



City Council  
Agenda Report

**DATE:** July 25, 2023  
**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers  
**FROM:** Deyanira Brito, Housing Specialist  
**SUBJECT:** Update on Homeless Programs and Services

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council receives the homeless programs and services report and, if desired, provides feedback, recommendations, and direction on homeless-related programming and funding.

**BACKGROUND:**

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide a report on the homeless programs and services using city, federal and state funding sources. This report provides a summary of programs and services, outcomes, a program assessment, recommendations and a conclusion.

***Summary of Programs and Services***

Since January 2020, the City has funded or operated 13 different homeless-related programs or projects, and allocated an estimated \$4 million in general, federal, and state funds to support those programs. The programs have one of three aims:

1. Housing homeless individuals (both temporary and permanent housing),
2. Preventing homelessness, or
3. Addressing community impacts as a result of homelessness.

The following sections of this report provide updates, funding, and expenditures on these programs, most of which are ongoing. Table I below provides additional information on expenditures and program outcomes in alphabetical order.

**A Way Back Home Program**

The Salvation Army's (TSA) "A Way Back Home" program reunites homeless individuals in El Cajon with their families by providing assistance with transportation, food and sometimes an overnight stay while en route. The program was funded with Low and Moderate Income Housing Asset Funds (LMIHAF) of \$10,000 during FY 2022-2023.

**Acquisition and/or Rehabilitation of Facility Serving the Homeless**

In May 2021, City Council allocated the balance of the CDBG-CV funds (\$299,307) for assisting in the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of a facility for use as a shelter or navigation center. The goal for these funds was to be leveraged with other available funding sources (potentially with other jurisdictions). However, because of the urgency in the expenditure and use of CDBG-CV funds to assist homeless individuals and families in El Cajon, City Council approved the

re-allocation of all funds. A total of \$264,807 was re-allocated to the existing Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel Program and \$22,000 was re-allocated toward the monitoring of all CDBG-CV related programs to ensure HUD compliance.

### **Crisis House**

On November 10, 2020, City Council approved the First Amendment to FY 2020-2021 One Year Action Plan that re-allocated and appropriated \$700,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to assist Crisis House, Inc. in acquiring a new site to serve the community of El Cajon. In return for the City's assistance, Crisis House is required to serve El Cajon residents for a total of 10 years (expiration year 2031). From 2021 to present, Crisis House continues to provide services to homeless persons and victims of domestic violence in El Cajon. Annual accomplishments are reflected below in Table I.

### **East County Homeless Task Force**

Since 2019, the City has annually contributed \$5,000 from the General Fund to assist in sustaining the East County Homeless Task Force (ECHTF). The ECHTF plays a role in coordinating efforts in the East County region and helping to understand homeless service needs. In addition to financial support, the city manager participates on the organization's steering committee.

### **El Cajon Homeless Outreach & Flexible Housing Assistance Program**

In September 2020, the City contracted with Home Start, Inc. to provide a dedicated Homeless Outreach Specialist along with flexible housing assistance funds to help homeless individuals and families in El Cajon. The Outreach Specialist (or Navigator) connects homeless households with services and works to secure permanent housing. The program was funded by LMIHAF, totaling \$200,000 during FY 2022-2023.

### **Emergency Motel Stays Program**

In 2020 and 2021, the City Council awarded \$145,000 in CDBG-CV funding to Home Start, Inc. for the provision of an emergency motel voucher program to assist homeless families and individuals with immediate shelter to reduce their risk of exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and serve as a gateway to permanent housing. The program concluded in 2021, and a new, refined Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel program was implemented, with a new allocation of CDBG-CV funding (see Emergency Scatter-Site Motel Program below).

### **Emergency Scatter-Site Motel Program**

In May 2021, the City Council awarded \$400,000 in CDBG-CV funding to Home Start, Inc. for the provision of a refined emergency motel program to assist homeless families and individuals with immediate shelter, to reduce their risk of exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This program provides emergency motel room vouchers, housing placement and emergency housing assistance for homeless families and individuals impacted by COVID-19 that are housing-focused and housing-ready, with the goal of attaining permanent housing. Staff saw an increase in the need for emergency motel room vouchers from July to December 2022, which resulted in additional CDBG-CV funding provided to Home Start, Inc. for \$99,307. In March 2023, to provide an ongoing program, City Council approved an additional \$165,500.

