

# Emergency Interim Housing at Evans Lane Response to COVID-19 and City Shelter Crisis Declaration

In response to the COVID-19 emergency and the City's shelter crisis declaration, the City of San José is developing emergency interim housing for at-risk and unsheltered people, reducing the risk of the spread of COVID-19 to them and to others, and providing future bridge housing after this immediate public health emergency recedes.

One such community will be located on Evans Lane in Council District 6. Residents have asked questions about the site plans, the speed with which the projects are being developed across the City, the purpose of the projects, how they will be operated, as well as potential impacts to the surrounding community. The City of San José developed responses to Frequently Asked Questions below:

## **1) Why is this happening now, and why so quickly without the typical levels of community input, regulation, and review?**

- California is under a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a highly infectious virus that may result in serious illness or death. Unsheltered people are more vulnerable to COVID-19 because they have limited access to sanitation like clean water and soap, are more prone to illnesses, and there is a significant lack of shelter spaces to meet the need of the over 5,000 people who are already living on our streets. Lacking a safe place to go indoors makes it impossible to meet the Shelter-in-Place Order. Unsheltered people, particularly those over 65 years old, and people with underlying health conditions, are at higher risk for severe illness and death.
- In March, the Governor issued Executive Order N-32-20 urging a focused approach to bring unsheltered Californians indoors by increasing shelter and housing inventory. The Order also suspended certain regulations if specific State funding was used to increase housing capacity during the State of Emergency.
- Additionally, the Santa Clara County Shelter-in-Place Order not only directed residents to shelter in their place of residence, it urged governments to make shelter available for people experiencing homelessness. As San José residents shelter-in-place during the pandemic, the City's homeless community (over 5,000 are unsheltered) are among the most vulnerable. These emergency housing solutions support our unsheltered residents and the general public by providing safe shelter for those with high risk of becoming ill, and spreading the virus to others.
- To address the public health crisis and the homelessness crisis, the City Council ordered a suspension of many local regulations applicable to shelters established during the COVID-19 emergency to speed shelter delivery, as well as declaring the continued existence of a shelter crisis by ratifying the City Manager's declaration of a Shelter Crisis. The proposed emergency interim housing communities not only advance State and County objectives, they also respond to Council direction seeking to address these intersecting crises.
- While the County is currently leading isolation and quarantine efforts related to individuals who have tested positive or have been exposed to COVID-19 (primarily through the use of hotels/motels), the City will prioritize individuals at these emergency interim housing sites

who are most vulnerable (individuals or families with a family member that is an older adult with underlying health conditions or has three or more severe underlying health conditions). Question five (5) below summarizes the City-County multi-pronged approach to addressing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2) What are the Emergency Interim Housing Communities?**

- In the near-term, emergency interim housing provides some additional short-term shelter to more unhoused residents so that they can meet the statewide and local orders to Shelter-in-Place, helping to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 and keeping us all safer. As the COVID-19 risk declines, these housing communities can provide short-term transitional shelter to unhoused residents while they wait for placement in a permanent supportive affordable apartment or locate other housing.
- One such site is being developed in District 6 and will be dedicated to families. The Evans Lane site will have approximately 14 modular units fully connected to public utilities that will house up to 108 formerly homeless individuals (family members) in furnished private units. The community will be located on a City-owned site and will include individual shower and restroom facilities within each family unit, shared facilities for basic living needs like communal kitchens, office space to manage the site and provide services, a perimeter fence and onsite security, job training space, a basic recreation room, pet accommodations, onsite parking for residents and staff, and basic traffic safety measures. Additionally, as the site is dedicated to families, a play area will be provided for children.

## **3) Previously this site was planned for affordable housing. Will an affordable housing project still move forward?**

- The Evans Lane site continues to be a future site for the development of affordable housing. The Housing Department is planning to release by the end of 2020 a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of a mixed-income affordable housing site. Space for a Bridge Library will be included as one of the design components for the site. The emergency interim housing solution being built now will be located on a portion of the site, with the entire site eventually being developed into affordable housing.

