

# STAFF REPORT



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**DATE:** February 9, 2021

**TO:** Justin Hess, City Manager

**FROM:** Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director  
VIA: Simone McFarland, Assistant Community Development Director

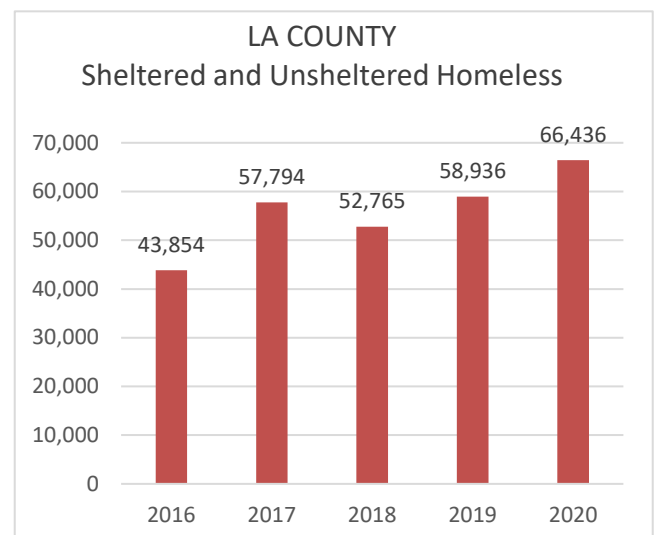
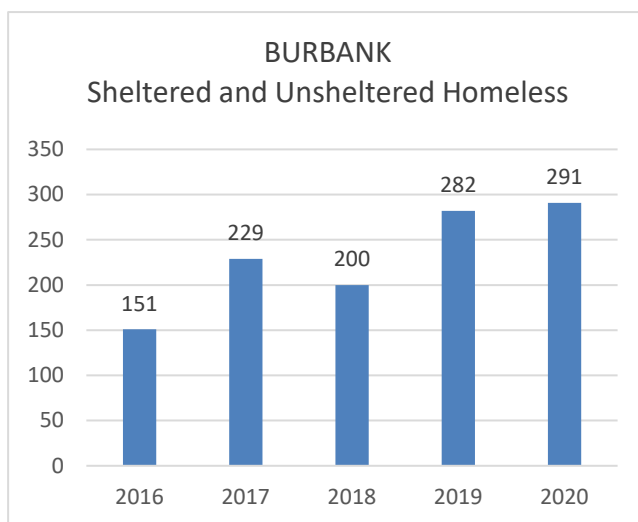
**SUBJECT:** Update on Homelessness Efforts in the City of Burbank

### RECOMMENDATION

Note and File.

### BACKGROUND

Every year, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) conducts a Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count to collect data on the homeless population within Los Angeles County and inform homeless strategies, policies, and programs. For 2020, the City of Burbank continued to see homeless numbers increase as shown in the charts below. Between 2019 and 2020, Burbank's homeless population increased by 3%, while Los Angeles County as a whole saw numbers increase by almost 13%. While the 2021 Homeless Count will not occur due to COVID, it is likely with the County's large numbers continuing to grow, Burbank will see an increase in its homeless population as well, and



anecdotally this seems to be the case. While this is a regional concern, Burbank is doing its part to mitigate the issue by implementing its Homelessness Plan.

## **DISCUSSION**

In 2017, the City began working on a three-year Homelessness Plan that was approved by City Council late that year. The Plan runs three calendar years, 2018 to 2021, and the process to update the Plan will begin in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 with community outreach and input. This report serves as an update to the City Council on the City's progress in implementing the following seven strategies included within the Plan:

1. Developing Storage Facilities and Transportation
2. Enhancing the Quality of Life, Mental Health and Healthcare Awareness
3. Building Temporary Housing
4. Creating Affordable Housing
5. Continuing Outreach, Coordinated Care System and Community Awareness
6. Increased Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing
7. Enforcing Public Health & Safety and Ordinances

### **Strategy 1: Developing Storage Facilities and Transportation**

#### *Storage*

Because homeless individuals may have items that they value but cannot always carry with them, a voluntary storage program is desirable along with transportation to and from the Center. The program would allow for each homeless person (up to 60 people) to use an approximately 60-gallon container to store their items within specified time parameters. Additionally, the City needs a space for involuntary storage where items collected through abatements can be stored for up to 90 days.



