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MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Shola Olatoye
Housing and Community
Development, Director

SUBJECT: Anti-Displacement and
Homelessness Prevention Activities

DATE: Sept. 18, 2020

City Administrator
Approval

Date:

September 18, 2020

INFORMATION

The Informational Memo provides an update on anti-displacement¹ and homelessness prevention² activities managed by the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). This report presents information on programs that have been operating for the past two years, newly launched programs, and planned activities moving forward. Further, the report describes the manner in which these efforts connect to the City's Five-Year PATH Framework, presented to the Life Enrichment Committee (LEC) on December 4, 2019.

Background

In 2017, the City Council identified the need to provide anti-displacement programming as a means to address rampant displacement of lower-income and African American residents from their long-standing homes. The program design focuses on preventing evictions and foreclosures and included the following components:

- Legal assistance
- Financial assistance
- Community education and outreach

In July 2018, the City Council approved a contract with Centro Legal de la Raza, along with a collaboration of non-profit partners to operate a two-year anti-displacement program serving low income tenants and homeowners which commenced October 1, 2018 and concludes September 30, 2020. Midway through this period, the program was named Oakland Housing Secure (OHS).

¹ **Anti-displacement** programs include individuals who are at risk of experiencing homelessness, but also includes a broader group of people who may be housing insecure, but not necessarily at the "front door" of homelessness.

² **Homelessness Prevention** programs seek to prevent people facing housing crises from experiencing homelessness and targets those most at risk of becoming homeless if crises are not addressed. These programs will typically provide an array of assistance and supports.

Six months prior, Alameda County launched a program called Alameda County Secure (ACHS) that provides the same legal services and financial assistance throughout the County, including Oakland, but does not include a community education and outreach component. The launch of OHS also coincided with the kick-off of the Mayoral-backed philanthropic-backed anti-displacement program called Keep Oakland Housed (KOH). This program provides the same legal assistance and financial assistance provided by the City-funded program, OHS; however it only provides services to tenants. KOH partners are: East Bay Community Law Center, Bay Area Community Services (BACS), and Catholic Charities East Bay.

ACHS and OHS are administered by the same agency, Centro Legal de la Raza, and as such there is a single point of entry for residents seeking assistance through these two programs. Distinguishing features of KOH are its integration of a support services component and its focus on targeting tenants who are most at risk of homelessness. The programs reflect a range of needs and services and each is evolving to better meet needs and employ lessons learned. City staff is beginning to work with all of the agencies to develop ways to improve alignment and ensure the public has clarity about where to go for the services that will meet critical needs.

Current Activities: Anti-Displacement, Homelessness Prevention, and PATH Framework

Anti-Displacement

Over the past two years ACHS, OHS, and KOH have been delivering anti-displacement services to over 5,000 residents to retain housing.

PATH Framework

During this timeframe, the Human Services Department (HSD) presented the Five-Year PATH Framework before the LEC which includes three core components:

1. Prevention strategies to keep people from becoming homeless
2. Emergency strategies to shelter and rehouse households and improve health and safety on the street.
3. Creation of affordable, extremely low income and permanent supportive housing units prioritized for households experiencing homelessness.

HSD prepared specific policy recommendations related to the prevention strategies included in the PATH Framework and presented them in a follow-up memo to the LEC in May 2020. These recommendations include the following components:

- Use of evidence-based screening tools to identify people most at risk of becoming homeless and prioritizing resources to address critical needs;
- Use racially disaggregated data to target assistance and identify and address racial disparities;
- Collaborate with systems where African Americans are disproportionately involve/impacted; and
- Eliminate barriers to receiving assistance such as requirements to have a lease, income, good credit.

Aligning Homelessness Prevention and Anti-Displacement with PATH Framework

Since the launching of these programs and the development of the PATH Framework, along with the onset of the COVID-19 health pandemic, efforts have been made to target some of this work toward homelessness prevention. This is aligned with the PATH policy to put all new anti-displacement funds above current levels toward targeted homelessness prevention. The following are the ways in which the original anti-displacement program activities are evolving to integrate homelessness prevention strategies:

