

Emergency Interim Housing Response to COVID-19 and City Shelter Crises 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.

Two such communities will be located in south San José at Monterey Road and Bernal Road, and at Rue Ferrari and 101. Residents have asked numerous questions and raised concerns about the plans, the speed with which the projects are being developed, 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 with underlying health conditions, are at greater risk of infection.
- 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.

2) What are 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.

- Two such sites are being developed in south San José. The Monterey and Bernal site will have approximately 20 modular units fully connected to public utilities that will house up to 80 formerly unhoused residents in furnished private rooms. The community will be located on a City-owned site and will include individual shower and restroom facilities within each room, shared facilities for living needs, office space for staff to provide services, a perimeter fence and onsite security, pet accommodations, onsite parking for residents and staff, and basic traffic safety improvements.
- The Rue Ferrari and 101 site is still in early stages of development; a final conceptual plan is not yet available. The site is expected to accommodate housing for approximately 120 currently unsheltered people, with communal facilities and supporting facilities similar to the Monterey and Bernal site.

3) 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 over \$17 million in 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 Monterey at Bernal site is City-owned and controlled, has access to utilities, and presents the most rapid path to development, allowing the City to move immediately to prepare the site to be operated as emergency housing. The second site at Rue Ferrari and 101 is publicly owned by Caltrans, with whom the City is in partnership to rapidly develop the site, it is sizeable and accessible, and close to utilities, making it also feasible for rapid development.

4) 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 existing site control (or ability to quickly control a site), accessibility to utilities, 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 Monterey and Bernal and Rue Ferrari and 101 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. Overnight warming locations have been hosted in Council Districts 3 and 6, safe parking programs in 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 District 3. FEMA trailers to house at-risk and/or unsheltered residents are located in a District 7 City parking lot at Kelly Park, and a family shelter recently opened in 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. While 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. These differences will affect rules, visiting hours, staffing, and site design and layouts.

5) Who is building the Monterey and Bernal site and when will it be completed?

- Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) was selected as the project developer for the site at Monterey and Bernal. Habitat built the City’s first BHC site on Mabury Road in Council District 3 and is also developing a second BHC site near Felipe Avenue in Council District 7. Due to Habitat’s expertise in building these types of housing solutions, and its existing contract with the City, staff determined and the Council made findings that having Habitat build this additional site would be the fastest and most efficient way to deliver this project.
- The Monterey and Bernal emergency interim housing site is expected to house residents by the end of June 2020.

6) How will these emergency housing solutions be funded?

- The City Council re-allocated over \$17 million in restricted State funding from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) towards the lease, purchase, and/or construction of emergency housing. The Governor also signed SB 89, emergency legislation that authorized \$500 million in immediate funding, including support for local governments to protect the health and safety of homeless populations. Both funding sources may be used for these housing solutions.

7) Who will operate and oversee the emergency interim housing sites?

- The City is in the process of releasing an expedited Request for Qualifications 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, and on-site supportive services.

8) 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 and/or behavioral health related services are appropriate to include.

9) 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 or couples 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. The City expects to prioritize individuals who are at-risk of becoming ill from COVID-19, which include older adults with three or more pre-existing conditions.
- Prior to the end of the public health emergency, the Housing Department will develop plans for placing residents in these sites. The existing BHC screening process includes background checks; this protocol will extend to sites operated after COVID-19.

10) How will this affect parking and 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. 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 basic improvements that will be made surrounding the site.

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

- 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.

12) 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. In addition, for the first BHC community off Mabury Road in Council District 3, a neighborhood advisory group was created to provide input on the operation of the site. Its role is to help problem solve challenges, improve operations and neighborhood compatibility, and celebrate successes. The City would like to replicate this approach at the emergency interim locations.

13) 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 is negatively affecting 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 to surrounding communities.

14) 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 them 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 sites at Monterey and Bernal and Rue Ferrari and 101 are being developed in accordance with legislation that allows the sites to operate through January 1, 2025.