After searching for and researching possible spaces for a homeless storage location, staff identified a City-owned lot on the corner of Front Street and Verdugo Avenue (401 Front Street), which was previously rented out to a painting contractor on a month-to-month lease. The lot is located between Interstate 5 and the Southern Pacific Rail Line and adjacent to 322-323 S. Front Street (Hollywood Piano).

In 2018, staff applied for and received Measure H funding that included money to assist with the development of the storage facility. The current amount of funds that are allocated to the facility is approximately \$133,000. Additionally, the City Council allocated \$180,833 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding in FY 2019-20 toward the

project. The total of \$313,833 will be used for infrastructure improvements needed at the site.

Services for the facility would be provided by the Salvation Army and the annual cost for operation and maintenance is estimated to be \$130,000 annually. In FY 2019-20, City Council allocated \$140,000 towards the first year to run the Center. Additionally, allocated was \$259,693 in CDBG funding towards a homeless access center at the Salvation Army building; however, the building was sold to the Boys & Girls Club. Staff will return to Council at a later time to request that City Council reallocate these funds to years two and three of services at the proposed homeless storage site with the idea that this area will become an access center in the future. Funding after that could come from Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) funds if City Council decides to reallocate these funds in the future.

### *Transportation*

LAHSA provides a winter shelter program annually to protect people experiencing homelessness, with sites in Los Angeles and the Antelope, San Fernando, and San Gabriel valleys. This year, the program will be in place until March 31, 2021. Currently, the City sets asides \$20,000 through Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Funds to help transport homeless individuals to winter shelter sites. The City has previously entered into contractual agreements with Hope of the Valley's Pacoima Shelter, which serves Burbank and surrounding areas as part of the winter shelter network, by utilizing the \$20,000 for shuttle services, offering Burbank homeless a daily shuttle ride from the Downtown Burbank Metrolink Station to the Pacoima Shelter. This year, the Pacoima Shelter is not running the shuttle due to COVID-19 so other accommodations must be found when a Burbank homeless person is accepted into the Shelter. Additionally, the Pacoima Shelter has experienced continuous COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdowns reducing accessibility. When the shelter has been open, it has generally been full. Their outreach team continues to utilize the limited spaces available at these shelters with homeless referrals.

### Strategy 2: Enhancing the Quality of Life, Mental Health and Healthcare Awareness

The Plan states that the City should consider a Whole Person Care (WPC) Initiative Pilot program, which would increase the quality of life and healthcare awareness for Burbank's homeless and provide comprehensive care through the coordination of health, behavioral health, and social services. The implementation of this objective is still in its infancy, as additional staff is needed for full implementation. An internal working group composed of staff members from Community Development, Public Works, Library Services, Parks and Recreation, the Police Department, Burbank Water and Power, City Manager's Office, and City Attorney's Office meets on a monthly basis to discuss concerns, and this has served to enhance communication among staff and creates a cohesive environment for the sharing of ideas related to progressing the WPC initiative.

As collaboration between public and private entities will be key in pursuit of this strategy, City staff has had an initial meeting with Providence St. Joseph Medical Center personnel to discuss creating closer relationships between the City and the hospital in terms of homeless care and outreach. Further meetings will hopefully resume once the situation stabilizes after the pandemic and if staff levels increase.

Staff also seeks to build relationships with and incorporate additional service agencies in pursuit of the WPC initiative. While this goal is far from complete, staff has made great strides in the areas of outreach and awareness, especially through the City's StreetPlus Ambassadors and the Burbank Mental Health Evaluation Team (MHET), as described under the fifth strategy, Continuing Outreach, Coordinated Care System, and Community Awareness.

### Strategy 3: Building Temporary Housing

The City Council set a goal to build or obtain temporary and/or transitional homeless housing, and staff has been searching for an appropriate property. Staff has considered existing hotels, a lot for the placement of tiny houses, and existing buildings that could be converted.

Most recently, the City partnered with the Burbank Housing Corporation (BHC) to make an offer to purchase the Scott Motel. Staff sought to use a \$2.8 million grant from the state's Homekey Program to supplement City funds. Unfortunately, during the due diligence period, concerns surfaced including the high cost of on-going services. Additionally, the deadline for expenditure of the grant was moved up and required a purchase-closing date that would have been nearly impossible to meet. As a result, the BHC Board voted not to move forward with the purchase. Following this development, staff looked at the possibility of the City purchasing the motel, but due to funding constraints, deadlines, and cost of services, staff elected not to move forward. Staff will regroup and continue to look for a site that is suitable to all parties involved, including different service providers that would provide a transitional homeless housing program.

