of such data could be:

- Number of unduplicated individuals, households, or families serviced.
- The types and nature of services or housing provided.
- The number of refusals of such offerings for housing and services.
- The number of individuals successfully completing addiction treatment, workforce training, and mental health treatment offered to program participants.
- The number of calls to emergency services by the provider because of participant behaviors.
- The amount of income, both earned and as a result of public benefits, received by participants.
- The number of people from Chico or Butte County as determined by the location of the junior high school they attended.
- The number of previous times individuals, households, or families received similar services.
- The number of unduplicated individuals, households, or families who graduated, relocated, or moved along and for what reasons.

The benefits of collecting and analyzing this type of data include reporting to the community the efficacy and efficiency of the programs that are located in the City and the impacts they have on the community. It would assist the City in understanding which programs to continue supporting and those that require more scrutiny. It would also mitigate the negative perception that often leads to NIMBY attitudes for additional programs, developments, and services.

A program that can boast as to its effectiveness in, for example, helping people achieve sobriety, learn workforce skills, and increase their incomes may be more positively received if the City can attest to its effectiveness through data collection and analysis. At the same time, existing programs that demonstrate a lack of effectiveness or positive impacts in assisting people stabilize and increase self-sufficiency may cause the public to withdraw support and demand improvement.



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