

City of San José

Emergency Interim Housing Program

What is emergency interim housing?

In San José, emergency interim housing is short-term housing designed to break the cycle of homelessness. Emergency interim housing communities provide homeless individuals with private sleeping units, restrooms and showers, similar to very small studios. Program participants typically stay in emergency interim housing for a few months while they stabilize their lives and look for permanent housing. While living in emergency interim housing, participants recuperate from the physical and mental stress of living in “crisis mode” on the street, and they have access to supportive services that can lead to positive outcomes.

Why is emergency interim housing necessary in San José?

According to the 2022 homeless census conducted in February, at least 6,700 people are homeless in San José on any given night, including at least 5,000 people who have no shelter (i.e., live on the street or elsewhere outside). People experiencing homelessness often find themselves trapped in a downward spiral. When someone falls into homelessness, it becomes harder to find a job, harder to find permanent housing, harder to stay healthy, harder to maintain relationships with family and friends, and harder to preserve mental wellness. The City of San José developed emergency interim housing communities as a quick and safe housing option for people who are unsheltered while affordable permanent housing is being built. Emergency interim housing provides homeless individuals a way out of homelessness and a path to stable, permanent housing.

What supportive services are provided to emergency interim housing participants?

The services offered to participants are intended to address the trauma of homelessness. Participants have access to healthcare, mental health counseling, addiction treatment, job placement assistance, housing search assistance, and life skills classes such as financial literacy. Each participant is assigned a case manager who acts as an advisor and helps connect participants to these services.

Why is the City involved in building and operating emergency interim housing?

Our entire community stands to benefit when fewer people are homeless. As individuals get off the street and into stable housing, the strain on our social safety net and vital public services is reduced. When people become housed, they are less likely to use emergency resources, including Valley Medical Center and the San José Fire Department, they are less likely to become entangled in the criminal justice system, families are more likely to stay intact, children are more likely to stay in school, and the blight caused by homeless encampments is reduced.

How are emergency interim housing sites selected?

The City evaluates potential sites based on several factors, including lot size, accessibility for construction equipment, City control of the property, proximity to mass transit, and access to sewer, power and water systems. Staff also tries to avoid concentrating emergency interim housing sites. Emergency interim housing communities are currently located in four City Council districts.

Is the City planning to build more emergency interim housing communities?

Yes. An emergency interim housing site near the San José Police Department headquarters is scheduled to open in late 2022, and the City Council has approved the construction of more sites as suitable locations are identified.

How does emergency interim housing impact nearby neighborhoods?

The City expects all emergency interim housing participants to be good neighbors. Each emergency interim housing community has 24/7 professional staffing and security. All emergency interim housing participants and visitors check in upon arrival, and staff monitors the surrounding area for loitering. The City's existing sites, which have been open for over a year, have not caused people to gather around them. Each emergency interim housing site also has a community advisory committee (CAC) that includes neighbors who want to be involved. CACs are vital resources that help problem solve, improve operations and neighborhood compatibility, and celebrate successes.

Do emergency interim housing sites add to parking challenges and pedestrian safety in nearby neighborhoods?

Emergency interim housing communities include on-site parking for staff and participants. Sites also include bicycle parking. And the sites are designed with a focus on traffic and pedestrian safety. Existing traffic conditions are evaluated and factored into decisions about street improvements near the sites.

How are participants selected for each emergency interim housing community?

The selection criteria vary at each location. In most cases, potential participants are prioritized based on their geographical proximity to a given site, and the possible demobilization of other sites or programs. Street-based outreach and engagement teams conduct assessments to understand individual housing needs, which helps emergency interim housing operators match participants with eligible housing opportunities.

Is emergency interim housing being built for homeless people who already live in this region?

Yes. The homeless population tends to be transient, so it is difficult to know the details of every person's journey. However, our data indicates more than 80 percent of homeless people in our area were living in Santa Clara County prior to becoming homeless. Our intention is to use emergency interim housing to serve people who already live here and, in many cases, live within the specific community where a site is being built.

How is the City funding its emergency interim housing communities?

Past and present funding for emergency interim housing has come from many sources, including:

- The State's Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP);
- State-funded Project Homekey grants;
- The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;
- The federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA);
- Measure E; and
- The City's General Fund.

Is the City taking additional steps to address homelessness?

Yes. The City works closely with the County of Santa Clara and nonprofit partners to address homelessness on a regional basis. [The 2020-2025 Community Plan to End Homelessness](#) lays out a three-prong strategy for addressing homelessness, which includes building more permanent housing for low-income households, increasing shelter and emergency interim housing capacity, and providing street-based services to help our unsheltered neighbors overcome the challenges they face to get housed and stay housed while creating healthy neighborhoods for all San José residents.

Who operates emergency interim housing communities in San José?

When the City prepares to open an emergency interim housing site, it goes through a competitive procurement process to select a site operator. The current emergency interim housing sites are operated by experienced nonprofits with long histories of serving homeless individuals and households. These organizations include HomeFirst, PATH, Abode Services, and LifeMoves. The City works with these operators to develop comprehensive

management plans for each emergency interim housing community, including security, resident screening, community rules, on-site supportive services, and good neighbor policies.

Is the City open to suggestions for new sites?

Yes. Residents are encouraged to identify potential sites for emergency interim housing. Sites must be over one acre and have a willing owner. Please note City staff has evaluated more than 140 locations, so it is possible some suggestions will have already been evaluated. [You may click this link to submit a suggestion](#) for a new emergency interim housing site.

Do new suggested sites have to be owned by the City?

No. The original direction from the City Council was for staff to evaluate the initial list of 140+ locations that were either owned by the City or partner agencies such as Caltrans or VTA. However, recent City Council direction provides an opportunity for staff to evaluate privately owned sites. Please keep in mind, a major reason why emergency interim housing communities are cost-effective is the fact there is little or no cost to use the land. Once a new site has been submitted to the City, staff will do the work of determining ownership and evaluating the sites for basic feasibility.

How can I become more involved in the City's emergency interim housing program?

There are several ways to get involved and stay involved with the City's work on emergency interim housing.

- [Sign up for email notifications here.](#)
- Attend community meetings. [Click here for a list of upcoming meetings.](#)
- Request neighborhood-level engagement opportunities through your City Councilmember's office.