One such site that may be considered is the property located at 322-323 Front Street (Hollywood Piano store), which the City is currently in the process of purchasing. The lease for one half of the building is with Sweet 16 Musical Properties and ends February 28, 2023. This location may be a good site for a future transitional homeless facility but should be considered for other uses as well. Staff will be bringing ideas for the use of this property to City Council to consider in the future.

### Strategy 4: Creating Affordable Housing

As the City Council knows all too well, the creation of affordable housing is expensive. The City has worked with BHC to purchase two triplexes during the last four years, Jerry's Promise Transitional Housing Project and 2300 N. Fairview, which were both acquired in 2018 and completed in 2019. The cost of these units averaged approximately \$500,000 per unit, which is prohibitive and unsustainable. The City simply does not have enough funds to meet the need for affordable housing in this manner.

At the same time, the City Council has effectively utilized a vital tool for creating affordable housing by requiring affordable housing be built within new private developments. Through the Development Agreement (DA) process, the City Council has entitled 100 moderate-income units, and through the density bonus process, 17 low- and very-low income units have been approved. The City would be unable to build this number of affordable units with its current resources alone.

Last November, Council held a study session to discuss updates to the City's Density Bonus and Inclusionary Housing Ordinances, and following community outreach, staff will return to City Council with updated Ordinances this year. Approval of updated ordinances could result in a consistent requirement of affordable housing for future developments and provide clarity to developers when proposing new residential developments.

Lastly, the large number of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) approvals by the City's Planning Division has helped expand Burbank's affordable housing stock. Planning staff commissioned a study to determine how new ADUs relate to the affordability of housing. The table on the following page estimates where new ADU developments fall in terms of affordability.

Staff has received approximately 543 ADU building permit applications since 2017 that are at various stages of review or have been approved, are under construction and/or have received their final Certificate of Occupancy (COO). Of these, approximately 280 ADU building permits have been issued and 189 permits have been finalized.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)		Rent Distribution*	Estimated ADUs**
<b>Total ADU Submitted as of 11.10.20</b>	543		
<b>Low Income (80% AMI)</b>		36%	195
<b>Moderate Income (120% AMI)</b>		12%	65
<b>Above Moderate (.120% AMI)</b>		52%	282
*Karen Warner Associates ADU Rent Survey and Affordability Analysis			
*Assuming all submittals are approved			

Strategy 5: Continuing Outreach, Coordinated Care System and Community Awareness  
Currently, the City contracts with StreetPlus to conduct outreach and directly work with the homeless in two principle focus areas:

- Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) – The BID pays for concierge and homeless services provided by StreetPlus within the Downtown area only.
- Downtown Metrolink – Using Prop A (Fund 104 – Transportation) funds, the City's Transportation Division has hired StreetPlus to provide assistance at the Downtown Metrolink Station.

The City also has a contract for one Homeless Services Liaison (HSL) who conducts outreach for the rest of the City. The demand for these services continues to grow, and with the increase of homeless due to overflow from Los Angeles and COVID-19, along with the amount of time and dedication it takes to build relationships with the homeless, there is a need for another HSL. This would help enable the City to keep up with demand and continue to help connect people with housing services.

Additionally, the City's MHET program serves the following three primary functions:

- Crisis support during calls for service
- On-going case management support to other divisions regarding persons who would benefit from intensive case management/linkage
- Training to City departments and other community groups/forums

As part of their efforts, MHET frequently receives referrals and will conduct homeless outreach, particularly for those suspected of experiencing mental illness and/or substance abuse problems. They conduct mental health assessments and work with StreetPlus on a daily basis, coordinating their efforts and helping with mental health evaluations and crises that are related to mental health.

Staff continues to work within Los Angeles County's Coordinated Entry System (CES), which is the system that service providers use to communicate and coordinate housing and crisis resources. The System stores confidential client information and is only shared with specific service providers. Currently, only StreetPlus has access to the program, and the City is requesting access for other staff, including the Police Department.

Concerning outreach and community awareness, the City's Public Information Office (PIO) has worked with the Community Development Department to provide up-to-date information via social media and the City website. Currently, the PIO is creating an informational video that will provide an overview of homeless concerns, what the City is currently doing, and how the community can assist. The purpose of the video is to educate viewers on the complexity of homelessness, inform people of the City's current initiatives and challenges to this work, and provide information on how community members can help.