1. **KOH 2.0:** Earlier this year, KOH developed a homelessness prevention pathway to ensure that some of the program’s services target those most likely to become homeless. In line with the PATH policy recommendation related to evidence-based screening, KOH created a homelessness prevention prioritization tool. This following is a sample of the tool’s priorities:
 - a. Previously homeless
 - b. Income is below 30% of AMI
 - c. Moved recently because of economic factors
 - d. Experienced a sudden and significant loss of income
 - e. Reside in a zip code identified as presenting high vulnerability
2. **OHS 2.0:** The City issued an RFP in February 2020 seeking a new program administrator to continue the OHS work which focuses on anti-displacement. Centro Legal de la Raza, along with a collaboration of non-profit partners were selected for a renter program, and Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA) were selected for a homeowner program³. This new contract will commence October 1, 2020 and modifications that align with PATH homelessness prevention strategies include incorporating a services component to assist with non-legal housing stability needs and increased targeting of outreach activities and service delivery in African American neighborhoods. In addition, there will be increased resources directed to homeowner assistance.
3. **CARES Act/KOH:** The City’s allocation of \$5,000,000 in State CARES Act funding for renter and homeowner relief is being deployed through four non-profit providers under the KOH umbrella: BACS and Catholic Charities East Bay along with OHS’s Centro Legal and HERA. The program design targets those most at risk of homelessness along with those most impacted by COVID-19. The prioritization tool described above is being used and includes zip code targeting that incorporates data from Alameda County’s COVID-19 data hub. In line with another of the PATH policy recommendations, it is designed as a low barrier program that facilitates access to individuals and households without formal leases and modifies documentation requirements to limit barriers to entry.

Outreach for the CARES Act/KOH program is targeting the zip codes identified above. To date outreach has included distribution of postcards as follows:

³ These were the only two respondents to the RFP. The contracts are for one-year terms.

- Distribution through Department of Violence Prevention Community Ambassadors
- City Recreation Centers
- COVID Testing sites
- Housing Resource Centers
- Human Services Department distribution through Head Start, Senior Centers, and food distribution sites
- Distribution at neighborhood grocery stores and markets
- Email blast to Community Development Block Grant program grantees and City Housing Resource Center partners
- City Councilmember Offices

Outreach activities will be ongoing until funding is fully deployed.

- 4. CARES Act and CDBG Funding for Fair Chance Access to Housing Ordinance implementation:** HCD is also funding Just Cities with \$100,000 in CARES Act funds to conduct outreach to individuals exiting the criminal justice system and with criminal records to facilitate transitions into stable housing. In addition, CDBG funding is being provided to the East Bay Community Law Center in the amount of \$185,000 for two years to assist with implementation of this ordinance and the provision of support to this community through its Clean Slate program.

Program Planning Underway

There is still much more work to be done. HCD is working closely with HSD, and the Homeless Administrator on additional activities that advance homelessness prevention in its anti-displacement work and the integration of the PATH policy recommendations along with other best practices. The following are the initial next steps:

1. **CDBG-CV:** \$1,500,000 in CDBG-CV (first phase) funding will be deployed to continue the renter and homeowner assistance program activities described above. A key focus of this tranche of funding will be to utilize community-based organizations that are closely connected to impacted neighborhoods to provide this funding in their communities. A Request for Qualifications was issued on September 4, 2020 and responses are due October 9, 2020.
2. **Continued Targeting Through Prioritization and Improved Data Collection:** HCD staff is exploring work with a non-profit called the Q Foundation which has built an intake platform in San Francisco for its COVID-19 renter relief program. The platform has several key attributes which staff is very interested in exploring for use in Oakland.
 - a. Prioritizes applications through a scoring and ranking algorithm determined by the city
 - b. Generates real time data with ease to identify who's being served
 - c. Creates data dashboards and maps with the click of a button

- d. Facilitates multiple agencies operating a single program without duplication
- e. Streamlined processing of applications and communication with applicants
- f. Can be used to generate payments

These features would facilitate the type of data disaggregation contemplated in one of the PATH policy recommendations. The algorithm can easily be recalibrated to adjust prioritization scoring to ensure the intended results are being achieved.

3. **ESG-CV:** HSD will be recommending in an upcoming Council report (to LEC in October or November) to use a portion of the ESG-CV allocation for targeted prevention activities, with a focus on people most at risk of homelessness who do not have a legal lease.

We expect this momentum to generate additional activities as lessons learned are applied and new resources made available.

Respectfully submitted,



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Reviewed by Sara Bedford, Director of Human Services, and Lara Tannenbaum, HSD Community Housing Manager.