## **4) Why were the emergency interim housing locations being selected without informing neighbors sooner?**

- The City Council ratified an emergency order and shelter crisis declaration on April 7, 2020, allowing the City to respond quickly to State and County orders noted in question #2. On the same day, the City Council also directed the City Manager to re-allocate State funding dedicated for sheltering and supporting homeless populations, towards the urgent deployment of emergency interim housing. The City moved immediately to identify and evaluate various sites which the City controlled, or could control quickly, and could rapidly stand up as emergency interim housing. The urgency of the public health crisis means City staff is doing many things concurrently, including standing up emergency mass shelters across the City, while conducting site evaluation and site planning.
- Many sites have been and continue to be considered for the development of emergency interim and/or bridge housing communities across the City. The Evans Lane site is City-

owned and controlled, has access to utilities, is level and requires minimal site grading, is near schools and other resources, and was already identified as a future affordable housing site. This makes it an ideal interim family-use location, and allows the City to move quickly to prepare the site to be opened and operated in short order.

- Councilmember Davis notified her residents of this decision as soon as information was available to her.

**5) Are these Emergency Interim Housing solutions the City’s only approach to addressing at-risk, vulnerable, and homeless populations during the COVID-19 public health emergency as well as the existing shelter crisis?**

- The City’s Housing Department has been working urgently with its partners to address the immediate needs of our unsheltered residents to keep the public safe. For those living in large homeless encampments, the City has placed hygiene equipment such as handwashing stations, portable toilets, and arranged for garbage collection to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Together with Santa Clara County, the Housing Department expanded temporary housing and shelter capacity in response to public health orders. To date, over 680 motel/hotel rooms are reserved across 8 cities in the County, over 450 temporary shelter beds were added across several sites including Parkside Hall and South Hall in downtown San José (Council District 3) and the County Fairgrounds, hours of operation were expanded at 10 shelters, safe parking sites, and overnight warming locations, and bed capacity is being used at an existing Bridge Housing Community as well as the Plaza Hotel. Additionally, the City opened a family shelter at the Camden Community Center (Council District 9) and is set to open an emergency housing site for vulnerable populations using 90 travel trailers at a City owned parking lot (Council District 7).
- The City-County COVID-19 shelter plan is flexibly designed to respond to the dynamic nature of the pandemic and built to enable an effective response to the public health crisis as it unfolds. The City and County will continue monitoring the best use for all sites as the nature of the public health crisis changes.

**6) Will more Emergency Interim Housing or Bridge Housing be developed elsewhere in the City? If so, how will this site compare to others?**

- The City is continually looking at potential housing solutions for homeless residents across the City. That search has taken on greater urgency due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- To expedite the search for emergency interim housing now, the City reviewed existing BHC site evaluations from 2017 and 2018. These lists are available on the Housing Department’s website from memos dated 12/12/17 and 3/5/18 (<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments/housing/ending-homelessness/bridge-housing-communities/reports-and-memos>). Although various evaluations and refinements have occurred from these original lists, they served as a good starting point.
- Current site evaluations prioritized the City’s site control (or ability to quickly control a site), accessibility to utilities, limited grading and site work, and feasibility of low-cost development.

- The City opened its first Bridge Housing Community in Council District 3 off Mabury Road this spring and is currently developing its second site in Council District 7 off Felipe Road near Story Road. The City is currently developing three sites—one at Monterey and Bernal, a second at Evans Lane, and a third at Rue Ferrari and 101. All three of the new sites are being flexibly developed to serve dual purposes as emergency interim housing sites and future bridge housing sites to address both immediate needs and future needs.
- The City also operates overnight warming locations, safe parking programs, and has stood up mass shelter sites during the COVID-19 crisis (as described in question 5). Overnight warming locations have been hosted in Council Districts 3 and 6, safe parking programs in Council Districts 2, 3, and 7, and the mass shelters stood up in response to COVID-19 (South Hall and Parkside) are both located downtown in Council District 3. Travel trailers to house at-risk, unsheltered residents are located in a City owned parking lot in Council District 7, and a family shelter recently opened in Council District 9 at the Camden Community Center.
- Both emergency shelter and Bridge Housing Communities in the City of San José are intended to be short-term or transitional housing. On-site services are provided to stabilize residents so that their basic needs are met including shelter, sanitation, and food. The emphasis during COVID-19 will be to stabilize residents; additional services will be provided once the needs of the residents have been identified. While there will be similarities among these housing communities, they will not be identical. The target populations, and the housing capacity of each site may vary. For example, the Evans Lane site will be dedicated to families. These differences will affect rules, visiting hours, staffing, and site design and layouts.