#### Strategy 6: Increase Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

Project Roomkey is a collaborative effort by the State and County to secure hotel and motel rooms for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to protect these high-risk individuals and minimize community spread, the County is using 17 hotels as temporary housing, offering 2,434 rooms. StreetPlus has been actively using Roomkey resources and has placed 20 Burbank homeless into this program since April 3, 2020.

The County is getting ready for the transition from Project Roomkey (temporary housing) to Home Key (Interim or permanent long-term housing) and is decreasing the number of beds available under Roomkey. Currently, Roomkey is operating at 78% capacity as the program is expected to wind down to zero in the future.

StreetPlus has also been actively looking for other resources for the homeless, placing some in bridge and/or transitional housing and emergency shelters, or reunifying them with their families. As of the end of January 2021, they had assisted 86 people since April 2019, as depicted in the chart.

Collaborative Care Housing Types	Member Placement**
Boarding Homes	7
Emergency Shelter	20
Group Home	4
Homeless Prevention (Diversion)	3
Hotel / Motel Vouchers	19
Permanent Housing	1
Reunification (CA)	4
Reunification (USA)	11
Rooming House	1
Shared Housing	1
Supportive Housing	2
Temporary Housing (Bridge)	9
Transitional Housing	4
Food - R	30
Clothing - R	20
Medical - R	14
Agency - R	45
Total (not including E.S. & D.)	63
Total (transformative)	86
<b>**Since April 1, 2019</b>	



Additionally, the City has requested and received more Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, which are granted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for use towards housing for veterans. The City currently has 15 VASH vouchers, and staff will apply for additional vouchers should they be offered and needed.

Family Promise of the Verdugos, the local network of the national non-profit Family Promise, has also been instrumental in helping homeless families and those on the brink of homelessness with the following services:

- **Rapid Rehousing** - helping 60 to 70 families at any one time to find housing and providing funds for security deposits.
- **90-day Family Shelter** - using both churches for sleeping accommodations and more recently, with COVID-19, hotel vouchers.
- **Homeless Prevention** - implementing the City's rental assistance grants funded by the CARES Act, CDBG funds, and Measure H Innovation funds.
- **Jerry's Promise** – providing transitional housing for three homeless families.
- **Lifting People Up** – providing a financial literacy program funded through Burbank's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Fund as a pilot program for BHC residents, which they hope to expand Citywide.

Lastly, with the economic impacts of COVID-19, the City Council has been instrumental in ensuring housing security for Burbank residents by approving urgency eviction ordinances for residential dwellings. Local eviction moratoria were superseded by State Assembly Bill 3088 (Tenant, Homeowner, and Small Landlord Relief and Stabilization Act of 2020), which provided eviction protections through January 31, 2021. These protections were extended to June 30, 2021 with the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 91, which stipulates tenants must pay at least 25 percent of owed rent, either in monthly payments or in a lump sum by June 30, 2021, and extends the preemption on local eviction ordinances. In addition to extending protections through June, SB 91 allocates federal funding for a rental assistance program for use towards rental arrears, prospective rent payments, and utility payments.

#### Strategy 7: Enforcing Public Health and Safety Ordinances

The City has made substantial progress on enforcing Public Health and Safety ordinances. In November 2019, the City Council approved an ordinance establishing a property abatement procedure for encampments that encroach on public property. By adding this tool, staff has been able to create internal processes for property abatements that are defensible in court. Prior to abatement, the City provides numerous outreach services, utilizes an interdepartmental committee for reviewing encampment sites and discussing other concerns, and gives advance notice of the clean-up followed by an opportunity to retrieve belongings. The coordination and communication between departments has been greatly expanded, and the process is becoming much easier and systematic. This past year, staff has conducted eleven abatements throughout the City and placed three fences to secure City-owned property. In addition, the outreach efforts associated with these abatements have resulted in a number of the housing/shelter placements discussed under Strategy 5, which is often the goal of outreach.

## **Needs and Future Work**

While the City has made great strides to assist with curtailing its homeless challenges, staff needs assistance to continue upon this path. Below is a list of needs that will have to be addressed in the near future.

### **1. Staffing**

All of the work done on homelessness during the past three years has been collaborated by one half of one full-time staff position. The Community Development Department's Housing Development Manager, who is assigned to homelessness, also monitors grant opportunities, other federal programs whose funds we receive (HOME and Permanent Supportive Housing Vouchers), and the CDBG program.

