



June 11, 2020

Law Offices of Arkady Itkin
100 Pine Street, Suite 1250
San Francisco CA, 94111

Dear Mr. Arkady Itkin and Co-signers,

Homelessness is hard. People who experience homelessness have an average life expectancy of around 50 years of age, almost 20 years lower than housed populations. The ability to sustain employment, well-being, and social relationships is greatly diminished when homeless. And as you highlighted, the strain of homelessness for everyone in the community is becoming increasingly difficult to live with.

Regardless of how people came to be on the streets, it is our commitment to connect them to the services and housing needed so that they are no longer homeless, during the pandemic and beyond. Our multi-disciplinary outreach teams coordinate daily to engage with people, problem solve, and enforce public safety. That said, having these resources does not mean we have an instantaneous solution. If people do not initially accept what we have to offer, movement off the streets to housing can get stalled. We can continue to work to engage people, but we often cannot compel people into accepting services.

While the conditions on our streets are dire, it is important to remember that every night the City provides housing, shelter and services to nearly 13,000 people every day. We have been investing in shelter and housing, with positive outcomes. Since I took office in July 2018, the city has ended homelessness for over 3,000 people, prevented homelessness for approximately 2,000 households, sustained housing supports for thousands more, reformed systems, and expanded proven programs (including the addition of 157 units of housing and 693 shelter beds).

When the pandemic hit, we lost 77% of our shelter capacity due to a need for social distancing. That is over 1,400 shelter beds. This, combined with the economic and social pressures of shelter in place orders has created more housing instability among San Francisco residents and at the same time, less movement through our homeless system.

To respond to COVID-19, the Emergency Operations Center was activated here in San Francisco. Recognizing the impact of homelessness on our community, a team dedicated to homelessness was created at the Emergency Operations Center. This team consists of leaders from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Public Works, Police Department, and Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.



Here are the current actions underway:

Testing: We are providing medical outreach and testing for people in permanent housing, shelters, hotels, and those who are still unsheltered. We continue to track health data, and do not have evidence that people who are unsheltered are disproportionately spreading COVID-19.

Identifying Hot Spots: Since January of this year, over 27,000 calls have come in about encampments through the SF 311. Depending on the nature of the call, a law enforcement, health care, and/or housing representative triages the request and activates the necessary services. In addition, public works is notified when clean-ups are needed. With the onset of COVID-19, city teams are coordinating daily to plan and respond to issues. As we create safe sleeping alternatives, we are moving quickly to connect people so they can access them.

Creating Alternatives to Congregate Shelter: We have matched 1,483 vulnerable people experiencing homelessness to hotel beds and we are ramping up the number of hotel rooms acquired for this purpose. Finding staff to manage our existing shelters and stand up hotel rooms has been a challenge.

Evaluating Assets Increase Capacity: Interdisciplinary teams are working to ensure that any unoccupied rooms hotel rooms not needed for COVID-19 isolation and quarantine anymore are made available to people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, each existing congregate shelter location is being assessed to determine how it can be used, even if at a lower occupancy rate.

Finding ways to Improve Health & Safety on the Streets: The Safe Sleeping Village model has been implemented. It is a short-term, temporary method of establishing minimum health and safety standards for people in outdoor settings where services like food, water, sanitation, and healthcare can be more effectively provided. To ensure everyone's health and safety and to comply with CDC social distancing protocols, access to the village is reserved exclusively for occupants and service providers through designated entrances and monitored 24 hours a day. Individuals accommodated in a Safe Sleeping Village sign a community guidelines agreement that sets expectations around conduct and services. Safe Sleeping Village sites are run by local service providers, with assistance from City agencies for health services, and in collaboration with the SFPD.

Continuing to Focus on Housing: Despite the pandemic, we continue to connect people to housing and support individuals who have exited homelessness. Currently there are over 7,800 units of Permanent Supportive Housing that support formerly homeless individuals and families. We continue to finance and develop housing options for people experiencing homelessness, with 1,212 permanent supportive housing units in the pipeline.

Homelessness is a priority even as we respond to the crisis of COVID-19. These times are creating unprecedented challenges for our city and we are pushing the envelope, looking for

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LONDON N. BREED
MAYOR

creative solutions to mitigate the impact of homelessness on everyone. For example, we recently jumped at the opportunity to create a space where people park and stay in RVs. This alleviates the pressure on the streets, but we are still going to have find a way to create housing options for people in the RVs.

As the community brings ideas forward, we are vetting and responding to them quickly and with an open mind. We are also looking for novel partnerships so that contributions from people in communities can make a difference – it is going to take commitment from everyone in this city if we want to see lasting change.

Thank you for your concern and interest in finding solutions. I would be happy to meet and discuss your concerns. Please work with Amy Sawyer in my office to schedule this meeting. Her email is Amy.Sawyer@sfgov.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "London Breed".

London N. Breed
Mayor

cc. Amy Sawyer, Mayor's Advisor on Homelessness