### **Emergency Shelter Program**

Historically, the City has contracted with the East County Transitional Living Center (ECTLC) to fund the Emergency Shelter Program using CDBG funds, currently totaling \$100,000 for FY 2022-2023. This non-faith-based program provides emergency shelter, case management, meals and other services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Additional one-time CDBG-CV funding was approved by City Council in 2020 and 2021, (\$185,294 and \$75,691) to increase essential services and assist additional individuals and families experiencing homelessness to reduce their risk of exposure to, and to prevent the spread of, COVID-19. This program ended in March 2023.

### **Homeless Outreach Events**

Police Department staff previously accompanied homeless service providers twice per month in an effort to make contact and offer assistance to the city's homeless community. On March 2021, the goal for the number of outreach events was increased, now occurring every Friday, as allowed by attendance of police officers. When police officers are unavailable, service providers make an effort to continue with planned monthly outreach events. The City's contribution to this program continues to be two police officers for three hours per event. These costs are funded by the General Fund and vary depending on the amount of outreach events attended.

### **Neighborhood Quality of Life Team**

Between January 2020 and June 2023, the Neighborhood Quality of Life Team (a multi-departmental team) provided 465 clean-up events throughout the City. The team is supported by a contract for cleaning services with Urban Corps. The Neighborhood Quality of Life Team ensures that the city's parks, right-of-way, and drainage channels are clear of debris and trash. In the past six months, the city has removed 299 tons of debris from parks, streets and drainage channels. To date, the city's contractor has removed at least 145 tons of debris. Clean-up costs are funded solely by the General Fund.

### **Outreach Support Services Program**

On April 26, 2022, City Council awarded \$155,000 in available CDBG-CV funds to Home Start, Inc. to launch the Outreach Support Services Program. This new program was created to bolster existing outreach efforts during the coronavirus pandemic. This program provides street-based outreach and hosts weekly outreach events for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These outreach events provide connections to vital resources such as housing, food and employment for homeless families and individuals affected by COVID-19.

### **Rental Housing/Utility Assistance (COVID-19)**

In May 2020, the City Council awarded CDBG-CV funding for a new rent and utility assistance program to assist individuals and families impacted by COVID-19, to keep them from losing their homes and falling into homelessness. A total of \$572,362 was awarded to three agencies (CSA San Diego County, Interfaith Shelter Network, and Home Start, Inc.). The City's funded program concluded in February 2021 with the launch of the State and Federally funded Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program ("ERAP") overseen by the County of San Diego. The City's program expenditures were \$433,000 and funds were expended from May 2020 to February 2021 assisting 103 households. The ERAP program assisted 5,027 households from March 2021 through April 2022 and total expenditures were over \$42 million.

Although no new rent and utility assistance has been identified for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the County Board of Supervisors approved a "shallow" rent subsidy program in February 2023 for eligible seniors with program funds awarded in the Spring of 2023. Although the application period is now closed, if the pilot program is successful, the County will pursue additional funding opportunities to support the sustainability and expansion of the program.

**Rotational Shelter Program**

Historically, the City has awarded funding to the Interfaith Shelter Network’s (ISN) Rotational Shelter Program using CDBG funds typically totaling \$10,000. This program typically provides seasonal, nighttime shelter for homeless individuals and families at East County area places of worship that volunteer to provide shelter, meals and support.

With COVID-19, the rotational shelter program was required to modify its operations in 2020 to accommodate shelter guests at area motels instead of on religious properties, in order to ensure the safety of the volunteers and congregants. ISN returned to its typical rotational shelter model in FY 2022-2023.

**Program Outcomes**

Over the last 3.5 years, the City has allocated nearly \$3.58 million to direct homeless assistance/housing programs, over \$500,000 to neighborhood clean-up efforts, and \$20,000 to the East County Homeless Task Force, for a total of over \$4 million. Between January 2020 and June 2023, staff estimate that more than 7,000 individuals have received services, more than 3,300 of those were assisted with some form of housing or shelter, and more than 1,100 individuals were assisted into permanent housing.