As we continue to implement our Homelessness Plan, the demands have grown exponentially, and we still have a lot to do. During the City Council Goal Setting on January 27, 2021, Council adopted Housing and Homelessness as a priority for 2021, and if the City Council wants to continue to effectively address homelessness, another staff position is critically needed. An Administrative Analyst II (AAIL) would fulfill the technical, analytical, communication, and program management skills required of such a position, and would cost approximately \$110,000 annually (including benefits). As there are no restricted funds available for this use, funding for this position would have to come from the General Fund.

### **2. Additional Funding**

As previously stated, the City has a contract for a Homeless Services Liaison (HSL) through StreetPlus. The interaction and follow up between the HSL and the homeless is demanding and time consuming. The position is similar to a case manager for social services, and to be successful requires time to navigate the system and processes. While StreetPlus has helped a large number of people, we continue to have more homeless enter and reside within our City. If the City wants to continue to keep our numbers from growing exponentially, additional funds are required for this contract. The cost of this contract is currently \$80,000 for the existing HSL, and adding another one would require an additional \$80,000 for a consultant contract. This would likely need to be funded from the General Fund.

Measure H was approved by voters in March 2017 and implemented a Countywide ¼ cent sales tax for 10 years. Each year's revenue was estimated to be \$355M, and the initiative passed with nearly 70% of the vote.

The amount generated by the Measure H sales tax in Burbank is estimated to be between \$6M and \$8M annually. In FY 2019-20 this amount was approximately \$9M, and because of the decline in sales tax revenues, FY 2020-21 is estimated to bring in around \$7M. This revenue goes to the County for homeless services, and there is no formulaic return to cities. As seen on the following page, Burbank has received \$786,740 in Measure H grants since 2017.



Measure H Grant Funding Received by Burbank		
Grant Amount	Program	Fiscal Year
\$50,000	Homeless Planning Grant	17-18
\$77,000	Landlord Incentive Program	17-18
\$81,400		18-19
\$99,000		19-20
\$340,000	Homeless Implementation Grant	18-19
\$139,340	City Homeless Innovation Funds	20-21
<b>\$786,740</b>	<b>Total</b>	

Staff will apply for additional Measure H funding from the County if it becomes available and fits our needs.

Attachment 1 contains a chart that shows Burbank's homeless budget, including items that will be needed in the future that are currently unfunded, such as:

- **Shelter Beds** – This could possibly be a purchase of dedicated beds for Burbank's homeless. The cost is still yet to be determined and future PLHA funding could be used for this.
- **Shelter Service Provider** - The amount of funding will be dependent upon the service provider and number of beds. Staff is currently studying what beds could potentially cost, with a current estimated annual cost of \$400,000. Future PLHA funding could be used for this.
- **StreetPlus** – An expanded contract would provide an additional Citywide Homeless Services Liaison, with an on-going cost of \$80,000. This would have to come from the General Fund.
- **Staffing (AAll)** to assist the Housing Development Manager. On-going funds of \$110,000. This would have to come from the General Fund as there are no restrictive funds available for this use.

### 3. Lobbying and Legal

Some of the large challenges to bettering the homeless landscape is related to transitional and long-term housing, along with the need for mental health facilities. This only can be solved with additional funding. The City continues to advocate for a direct allocation of Measure H funding from the County. Changes in state and federal laws can also improve processes and expand available tools for local jurisdictions like Burbank. City staff will be working with our advocacy firms in the coming year to influence these conversations at the state and federal level.

### 4. Community Volunteers

One of the other focuses staff would like to work on while updating the Homeless Plan is how to better facilitate partnerships between our community volunteers and service providers. The Community Development Department has not been able to work on this due to lack of staffing.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The City has made significant progress on its Homelessness Plan in the last three years, especially given the challenges posed by financial constraints, staffing shortages, and COVID-19. While there is no immediate financial impact to note and file this report, continued progress on the City's Homelessness Plan may require future allocations as discussed in the Discussion section of this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

The City is doing a lot in terms of helping the homeless, but we need to do more. To achieve our goals, there are concerns that need to be addressed including:

- Adequate staffing
- Identifying a location for temporary/transitional housing
- Continuing to identify and apply for grant funds
- Working with County service providers
- Updating the Homelessness Plan
- Creating a community-based volunteer group
- Lobbying for legal and funding reforms

The valid fears that homelessness will continue to increase within our City renders the need for staff to be proactive and continue to implement the City's Plan.

## **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1 - Homelessness Budget and Unfunded Needs