

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2021

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Operation Shelter-to-Home 2.0: Joint Memo Requests City Develop Non-Congregate Shelter Program

Councilmembers Joe LaCava, Raul Campillo, Chris Cate, and Sean Elo-Rivera, and diverse stakeholders offer support for City to pursue FEMA 100% reimbursement

SAN DIEGO, CA – City of San Diego staff and service providers have worked hard for the last year to protect unhoused people from COVID-19 by innovating with limited resources in extraordinary circumstances. The Biden Administration’s recent offer to reimburse 100% of expenses for non-congregate shelters presents an unprecedented opportunity to rapidly, efficiently, and, most importantly, humanely build upon the work that has been done by putting hundreds of unhoused San Diegans on the path to being housed, healthy, and prosperous.

Non-congregate shelter programs throughout the U.S. have proven that they can be a successful model for reducing the risk of COVID-19 spread and can provide a better foundation for permanent housing opportunities than congregate shelter settings.

Councilmembers Joe LaCava, Raul Campillo, Chris Cate, and Sean Elo-Rivera, and a coalition of stakeholders extend offers of support to develop an effective non-congregate shelter program that qualifies for 100% reimbursement from FEMA. The four Councilmembers have released a joint memo detailing steps to guide a collaborative process to leverage San Diego’s collective resources to develop Operation Shelter-to-Home 2.0, San Diego’s non-congregate shelter program.

“The COVID-19 pandemic remains a serious threat to the health of all San Diegans, particularly individuals living unsheltered,” said **Councilmember Joe LaCava**. “The closing of the Convention Center shelter and the tragic incident this week further underscore the urgency to take advantage of the FEMA reimbursement and secure a safer pathway to permanent housing. With the Mayor’s release of the RFQ, I am hopeful in our collective ability to remove obstacles, move with all due haste, and come together for the health and welfare of those at risk.”

“With additional Federal funding committed to reimbursing local governments for expenditures related to non-congregate shelter options, we must do everything possible to thoroughly explore the feasibility of developing a robust non-congregate shelter program to provide additional resources to people experiencing homelessness,” said **Councilmember Chris Cate**. “The Request for Qualifications initiated yesterday by Mayor Gloria and the Housing Commission, seeks to identify service providers for a non-congregate shelter program, and is an important step toward this effort.”

“We were elected with a mandate to put forward real, workable solutions to the homelessness crisis in our City, and to get people off the streets and into housing,” **Councilmember Raul Campillo** stated. “For the first time, we have a Mayor and a City Council who are working together to advance proven solutions to homelessness. I commend the Mayor’s commitment to a Housing-First approach and ask that he use the full power of his office and newly-available FEMA funds to fight for housing solutions in non-congregate facilities for our unsheltered neighbors.”

“Housing is a human right. Together, and with a sense of urgency, we can make good on that right by leveraging federal support to develop a non-congregate shelter program that can become long-term, permanent solutions,” said **Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera**. “Last week, Mayor Gloria took the first step to secure the services necessary to properly support our unhoused neighbors. Now is the time for all San Diegans to band together and offer what we can to build upon those efforts. The next six-months offer San Diego an incredible chance to turn tragedy into triumph when it comes to homelessness. We cannot afford to allow this opportunity to pass us by.”

The joint memo included offers of support from a broad network of stakeholders who bring skills, expertise, and resources to this effort, including: UNITE HERE Local 30, The San Diego Foundation, Think Dignity, Urban People Living In Faith & Trust (UPLIFT), Downtown San Diego Partnership, and civic leader Steve Cushman.

“What we need for those living on our streets in Downtown and throughout the region right now are solutions. This effort will provide another choice and an added tool to help get our most vulnerable residents off the street and into care,” stated **Betsy Brennan, President & CEO, Downtown San Diego Partnership**.

“San Diego has a long history of failing to adequately prioritize the needs of homeless San Diegans and effectively addressing our homelessness crisis. Housing is a human right and the tragic incident on Monday, where a vehicle plowed into a homeless encampment killing 3 and injuring 6 as they slept on the sidewalk is a devastating example of the critical need to protect the health, safety and dignity of unsheltered San Diegans,” said **Mitchelle Woodson, Executive Director and Managing Attorney of Think Dignity**. “We must protect our community members. We vehemently support the call for the City of San Diego to access the millions of FEMA dollars available to provide non-congregate housing options during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has long been overdue for the City of San Diego to take bold action to finally prioritize the needs of people experiencing homelessness. We have the opportunity to make a difference and it is our responsibility to do better.”

The joint memo is attached and available [here](#).

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