Table I below identifies the total expenditures of \$3,294,254 between January 2020 and June 2023 (a total of 42 months) for each program discussed above, and the results of those expenditures.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Expenditures Last 6 Months*</b>	<b>Outcomes Last 6 Months</b>	<b>Expenditures January 2020 - Dec 2022</b>	<b>Outcomes January 2020 - Dec 2022</b>
A Way Back Home Program (The Salvation Army)	\$1,464	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4 persons permanently housed (average of \$366 per person)</li> </ul>	\$10,195	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 36 persons permanently housed (average of \$283 per person)</li> </ul>
Crisis House	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 467 persons received services during Q3 and Q4 (FY 22-23)</li> </ul>	\$700,000**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 424 persons received services during Q1 and Q2 (FY 22-23)</li> <li>● 1,147 persons received services (FY 21-22)</li> <li>● 159 persons permanently housed</li> </ul>

East County Homeless Task Force	\$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assists in regional coordination</li> </ul>	\$17,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assists in regional coordination</li> </ul>
El Cajon Homeless Outreach and Flexible Housing Assistance Program (Home Start, Inc.)	\$138,422	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 534 persons enrolled in the program</li> <li>● 44 persons permanently housed</li> <li>● 8 persons housed in bridge housing</li> </ul>	\$298,660	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1,252 persons enrolled in the program</li> <li>● 209 persons permanently housed</li> <li>● 180 persons housed in bridge housing</li> </ul>
Emergency Motel Stays Program (Home Start, Inc.)	\$0	Program has been completed.	\$142,568	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 243 individuals sheltered</li> <li>● 1,646 night stays (average stay per person is 7 nights)</li> <li>● 47 persons permanently housed (average cost of \$587 per person)</li> <li>● This program ran continuously from June 2020 to May 2021. It is no longer available.</li> </ul>
Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel Program (Home Start, Inc.)	\$110,834	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 56 persons sheltered</li> <li>● 19 persons permanently housed</li> <li>● 1 person housed in bridge housing</li> </ul>	\$361,171	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 214 persons sheltered</li> <li>● 24 persons permanently housed</li> <li>● 15 persons housed in bridge housing</li> </ul>

<p>Emergency Shelter Program (ECTLC)</p>	<p>\$73,485</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 22 individuals sheltered during Q3 and Q4 (CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 78 individuals sheltered (CDBG-CV funding)</li> <li>● Total of 100 individuals sheltered over the past 6 months</li> </ul>	<p>\$687,500</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 306 individuals sheltered (annual FY 19-20 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 385 individuals sheltered (annual FY 20-21 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 286 individuals sheltered (annual FY 21-22 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 111 individuals sheltered Q1 and Q2 (annual FY 22-23 funding)</li> <li>● 957 individuals sheltered to date (CDBG-CV funding)</li> <li>● Total of 2,045 individuals sheltered over the past 42 months</li> <li>● Of this total, 5 households and 422 individuals (288 adults and 134 children) have moved into</li> </ul>
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				permanent housing with assistance from ECTLC
Homeless Outreach Events	\$5,143	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 15 outreach events conducted</li> <li>● 15 to 20 individuals contacted per event</li> </ul>	\$59,710	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 91 outreach events conducted</li> <li>● 5 to 23 individuals contacted per event</li> </ul>
Neighborhood Quality of Life Team	\$78,150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 38 clean-ups conducted</li> <li>● 299 tons of debris removed by City team</li> <li>● 145 tons of debris removed by City contractor</li> </ul>	\$445,157	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 530 clean-ups conducted</li> <li>● 718.25 tons of debris removed by City team</li> <li>● 380.06 tons of debris removed by City contractor</li> </ul>
Outreach Support Services Program (Home Start, Inc.)	\$106,468	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 327 individuals contacted</li> </ul>	\$23,652	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 175 individuals contacted</li> </ul>
Rental Housing/Utility Assistance Program (CSA San Diego County, Interfaith Shelter Network, Home Start, Inc.)	\$0	Program has been completed.	\$434,104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 103 households assisted to remain in their homes (average of \$4,214 per household)</li> <li>● This program ran continuously from May 2020 to February 2021. It is no longer available.</li> </ul>

Rotational Shelter Program (Interfaith Shelter Network)	\$3,449	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 15 persons sheltered Q3 and Q4 (FY 22-23 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 4 persons permanently housed</li> </ul>	\$27,444	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 38 persons sheltered (annual FY 20-21 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 69 persons sheltered (annual FY 21-22 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 12 persons sheltered Q1 and Q2 (FY 22-23 CDBG funding)</li> <li>● 5 persons permanently housed</li> </ul>
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\*Expenditures based on paid invoices through July 20, 2023.

\*\* Funding for acquisition of property and related costs for a new location.

**Program Assessment**

The staff believe that the majority of the City's programs are functioning well to help achieve the goal of securing permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness and to address community impacts as a result of homelessness. In the last 3.5 years, over 1,100 persons have been assisted with finding permanent housing.