## **7) Is this housing solution being built for homeless people from outside the County?**

- Every two years, communities across the United States conduct comprehensive counts of the local population experiencing homelessness. Known as the Point-in-Time Counts (PIT), this census and survey of people experiencing homelessness provides an overview of the number and characteristics of the homeless population in the community. As of the last PIT conducted in 2019, the City of San José had 6,097 people experiencing homelessness, with approximately 5,117 (84%) being unsheltered. Of those surveyed, 83% resided in Santa Clara County prior to becoming homeless. As such, the vast majority of San José’s homeless population are our residents, neighbors, families and colleagues. If you would like to learn more about the 2019 City of San José Point-in-Time Count, you can access the full report on the Housing Department’s website (<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=47511>).

## **8) How will these emergency housing solutions be funded?**

- The City Council re-allocated restricted state funding from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) towards the lease, purchase, and/or construction of emergency housing. Governor Newsom also signed SB 89 in March 2020. This emergency legislation authorized immediate funding, including support for local governments to protect the health and safety of homeless populations. Lastly, the City also received Coronavirus Relief Funds allocated under the Federal CARES Act. The Administration anticipates applying funding to these projects from any of these sources.

- The City is committed to ensuring these sites are operated effectively, are safe for program residents and the neighborhood, and are appropriately programmed to serve the needs of the residents. To that end, the City will ensure that the sites are funded beyond the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### **9) Who is building the Evans Lane site and when will it be completed?**

- The City of San José has not yet selected a developer for this site, but released an expedited Request for Proposals for this project on May 1, 2020, and plans to award the most advantageous proposal/contract to build the project around May 14. Construction will start approximately May 21, 2020. The Evans Lane emergency interim housing site is expected to be operational and housing families in late July 2020.

### **10) Who will be eligible to live in these communities?**

- During the existing public health crisis posed by COVID-19, referrals into the program for single individuals, couples, and families will be made through a central referral system that is coordinated with the City’s Housing Department, and jointly operated by the County’s Office of Supportive Housing and Valley Homeless Healthcare Program. For Evans Lane, the City expects to prioritize families who have individual members who are most vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19, meaning a family member is an older adult with underlying health conditions or has three or more severe underlying health conditions.
- Prior to the public health emergency ending, the Housing Department will develop a plan for placing residents in these sites as the sites transition to serve as Bridge Housing Communities. For Evans Lane, the City will develop a plan for transitioning families. The existing BHC screening process includes background checks; this protocol will extend to sites operated beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **11) Who will operate and oversee the emergency interim housing sites?**

- The City is in the process of releasing an expedited Request for Proposals to identify potential site operators. The City is committed to ensuring, to the best of our ability and capacity, that homeless residents have a safe place to shelter during this health crisis. The City is developing a comprehensive management plan for emergency interim communities that provides on-site security, resident screening, hours of operation, property management, cleaning protocols, community rules, on-site supportive services, and good neighbor policies.

### **12) What services will be offered to residents living on site?**

- During the initial phase, services will focus on stabilizing the residents. Additional services will be determined after the target populations are defined and as they are being sheltered. In the City’s current bridge housing community, residents receive assistance with job and housing searches, and they have access to workshops that focus on financial literacy, and stress and health management to improve basic functioning and improve self-sufficiency. In addition, City staff will collaborate with the County to determine which County public health or behavioral health related services are appropriate to include.

- The Evans Lane site for families will specifically be designed and operated to provide a safe, family-friendly environment where adults, youth, and children can begin to heal from trauma and establish goals towards self-sufficiency. Services may include counseling, financial education, support groups, job advocacy, children’s education and coordination and help with stable housing.

