City of San Jose - Emergency Interim Housing (EIH)
Siting and Evaluation Guidelines & Process – Identifying the Most Practical Sites

The following guidelines and process aim to effectively and efficiently evaluate potential EIH sites by assessing numerous considerations to establish initial **feasibility**, actual **viability** (project can be built in a relatively straightforward manner, with no significant mitigations), and ultimately project **practicality** (viable site compares well vs other sites in a Council District on ownership/control, cost, rapid development, # of units/beds, compatibility, etc). This process allows the City to be as thoughtful as possible with taxpayer dollars while also planning for effective solutions across neighborhoods.

A. Feasibility Considerations

This step involves the initial site review to determine site characteristics versus minimum requirements. This high-level review may include a preliminary field visit. This initial assessment uses readily available parcel/property information, and aerial and street maps.

1. **Size:** Sites must be a minimum of one acre – one acre is the minimum size to accommodate an approximate 40-unit EIH with limited parking and support services. Sites of two or more acres are better suited to build a more adequate number of sleeping units (e.g. 60 to 100), and the necessary support/shared facilities (e.g. parking, kitchen, laundry).

2. **Site Access:** Sites must be accessible to the City street system to enable people staying and working at the site, as well as emergency response personnel and vehicles, to access the site. Landlocked sites with little or no vehicular access are not feasible.

3. **Grades and Slopes:** Sites need to be fairly flat for efficient EIH development. As "Quick-Build" interim facilities the goal is to efficiently develop sites (e.g. control cost, rapid construction) to quickly shelter people living on the streets, and avoid more expensive, permanent site mitigations. Steeper slopes result in higher costs and longer development timeframes. Even sites with mild slopes present grading and utility installation challenges.

4. **Environmental:** Potential environmental factors that can affect any development may be numerous and complex. Environmental factors typically vary by site and project. During feasibility evaluation, environmental research focuses on readily accessible information that may impact interim housing development such as flood zone designation, riparian corridors, and previous land uses (e.g. dump sites).

5. **Shape:** Sites need suitable shapes to effectively configure an EIH. For example, some sites may meet the minimum acreages, but the entire site may not be useable enough to support all facilities, and achieve adequate setbacks from adjacent uses. For example, long narrow sites may have ample acreage, but may be challenged to accommodate all requirements. Square/rectangular parcels are more practical, but various shapes may be considered.

6. **Access to Basic Services:** While access to basic services such as groceries and transit are important, potential sites lacking proximity are not necessarily infeasible. Sites that meet all or most of the other considerations may be advanced for further review for viability and practicality. Sites with public transit located ½ mile or less are preferred. However, in lieu of public transit, the City and its site operators may provide other transportation options.

B. <u>Viability Considerations</u>

In the viability phase, sites must pass through a more detailed field and property characteristic investigation. It needs to indicate potential for development, have no fatal flaws emerge, be in a priority location (e.g. City Council District that does not have a project), or have the capacity for expansion of an existing EIH community.

1. **Location in the City:** The City Council directed that at least one EIH site be developed in each of the 10 City Council Districts. The City has EIH projects in four of the 10 City Council Districts (e.g. 2, 3, 6, 7) and is pursuing sites and projects in the remaining six districts (e.g. 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10) to ensure shared responsibility for sites across the entire City and provide multiple access locations. Potential sites in all City Council Districts can be evaluated to determine feasibility, viability, and practicality. The priority focus directed by City Council is for staff to develop EIH sites in Council Districts that do not have current EIH communities.

2. **Access to Utilities:** During the field review, sites are informally surveyed to identify access and proximity to utilities including power, water, sewer, and storm water systems.

3. **Site Configuration and Capacity:** Sites that are advancing through the viability phase are more thoroughly evaluated for how they may be configured and the potential capacity for development. Field visits are conducted to evaluate site conditions and developable space, to identify enough open flat areas that enable sufficient layout for access and circulation, site control/security, and buildings, versus sites that have limited space, greater variation of terrain, including sloped areas, or odd shapes that are not as useable. Gathering the following preliminary information is an essential component of determining viability:

    - Where can buildings be placed on a site
    - Approximately how many units/beds can a site accommodate (towards the City Council goal in this phase of EIH development)
    - How will the site be accessed and circulated, including emergency fire lanes
    - Are there undocumented site conditions such as utility poles, vaults, etc.
    - Are there limitations to site access due to unknown site factors or topography

4. **Preliminary Environmental Constraints:** In this viability evaluation phase, potential environmental constraints are researched that may limit development and/or require mitigations at a particular site. Sites are screened for various environmental constraints commonly encountered at development sites in San Jose such as:

a. Hazardous materials/contaminants
b. Geologic Hazards
c. Flooding
d. Habitat
e. Noise
f. Air Quality
g. Historic Culture

Additional environmental review and/or analysis is completed for sites that are advanced and approved by City Council for project design and construction.

5. **Site Restrictions:** Research is conducted to understand potential land or use restrictions such as deed restrictions, recorded covenants, or certain land use designations. The City's General Plan and Zoning requirements are suspended for the duration of the City's Shelter Crisis Declaration under the State Legislation that allows Bridge Housing and Emergency Interim Housing development and operation in the City of San Jose.

6. **Ownership/Ability to Control:** To build and operate EIH, the City must legally own or control the property through a lease as required by the enabling legislation. With limited funding available and the urgent need to develop EIH communities to shelter people on the street, using City owned land is usually the most practical and efficient path to developing these communities. The City does partner with other public agencies to use their land (e.g. VTA, Caltrans, County, Valley Water). Purchasing or leasing property from private owners usually makes a project impractical for cost and timing reasons, unless it is donated or leased at a nominal cost. Each potential site is evaluated on its own merit, however for sites the City does not already control, the willingness for urgent and timely participation by the property owner is essential.

C. Practicality Considerations

The project practicality phase can be characterized as the initial concept development phase, whereby some initial preliminary engineering and environmental analysis should confirm no fatal technical flaws are emerging, and some degree of site capacity is confirmed. Most importantly it aims to identify preliminary development capacity for an EIH site, to enable initial comparisons between sites, to begin making early assessments on the relative value of a site (e.g. cost, capacity of site, other qualitative considerations) versus other sites that are viable.

1. **Preliminary Concepts & Capacity:** Only a small number of potential EIH sites are advanced for further consideration based on the factors identified in the previous evaluation's phases. During the practicality phase, preliminary site concepts are formulated to evaluate a site's potential capacity. Early site concepts consider setbacks, access points, emergency access needs, proximity to utility connections, site grades, potential environmental constraints that may impact development, alternative site and building configurations, and buffers.

2. **Site Comparison and Evaluation:** Given the limited pool of sites available due to funding limitations, cost, and available public property, very few sites make it through all phases of evaluation. The limited number of sites that do are evaluated and compared on their ability to accommodate a desirable number of units/beds (e.g. 60 to 100), the cost effectiveness to deliver the project, the ability to rapidly design and build the project, and other qualitative factors that may be deemed relevant by the City Council, City staff, and the community. The Mayor and City Council consider and decide whether to develop an EIH community.