The El Cajon Outreach & Flexible Housing Assistance Program has become an essential component of the City's ability to respond to homelessness. Home Start, Inc. has proven to be a valuable partner and player in the region, with knowledgeable staff and responsive services to meet the needs. Home Start, Inc. appears to be effective at finding resources, establishing and maintaining relationships, utilizing the resources prudently and only as needed, and meeting the compliance and program requirements of all of its funding partners.

The A Way Back Home Program continues to fill a gap in services for those homeless individuals who have family members that are willing to receive and support them. Without this program, homeless individuals who want to "go home" would be without resources to connect with those family members who are willing to receive them, particularly due to the high cost of transportation.

The Emergency Shelter (through ECTLC), Rotational Shelter (through the Interfaith Shelter Network) and the Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel program (through Home Start, Inc.) continue to address the need for basic overnight shelter and services for those experiencing homelessness in the City. Each fulfills a different need in the community and staff consider the programs cost-effective and essential. Additionally, the Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel program assists individuals and families on a path to securing permanent housing.



The Outreach Support Service program, through Home Start, Inc., continues to work to enroll and connect individuals with vital resources in their community that will assist them in securing permanent or bridge housing. This program provides a pop-up event each week and serves to connect homeless individuals to other programs available through Home Start, Inc. and throughout San Diego County.

The City's Neighborhood Quality of Life Team and the Homeless Outreach Events continue to perform vital services and address community impacts as a result of homelessness within the City.

Staff is also continuing to work with neighboring jurisdictions (including the County) through the MOU process on a regional approach to jointly address homelessness in East County. Staff will return to City Council once a project or facility serving the homeless is identified. The MOU, as described above, has been fully approved and executed by all interested parties. However, staff believes the City's financial support to the East County Homeless Task Force has not demonstrated benefit in recent years.

Finally, staff will continue to monitor and report on the performance by Crisis House and the services provided to El Cajon homeless residents and victims of domestic violence.

### ***Recommendations***

Staff makes the following recommendations:

1. Continue funding the homeless programs described above, contingent upon available funding;
2. Continue the Homeless Outreach Events and the enhanced Neighborhood Quality of Life Team efforts;
3. Continue to work with neighboring jurisdictions, including the County, on a regional approach to jointly addressing homelessness in East County;
4. Withdraw support for the East County Homeless Task Force;
5. Continue to monitor Crisis House during their contract performance period through 2031 to serve El Cajon residents;and
6. Continue town hall meetings to provide updates to the community.

### ***New Funding Allocations:***

During the reporting period, the City was awarded two funding sources that will assist the at-risk and homeless community. HOME Investment Partnership Act - American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) awarded a total of \$2,189,272 to the City in May 2023 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Permanent Local Housing Allocation Program (PLHA) was awarded to the City in June 2023 for a total of \$2,752,411, which a total of \$2,120,302 will be allocated toward homeless services and administrative costs.

#### **PLHA**

Staff released a Request for Proposals in July 2023 and will return to City Council in August/September 2023 with final recommendations for eligible service providers. Homeless services eligible under the PLHA award include the following:

1. Street outreach
2. Supportive Services/Case management
3. Operation and Capital Costs of an Emergency Shelter/Navigation Center

#### 4. Rapid Re-Housing and Rental Assistance

PLHA funding is currently available through the Notice of Funding Availability Application and will be available for 30 days. Applications are due no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, August 11, 2023. All homeless service providers are welcome to apply. Additional information and requirements can be found on our website at [www.elcajon.gov/housing](http://www.elcajon.gov/housing).

##### HOME-ARP

Once the PLHA RFP process is complete, staff will work on soliciting proposals from eligible parties to allocate the HOME-ARP funding. Staff will return to City Council with funding recommendations.

##### CDBG

City Council approved a total of \$185,000 in CDBG funding toward an Outreach and Homeless Program that began in July 2023.

##### **Conclusion**

Staff will continue to monitor program performance for each of the active programs and provide technical assistance to service providers.

Although CDBG-CV funding is no longer available to fund new programs and projects, new funding sources from PLHA and HOME-ARP are available for eligible programs and projects as described above.

At this time, staff asks the City Council to accept the report and provide any feedback, recommendations, and direction on homeless programming and funding.

##### CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT:

The action being considered by the City Council is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a "project" under Section 15378(b)(5) of CEQA Guidelines. The action involves an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

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Reviewed By: Anthony Shute, Director of Community Development

Approved By: Graham Mitchell, City Manager

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