



Office of the City Manager

October 29, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Re: As Homeless Response Team shifts focus to Harrison/8th and 2nd St encampments, other encampments will be deprioritized

On September 10, 2024, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 71,513-N.S, “Encampment Policy Resolution to Promote Healthy and Safe Neighborhoods” which directed staff to prioritize the Harrison St and 2nd St corridor encampments in West Berkeley for enforcement, due to health, safety, traffic, and other concerns. This memo provides an overview of the Homeless Response Team’s proactive efforts to implement the Council’s direction, while explaining the impacts this work will have on our efforts to support other encampments across the City.

Overview of the Homeless Response Team (HRT)

The Homeless Response Team, coordinated by the Neighborhood Services Division within the City Manager’s office, is a collaborative, multi-department effort that works to support individuals experiencing homelessness. The team includes staff from Public Works, Health, Housing & Community Services, City Attorney’s Office, Police, Fire and Parks, Recreation and Waterfront. Together, they ensure a holistic approach to addressing the safety and health of encampment residents and surrounding communities.

The HRT’s primary mission is to end unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley by connecting individuals to resources, interim or permanent housing. With over \$10 million in Measure P funding, the City has now leveraged an additional \$15 million from State Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grants. In just two and half years, these resources have enabled the City to:

- Lease three motels for use as low-barrier, service rich, non-congregate shelters (with a lease for a fourth motel now in the works).
- Provide nearly 100 private, non-congregate shelter rooms.
- Facilitate more than 120 encampment deep clean-ups and closures, during which 81% of individuals from those encampments also accepted non-congregate shelter offers.

As a result of these efforts, the Federal Point-in-Time count showed a remarkable 45% reduction in unsheltered homelessness in the City of Berkeley between 2022 and 2024—a considerable achievement, and the largest reduction for a city of our size in the Bay Area.¹

Addressing the Harrison St and 2nd St Encampments: New Opportunities

October 4, 2024, the State of California announced that the City of Berkeley would receive a third round of ERF grant funding totaling \$5.4 million. The City is now one of only three jurisdictions in the State (alongside Los Angeles and Oakland) to have received funding in all three rounds of this competitive grant process, and it brings our total ERF funding to over \$15M. The new funding will be invested in the following ways:

- Master leasing of an additional 27-room motel (the Howard Johnson motel at 1512 University Ave.), dedicated to residents from encampments located on or near the 2nd Street corridor.
- Increasing the availability of new private (non-congregate) shelter units for encampment residents to approximately 120.

City staff and service providers, with elected representative participation, will share information about how this program will work at a community meeting open to anyone interested. Staff will also present materials related to this new program for the City Council's consideration and approval before the end of the current session in December 2024.

Balancing Priorities Across the City

While this additional funding provides new opportunities and supports the City's ability to create solutions to unsheltered homelessness, it also presents challenges. The City must meet the State's timeline requiring that 50% of the grant to be spent by June 30, 2025, a heavy lift that will require the reprioritizing of already limited staff resources.

The HRT, though inter-departmental in scope, consists of a core team of three full-time outreach staff in Neighborhood Services, who play a critical role in:

- Establishing rapport and working relationships with encampment residents (a slow process of building the trust needed for residents to accept indoor shelter).
- Coordinating with multiple agencies who serve the same clients.
- Ensuring successful transitions into interim or permanent housing.

Doing this work and minimizing the likelihood that residents are simply displaced to new encampments elsewhere in the City takes significant time and effort from this very small team. As a result, the complex inter-departmental planning and implementation process

needed to prioritize both the Harrison St and 2nd St encampments will require that the HRT deprioritize efforts at other encampments around the city.

Importantly, the HRT will not completely abandon other encampments. The team will still respond to emergent conditions and, as resources permit, the HRT will also continue to provide routine outreach to achieve voluntary compliance with city rules, as well as regular (usually, weekly) voluntary trash removal services to these encampments to mitigate the footprint of their debris and belongings. However, enforcement or encampment clearance activities in other city locations, because of the lengthy and complex planning required for them, will be paused until the Council's direction to prioritize 2nd and Harrison Streets is fully addressed.

Contact Information and Reporting

The City continues to encourage community members to make reports and/or otherwise request city services using the following contact information:

- Report any and all instances of crime to the Berkeley Police Department: 510-981-5900 for non-emergencies and 911 (510-981-5911) for emergencies. The Police will respond to calls for service in a prioritized fashion.
- Report encampments and changing encampment conditions to the 311 Customer Service Team: <https://berkeleyca.gov/city-services/report-pay/report-issues>

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, at 510-981-7045 or pradu@berkeleyca.gov.

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