

City of Sacramento

Legislation Text

File #: 2019-01835, **Version:** 1

Title:
Declaration of a Shelter Crisis

File ID: 2019-01835

Location: Citywide

Recommendation:

Adopt a Resolution: 1) making the findings necessary for declaration of a Shelter Crisis; 2) declaring a Shelter Crisis pursuant to Government Code Section 8698.2; and 3) directing the City Manager to take certain administrative actions to streamline provision of shelter to people experiencing homelessness.

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Presenter: Tom Pace, Interim Director, (916) 808-2691, Community Development Department

Attachments:

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Resolution Declaring a Shelter Crisis

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: The crisis of unsheltered homelessness is one that impacts an entire community, both those experiencing homelessness and the broader community of housed residents, businesses, and neighborhoods. Over the past several years, the City has made significant investments to increase access to and availability of shelter, services and permanent housing for people and families experiencing homelessness. Despite these efforts, homelessness and its impacts continue to rise:

- From 2015 to 2017, the Sacramento region saw an 85% increase of unsheltered homelessness.
- According to the most recent Sacramento County Homeless Deaths Report, death rates among the unsheltered homeless population are four times that of the general population and

rose by almost 75% from 2016 to 2017.

- Through the City's Railroad Drive Triage Shelter and the City's Pathways to Health + Home program, we are seeing the aging of the homeless population; over half of the participants in both programs are over the age of 50, and the majority self-identify one or more disabling conditions.
- In 2018, the City's 311 system fielded over 5,000 reports regarding homeless encampments, an increase of 33% from 2017.
- In 2018, the City's Police IMPACT team responded to over 4,800 calls for service related to homelessness.

In addition to the rise in homeless rates, Sacramento is experiencing a housing emergency. Residential rents are climbing, and many citizens face the threat of homelessness due to lack of access to affordable housing. Numerous other jurisdictions have declared a shelter crisis, including Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco, and Berkeley, all of which identified homelessness as a first-priority issue.

While the City and County have made significant strides in adding capacity in the homeless crisis system, allocating funding for almost 300 new shelter beds for single adults and over 30 new shelter units (approximately 90 beds) for families, there is insufficient capacity to shelter everyone experiencing homelessness in Sacramento.

Homelessness encampments are increasing across the city within the public right of way, exposing individuals experiencing homelessness to traffic hazards, crime, risk of death and injury, lack of adequate sanitation and debris services, and other conditions that are detrimental to their health and safety. Evidence demonstrates that providing low barrier access to decent, safe, and stable housing and shelter combined with crucial support services in line with "housing first" principles is the most effective and efficient way to help end homelessness, while respecting client choice and autonomy.

In October, the City Council discussed a Five-Point Plan that would include 1) master leasing of scattered site rental units, 2) homeless overnight parking, 3) sleeping cabins/tents, 4) motel conversion, and 5) permanent supportive housing. Some of these options may involve construction of emergency facilities that may not fully meet building, health, housing, safety, and zoning codes and may include provision of shelter on private property in addition to publicly-owned or leased sites.

California Government Code Section 8698, et seq., allows the governing body of a city to declare a shelter crisis when a significant number of persons are without the ability to obtain shelter, resulting in a threat to their health and safety. In addition, California Government Code Section 8698.1 provides that, upon a declaration of a shelter crisis, the provisions of any state or local regulatory statute, regulation or resolution prescribing standards of housing, health, or safety, as applied to public facilities, shall be suspended to the extent that strict compliance would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the shelter crisis. Lastly, California Government Code Section

8698.2 provides that, upon a declaration of a shelter crisis, a city may allow persons unable to obtain housing to occupy designated public facilities (including facilities leased by the city) during the duration of the crisis.

Policy Considerations: City Council made a short-term shelter crisis declaration on November 8, 2018 for the period between December 1, 2018 and March 1, 2019. On October 16, 2018, the Council held a workshop on Homeless Sheltering Policies and adopted a resolution embracing Housing First principles for City-funded Triage Shelters. At this meeting, the Council acknowledged the need for other shelter and service approaches, especially for vulnerable populations, including transition age youth and women and families. The recommended action will facilitate provision of these other shelter and service approaches over a longer (one-year) period, subject to review prior to the end of the period.

Economic Impacts: No funds are being requested as a part of this report. However, the recommended declaration may help facilitate receipt of public and private funds to alleviate homelessness.

Environmental Considerations: This declaration is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15061(b)(3), in that it can be seen with certainty that no significant effect on the environment would occur, and 15269(c) relating to specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.

The City Council has reviewed and approved several shelter proposals, and has concluded, in each case, that the design, construction and operation of such shelters would have no significant effect on the environment. Design of the shelters includes consideration of health and safety concerns, security lighting, sanitation and noise. The community concerns regarding those experiencing homelessness include health, safety, security and sanitation, and the establishment of safe and secure environments has a beneficial environmental effect that has been recognized by the City.

Sustainability: Not applicable.

Commission/Committee Action: None.

Rationale for Recommendation: Homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing the City, and the City Council has made significant investments over the past years to increase services, shelter capacity and housing supports for people experiencing homelessness. Despite these efforts, homelessness is on the rise, and is affecting communities throughout the City and the County of Sacramento. Declaring a shelter crisis will enable the City to shelter people experiencing homelessness in designated public facilities and to suspend certain housing, health, and safety standards, the strict compliance with which may prevent, hinder, or delay using those facilities for shelter.

Financial Considerations: No funds are being requested as a part of this report. However, the recommended declaration may help facilitate receipt of public and private funds to alleviate homelessness.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.