



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

24-0111

Agenda Date: 2/15/2024

2024 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

CDD 24-03

TITLE Establishment of a Sanctioned Encampment for Unhoused Individuals in Sunnyvale

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development

Support Departments: Office of the City Manager
Office of the City Attorney
Department of Public Safety
Department of Public Works
Environmental Services Department

Sponsor(s): Councilmembers: Mehlinger, Srinivasan, Klein, Cisneros,
Sell, Din

History: 1 year ago: N/A
2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What precipitated this Study?

Homelessness is a serious and worsening problem in the Bay Area, including Sunnyvale. There is increased pressure on City services from unhoused residents and more unhoused encampments developing. Generally, these encampments are in commercial/industrial areas (which are unsafe for a variety of reasons), City parks and other open spaces, and in residential areas (creating conflicts with and impacting the quality of life of nearby residents). In addition, unregulated encampments pose serious challenges for municipalities in areas such as sanitation, trash collection, and fire safety. As such, these encampments must be cleared often for a variety of reasons. However, clearing encampments is known to be very disruptive for the unhoused population.

At the same time, there is a shortage of shelter beds, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. This means that even if an unhoused resident wishes to avail themselves of services, they may not be able to. In some cases, unhoused residents prefer life outdoors to life in a shelter for various reasons and require substantial outreach and convincing before they are willing to accept shelter services.

A sanctioned encampment site could provide a place for unhoused residents to live without fear of having to go through an encampment clean-up. It would also facilitate the delivery of services, with a goal of getting residents into permanent housing. In addition, a sanctioned encampment could include water, electricity, sanitation, and trash services, and be laid out in such a manner as to

minimize the risk of fire. Finally, it would provide a place to direct residents of unsanctioned encampments if and when their encampments are slated to be cleared, if space were available.

What are the key elements of the Study?

This Study Issue would examine the possibility of establishing a sanctioned encampment site in or near the City of Sunnyvale; identify potential locations, prioritizing areas well-served by public transit and located a suitable distance from schools and residential neighborhoods; and explore partnership with nonprofits and other nearby governmental agencies, such as the County of Santa Clara (County) and Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water).

Estimated years to complete the Study: 2 years

FISCAL IMPACT**Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost):	Major
Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs:	\$40,000
Funding Source:	Will seek budget supplement

The Study would require significant partnerships among nearly all City departments, local homeless services nonprofits, and other stakeholders such as the County and Valley Water. Outreach would be a major component in terms of identifying the site and its suitability with its surroundings. Finding a suitable site is a major task, with implementation, logistics, safety, and other factors seen as major tasks with potential for significant costs.

Cost to Implement Study Results

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs, including capital and operating, as well as revenue/savings; however, it can be assumed costs for this type of project would be significant as general components would include safety, case management, sanitation services, rent/acquisition costs, etc.

EXPECTED CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OR COMMISSION PARTICIPATION

Council-Approved Work Plan: No

Council Study Session: Yes

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Housing and Human Services Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Support. This policy issue merits discussion at the 2024 Study Issues Workshop.

Prepared by: Jenny Carloni, Housing Officer

Reviewed by: Trudi Ryan, Director, Community Development Department

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager