



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2025

TO: CITY COUNCIL

SUBMITTED BY: ERIC LEVITT, CITY MANAGER

PREPARED BY: DAISY PEREZ, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: FULLERTON HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

SUMMARY

This report details the City's involvement in regional and local shelter programs, homelessness services, enforcement efforts, and partnerships aimed at addressing homelessness.

PROPOSED MOTION

Receive and file.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Provide alternative direction to staff
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

The City Manager intends to bring back an ordinance to the City Council addressing the impacts that Fullerton is seeing based on actions recently occurring in other cities.

The City of Fullerton, passed the critical infrastructure ordinance as a way to further address impacts in the community. Since that time, there have been Court rulings and other Cities have passed ordinances.

I recommend that the City evaluate our current ordinances and brings back appropriate changes to address the impacts created by enforcement in other cities.

In addition, we are putting more resources into addressing impacts on those that are homeless than many other cities in the region.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

- Fiscal and Organizational Stability
- Public Safety
- Infrastructure and City Assets.

FISCAL IMPACT

The City has committed financial resources to support regional and local homelessness programs:

- North SPA Navigation Centers: Fullerton shares costs for 250 regional shelter beds, contributing approximately \$4.53 million over five years.
- Fullerton Navigation Center: The City funds 40 emergency shelter beds at an annual cost of \$1,168,000, offset by a \$384,288 rent credit, resulting in a net annual cost of \$783,712.
- Motel Voucher Winter Program: Funded through federal resources, this program provides emergency shelter during extreme weather conditions.
- Social Worker Program: A \$1 million Fourth District Discretionary Grant funds a two-year pilot program integrating social workers into emergency response efforts.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Addressing homelessness and its impacts on both the community as well as those experiencing homelessness remains a priority for the City of Fullerton. This report provides an update on the City's ongoing efforts to manage and mitigate homelessness through shelter access, outreach programs, enforcement strategies, and regional collaborations. The information presented reflects the City's commitment to a balanced approach that ensures public safety while providing necessary support services to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Encampment Cleanups

The City of Fullerton Public Works Department, in coordination with the Fullerton Police Department's Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Unit, conducts biweekly encampment cleanups to address public health and safety concerns associated with unauthorized encampments. These efforts aim to maintain clean and safe public spaces while providing outreach and assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness.

During each cleanup operation, the HLO Unit engages with individuals at the encampment, offering resources, shelter referrals, and support services to connect them with long-term housing solutions. Simultaneously, Public Works crews remove

debris, hazardous materials, and abandoned property, ensuring that public areas remain accessible and sanitary for the community.

The cleanup process is conducted in compliance with local ordinances and state-mandated protocols, ensuring that individuals are given adequate notice and the opportunity to retrieve personal belongings. By working collaboratively, the Public Works Department and Fullerton PD HLO Unit strive to balance public safety, health, and compassionate outreach, reinforcing the City's commitment to addressing homelessness through both enforcement and supportive services.

Shelter Access

The City of Fullerton financially supports 290 shelter beds through agreements with the Illumination Foundation and the North SPA MOU. Fullerton fully funds 40 emergency shelter beds exclusively for its residents at the Illumination Foundation Navigation Center. Additionally, as a North SPA member, Fullerton shares costs for 250 regional beds (100 in Placentia, 150 in Buena Park) based on a population-based cost formula. These agreements ensure local and regional access to shelter while maintaining compliance with federal mandates.

North SPA

The County of Orange created three Service Planning Areas (SPA) to foster regional approaches to Homeless Services. The North SPA is comprised of 13 cities; Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Cypress, Fullerton, La Habra, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Orange, Placentia, Stanton, Villa Park, and Yorba Linda. The North SPA entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Federal Court and in May 2019, required to provide 250 beds in the North SPA which allows to enforce the City's anti-camping ordinance. In May 2019, the North SPA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop and operate two homeless navigation centers providing a total of 250 beds serving the North Orange County homeless population (Placentia – 100 beds and Buena Park – 150 beds).

The structure of the billings for the North SPA is based on the following cost share formula:

- 50% of large cities and 100% of small cities Senate Bill (SB) 2 funding allocation according to Exhibit D of the MOU.
- The remaining 'City Contribution' is the balance of actual costs incurred to operate the sites based on a population formula that includes a percent of the city population and a percentage of the city's homeless population.

Based on the aforementioned cost-sharing formula, the City of Fullerton is responsible for the following costs of the North SPA Navigation Centers:

Description	PLHA SB2	City Program Costs	Total Amount
Construction Costs			\$ 862,658.00
Year 1 Operating Costs	\$ 286,081.00	\$ -	\$ 286,081.00

Year 2 Operating Costs	\$ 508,283.00	\$ 126,542.00	\$ 634,825.00
Year 3 Operating Costs	\$ 559,349.00	\$ 65,210.00	\$ 624,559.00
Year 4 Operating Costs	\$ 280,347.00	\$ 692,640.00	\$ 972,987.00
Year 5 Operating Costs	\$ 280,347.00*	\$ 869,205.00	\$ 1,149,552.00
Total Cost			\$ 4,530,662.00

*Estimated SB2 Amount

Fullerton Navigation Center

The City of Fullerton entered into an agreement with the Illumination Foundation, approved by the City Council on March 5, 2024, to establish operational and financial responsibilities for a Navigation Center and Recuperative Care Center at 3535 West Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton, CA. As part of this agreement, the City acquired the facility from Dyer 18, LLC and is leasing it to the Illumination Foundation for the purpose of operating 110 recuperative care beds and 40 emergency shelter beds designated exclusively for Fullerton residents.

Under the agreement, the City of Fullerton is responsible for funding the 40 emergency shelter beds at a fixed daily rate of \$80 per bed, resulting in an annual cost of \$1,168,000. The Illumination Foundation provides an annual rent credit of \$384,288 (\$32,504 per month), reducing the City's net annual cost to \$783,712. Payments are processed based on monthly invoices submitted by the Illumination Foundation, documenting the number of Fullerton-referred individuals housed in the shelter.

Fullerton Navigation Center Shelter Bed Costs (40 Beds @ \$80/bed night)			
Daily Cost	Annual Cost	Annual Rent Credit	Net Annual Cost
\$ 3,200.00	\$1,168,000.00	\$ (384,288.00)	\$ 783,712.00

The Illumination Foundation assumes responsibility for the daily operations of the Navigation Center, including staffing, security, training, and compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. The agreement mandates that all 40 emergency shelter beds be exclusively reserved for Fullerton residents. Additionally, the City is committed to securing a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to formally approve the facility's expanded use.

This agreement is structured to remain in effect for the duration of the lease or 10 years, whichever is longer, ensuring operational stability and sustained service delivery for the community.

Motel Voucher Winter Program

The City of Fullerton has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Willow Tree Lodge to establish a Motel Voucher Winter Program, providing shelter and relief to vulnerable Fullerton residents during periods of severe weather. This initiative offers a safe and comfortable temporary housing option for unsheltered individuals, including families with children and seniors aged 62 and older, who are among the most at-risk populations.

As the program is funded through federal resources, HUD defines seniors as individuals aged 62 and older. Given their heightened vulnerability, seniors will be prioritized for assistance. While the City will continue to utilize local shelter facilities when space is available, this program provides an additional option for those in need.

To ensure effective outreach and communication, the City will rely on coordinated efforts from the Community Outreach Specialist, HOPE Center personnel, and Homeless Liaison Officers, all of whom maintain regular engagement with unsheltered individuals in the community. Through this proactive approach, the City aims to expand shelter access and enhance support services for those facing extreme weather conditions.

Dedicated Homeless Case Manager

The City of Fullerton employs a full-time community outreach specialist responsible for outreach and case management for individuals experiencing homelessness within the city and surrounding areas. This specialist provides intervention services, connects individuals to community resources, and collaborates with local government agencies, law enforcement, and community stakeholders to support homeless individuals.

The outreach specialist establishes and maintains effective working relationships with clients to provide counseling and case management services. Additionally, the role involves building and maintaining partnerships with public and private service agencies, community groups, and faith-based organizations to secure necessary services for clients and stay informed on emerging trends and best practices in community outreach. The specialist assesses client needs and characteristics, identifies short-term and long-term support requirements, and provides appropriate resources and referrals while coordinating service delivery plans.

This position also assists law enforcement personnel in non-enforcement situations involving homeless individuals and facilitates access to appropriate care. The specialist supports public safety personnel by managing non-psychiatric emergencies, including transporting clients to substance abuse treatment facilities and coordinating with hospital staff regarding emergency services and recuperative care.

Social Worker Pilot Program

The Fullerton Police Department Social Worker Program is a two-year pilot initiative aimed at enhancing public safety by integrating licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) into emergency response efforts. Funded through a \$1 million Fourth District Discretionary Grant from Supervisor Doug Chaffee, this program represents a shift from incarceration to treatment-focused responses, particularly for mental health crises, domestic violence, and juvenile delinquency.

The funding supports the hiring of two LCSWs, as well as the purchase of specialized equipment and two unmarked police vehicles. These social workers will be dispatched alongside or in place of officers to de-escalate crises, provide mediation and referrals to healthcare providers, and conduct case follow-ups to ensure long-term support. The goal is to reduce the strain on law enforcement, improve emergency response times, and foster positive community relationships.

The Behavioral Health Clinicians (BHCs) hired under this program began training in November. Their training includes working alongside Field Training Officers, learning police radio operations, and understanding in-car computer systems and patrol protocols. Additionally, they must complete a set number of mental health holds under the supervision of the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA). The training process is expected to last another two months before they begin responding to calls independently.

Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Unit

The Fullerton Police Department's Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Unit is comprised of multiple officers dedicated to assisting the homeless population in Fullerton. Utilizing partnerships with various organizations including Orange County Mental Health, the HLO Unit's mission is to provide homeless individuals with opportunities to get off the streets and into permanent housing.