**13) How will this affect parking/traffic in the neighborhood and is the City considering pedestrian safety in site design?**

- The sites include on-site parking for staff and program participants. Residents may make use of public transportation and alternative forms of transportation, such as cycling. It is also possible that the selected site operator may offer transportation services, depending on family needs. City staff is designing site plans with a focus on traffic and pedestrian safety at the site and along the approaches to the site. Existing traffic conditions are being evaluated and factored into any improvements that will be made surrounding the site.

**14) What measures will the City and site operator put in place to monitor for COVID-19 and support participants who test positive?**

- Santa Clara County is currently the lead agency housing individuals who are positive for or have been exposed to COVID-19. Those placements are occurring at other County operated locations.
- While COVID-19 positive patients are not currently planned for this site, the infectiousness and severity of the virus demands that protocols be in place to prevent the spread of illness, and the dynamic nature of the emergency requires flexibility in response.
- During the COVID-19 crisis, the following protocols will be in place to protect residents, staff, and neighbors:
  - ✓ Temperature is taken upon entry and re-entry to the site;
  - ✓ Staff monitors residents for symptoms;
  - ✓ Commonly used areas, such as restrooms and kitchens, are sanitized frequently;
  - ✓ Site-specific cleaning instructions have been developed;
  - ✓ Hand sanitizer is available on-site;
  - ✓ PPE may be provided to residents who are coughing or upon request;
  - ✓ Social distancing is enforced in common areas; and
  - ✓ Staff is required to wear PPE.
- If someone in an emergency housing community displays symptoms of COVID-19, then the following steps will be taken:
  - ✓ If a staff member is symptomatic, they may be asked to leave immediately and not return until they have tested negative or been symptom-free for 14 days;
  - ✓ If a resident tests positive, the individual will be transferred to another location where they can be isolated; and
  - ✓ Public health guidance for shelters will be followed when a resident tests positive to minimize the risk to other residents and staff.

**15) What are the City's plans for keeping the community safe when the new emergency interim housing sites open?**

- Each location will have 24/7 on-site private security that will control the site. All residents and visitors must check in with on-site security to access the facility. Additionally, residents near Bascom Community Center advocated to establish a community advisory committee (CAC) for the Overnight Warming Location (OWL) operated there. The first BHC community off Mabury Road in Council District 3 also created a CAC to provide input on the operation of the BHC site. Both CACs have proven to be vital resources that help problem solve challenges, improve operations and neighborhood compatibility, and celebrate successes. The City would like to replicate this approach at the Evans Lane location.

**16) Will the surrounding neighborhood receive enhanced services from the City?**

- The City Council directed the Administration to develop plans for coordinated service delivery and to explore the feasibility of enhanced services at these sites. The pandemic is impacting local economies in unprecedented ways, which negatively affects the City's budget situation. The City is currently reviewing and developing its 2020/2021 budget, which will play an important role in determining if enhanced services can and will be provided. Regardless of that outcome, the Administration is committed to ensuring coordinated service delivery at all sites to support community and program success, and limit any potential or perceived impacts. Further, the City will work with the program operator to monitor any increased encampment activity occurring around the site.

**17) What will happen to the site after the public health crisis?**

- The City is committed to ensuring that after the COVID-19 crisis is over, emergency interim housing sites will continue operating in a professional manner, serving previously homeless residents with a goal of transitioning people into stable housing. They will continue to operate like the existing BHC sites with on-site security, supportive services, and professional staff. The emergency interim housing site at Evans Lane is being developed in accordance with legislation that allows the sites to operate through January 1, 2025.

## **FAQ Updates Effective August 20, 2020 (Following 8-13-2020 Community Meeting)**

### **18) Who are the service providers?**

PATH and Abode Services, two organizations with extensive experience serving our unhoused neighbors, are partnering together to provide resident services and property management at the Evans Lane site.