HLO's conduct Homeless Outreach each week in partnership with the HOPE Center and our respective shelter operators and work every day to address the needs of the community. While every police officer is trained in how to assist the homeless population, the HLO Unit has direct contact with Orange County Social Services and relationships with numerous support services that are critical to helping the homeless. They also have a Clinician from Orange County Mental Health with them, in their patrol vehicle, 2-3 days a week to help not only the homeless population in but also those suffering from mental health issues as well.

The HLO Unit also documents Homeless contacts through the Outreach Grid, which is designed to collaborate with outreach workers and service agencies to better understand the state of homelessness in the region in order to deliver better and faster care.

Enforcement Efforts

Critical Infrastructure Ordinance

The City of Fullerton's Critical Infrastructure Ordinance, introduced on December 19, 2023, amended the city's anti-camping ordinance and adds regulations to protect designated critical infrastructure. Key aspects of the ordinance include:

- It prohibits camping and the presence of camp paraphernalia within, on, or near designated critical infrastructure.
- Critical infrastructure is defined as real property or facilities vital to the city's operation, including government buildings, hospitals, bridges, roads, train tracks, parking structures, drainage systems, computer networks, public utilities, and water sources.

The ordinance aims to mitigate potential threats to public health, safety, and welfare by allowing the removal of persons and their personal property from these areas.

It establishes a 25-foot buffer zone around designated critical infrastructure where camping is not allowed. The ordinance does not create a total ban on encampments in

the city. It balances addressing public safety concerns and protecting infrastructure while showing compassion for the homeless population.

Violations of the ordinance may result in civil penalties and can be classified as a public nuisance. Since its implementation, the Police Department has arrested 11 individuals for ordinance violations. The ordinance is part of Fullerton's efforts to address increased homeless encampments while protecting vital city infrastructure and maintaining public access to services.

Operation Clean Streets

In October 2023, Fullerton PD began a directed enforcement operation, "Operation Clean Streets," along the Orangethorpe Corridor to proactively address illicit activity such as narcotics use, possession and sales in public, and other nuisance criminal activity in the area in an effort to improve the quality of life for all in Fullerton. Since October 2023, FPD officers have taken enforcement action against 388 individuals for illicit activity and criminal conduct and issued 147 criminal citations.

Our partners at the HOPE Center have continued their mission of Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement during this period, responding to 1,081 calls for service, assisting those in need, and conducting general outreach and proactive engagement 346 times. In addition, their efforts have resulted in 107 individuals accepting services to better their lives. The progress has resulted from the combined teamwork of FPD, the HOPE Center, and the City of Fullerton Public Works. These groups will continue to maintain their efforts as they expand to other areas of the City that need enforcement and resources.

Regional Efforts

The HOPE Center

The HOPE Center in Fullerton, which opened in October 2022, serves as a central hub for homeless services across North Orange County. It provides coordinated support by dispatching mobile homeless outreach units staffed with social workers, mental health professionals, homeless liaison officers, and community service providers. The center ensures a rapid response to homeless-related calls, deploying the appropriate resources while working with local law enforcement to minimize police involvement in non-criminal situations. Through partnerships with local shelters, the HOPE Center facilitates access to shelter beds, case management, and assistance in transitioning individuals into stable housing.

Additionally, it offers behavioral health services, support from community health workers, and data integration to enhance resource allocation and service effectiveness. By collaborating with multiple cities, community organizations, and healthcare providers, the HOPE Center strengthens regional outreach efforts to locate and assist individuals in need, ensuring a comprehensive and consistent approach to addressing homelessness in North Orange County.

Other Regional Efforts

Several cities in Orange County have recently enacted or proposed ordinances and resolutions to address homeless encampments and related activities:

Stanton: Declared homelessness a local emergency in November 2024 and adopted an ordinance banning people from sleeping and storing personal belongings on public streets and sidewalks.

Garden Grove: Supported a new anti-camping ban in October 2024, prohibiting camping on public property and restricting encampments near buildings, ATMs, schools, and daycare centers.

Anaheim, Newport Beach, San Clemente, and Aliso Viejo: Revamped their anti-camping laws following the Supreme Court's ruling that allows cities to fine and arrest people for camping and sleeping outdoors.

Anaheim: Passed a resolution called "Operation Home Safe" to clean and repair city-owned property damaged by homeless encampments, enforce health and safety codes, and work with the county to restore damaged property.

These ordinances and resolutions generally aim to reduce public camping, enforce anti-camping laws, and address the impact of homeless encampments on public spaces and safety.

The City of Fullerton remains dedicated to addressing homelessness through a comprehensive strategy that combines shelter access, outreach programs, enforcement efforts, and regional partnerships. By continuing to collaborate with local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and regional partners, the City aims to provide effective solutions that balance support services with necessary public safety measures. This report serves to update the City Council on the progress of ongoing homelessness initiatives and provides transparency regarding fiscal commitments and program outcomes.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – 2024 HOPE Center Report

cc: City Manager Eric J. Levitt