- Founded in 1984, PATH serves 20 percent of California’s unhoused population and operates in 140 cities, making it the largest homeless service agency in the state. Our mission is to end homelessness for individuals, families, and communities, and we do this by providing supportive services and developing affordable housing. Since 2013, we have helped more than 10,000 people move off the streets and into their own homes.
- PATH San Jose launched in 2015 as an integrated service and housing effort to help end street homelessness. PATH has since expanded countywide and, in 2019, opened Villas on the Park, one of San Jose’s first 100% permanent supportive housing sites. PATH’s operation of the Evans Lane site will call upon PATH’s 27-year-experience providing interim housing to high-need populations (e.g., families, Veterans, chronically homeless, medically fragile, and transition age youth). PATH started 11 new interim housing sites in the past year alone, nine of which opened during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Abode Services is the Bay Area’s largest provider of housing services to homeless people. With over 40 years of experience, Abode Services provides management oversight to over 30 properties in Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz counties. Abode Services employs a Housing First approach, recognizing that once a person has a home, they are better able to work on improving other areas of their lives. Abode Services has had a 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator for 13 consecutive years for its sound fiscal management, accountability, and transparency.
- Since 2010, Abode Services has placed 11,824 individuals into permanent housing. During the 2019 fiscal year alone, Abode Services assisted 9,173 adults and children, serving more than 3,900 people on a given night and providing safe, stable homes. Abode Services helped over 2,000 people exit to permanent housing and supported over 5,600 additional individuals in their homes in the last fiscal year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abode Services has launched 13 emergency interim shelter sites serving 1,800 adults and children who would otherwise be at severe risk.

### **19) What services will be provided for residents?**

Evans Lane is designed and operated as a safe, family-friendly environment where adults, youth, and children can begin to heal from the trauma of homelessness and establish goals towards obtaining permanent housing. PATH’s supportive services follow a strengths-based, family-centered model where services are catered to the unique strengths, interests, and needs of each family. Services will be delivered by a robust team of professionals, including case managers, residential activity coordinators, a harm reduction specialist, an employment specialist, and a lead (clinical) case manager. Each part of the supportive services team has their own role to support families with developing or enhancing their skills and resources to quickly and permanently end homelessness.

During the initial phase, services will focus on stabilizing vulnerable families who are particularly at risk during the current public health emergency. Staff are trained to provide a variety of therapeutic case management services and will refer to specialty healthcare from community partners, as needed. Onsite employment assistance and benefit assessments will aid families in maximizing their income to increase their competitiveness for community housing options. Additional services will be determined by a needs assessment after families move into the community. Services will be delivered both in one-on-one case management and through facilitated events and activities, ranging from tutoring workshops, parenting classes, employment skill training, financial empowerment, stress and health management, and wellness groups.

## 20) **How can I support this development?**

Thank you for your interest in helping ensure the success of the Evans Lane site. There are three main ways that neighbors can help support our work at this development.

- **Volunteer:** Once the Evans Lane site opens, we will have a robust social calendar for residents with activities that will require many helping hands. Volunteers can participate in onsite activities such as leading a cooking class, cultivating the community garden, and tutoring students. To ensure safety during the pandemic, we will require all residents and volunteers to practice proper social distancing and wear masks. We will also offer a number of remote volunteer opportunities, such as creating care kits and Welcome Home kits for our residents. If you are interested in helping support PATH's mission in this way, please reach out to Emily Hsieh ([EmilyG@epath.org](mailto:EmilyG@epath.org)) or Laura Sandoval ([LauraS@epath.org](mailto:LauraS@epath.org)) to learn more about our volunteer needs.
- **Be an advocate:** We highly value advocates within the community who can speak to their neighbors and the public about the homelessness crisis and the urgent need for more housing in Santa Clara County. One of the most effective ways to be a part of this movement is to join a Housing Ready Community, a group of neighbors, nonprofits, government officials and housing developers that take action and support the approval of new affordable and supportive housing developments. Please sign up [here](#) to be a part of the Housing Ready Community Action Network.
- **Donate:** At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our operations as a homeless service provider were immediately deemed essential by statewide public health authorities. There are many additional costs associated with supporting our staff and ensuring we can carry out our services for clients during this unprecedented time. Please see our [website](#) with several ways that you can help support our mission to end homelessness.