



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Date: 9/23/2020

In Control: Housing Commission

DEPARTMENT:

Neighborhood & Housing Services Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD:

Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:

Citywide

SUMMARY:

Discussion on the City's CARES Act Recovery & Resilience Plan and other COVID-19 Federal Interventions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Commission has requested an update on the City's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Recovery & Resilience Plan and other federal programs that impact or assist residents during the pandemic.

Staff will provide a briefing on the following:

- Overview and update on the Recovery & Resilience Plan
- Emergency Housing Assistance Program
- CDC Eviction Moratorium

ISSUE:

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged government at all levels to respond to new public health and socioeconomic impacts. Two critical Federal Government responses included the omnibus Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed on March 27th, 2020, as well as the September 4, 2020 Centers for Prevention and Disease Control (CDC) Order on eviction prevention.

The CARES Act established the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) that provided direct payments from the Fund to States, cities and government entities administered by the US Department of Treasury. The City of San Antonio was awarded \$269,983,717 and Bexar County received \$79,626,415 from the CRF. The San Antonio City Council established the Recovery & Resilience Plan that focused the funding in several key pillar areas such as workforce development, housing security, small business, and digital inclusion. The Neighborhood & Housing Services Department is overseeing the successful implementation of the \$50.5 million housing security pillar. This pillar provides funding for several housing strategies including right to counsel program expansion, expansion of the emergency housing assistance program, eviction court prevention team, and the establishment of a financial housing & recovery resource center.

The Emergency Housing Assistance Program was approved by Council on April 23, 2020, amending the FY 2020 Affordable Housing budget and authorizing a funding agreement with the Family Independence Initiative for direct assistance. EHAP follows the same eligibility and allowance criteria prescribed in the Risk Mitigation Fund Policy, with the exception of expanding allowable uses for the funds to include groceries, medicine, fuel, and expenses related to internet access. As of September 16, 2020 the City received processed 24,151 applications to provide \$45.1 million to 15,794 households.

On July 1st the City of San Antonio established three Financial and Housing Recovery Centers at the Central Library, Claude Black Center, and Neighborhood Place. These centers are places for households to apply for emergency housing assistance, benefits navigation, financial and housing counseling, low cost financial products, and home repair programs. The centers are staffed by Housing Navigators who can also refer to other services such as workforce training, small business assistance, or services for people experiencing homelessness. 787 households had utilized the FHRCs as of September 11, 2020.

The City of San Antonio has dedicated six staff members to working with clients facing eviction. The Eviction Courts team has attended each of the over 1,900 eviction hearings that have taken place since June 15th, when the courts began to reopen. The team's primary goal is to prevent eviction with rent assistance and/or free legal aid. In those cases where the eviction is not preventable, the team works to mitigate the impact with legal aid and/or relocation assistance. Program partners include Bexar County Dispute Resolution Center, SAMMinistries, St. Vincent de Paul, American GI Forum, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA), San Antonio Legal Services Association (SALSA), and the St. Mary's School of Law's Housing Hotline. As of September 11, the team has assisted with 126 resets and 147 dismissals.

On September 1st, the CDC issued a moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent from September 4, 2020-December 31, 2020. To be protected by the moratorium, renters must:

- Be a renter at a residential property (not a hotel or vacation rental);
- Have made or be making an effort to pay rent, including by applying for housing assistance.
- Have an annual income of \$99,000 (or \$198,000 jointly) or less;
- Be unable to pay full rent due to loss of income or job;
- Would be homeless if evicted because they have no other housing options;
- Provide their landlord with a signed declaration that speaks to the above criteria.

The Neighborhood & Housing Services Department has created a template declaration for renters to fill out for their landlords. This template is available online in English and Spanish at

www.covid19.sanantonio.gov/evictions <<http://www.covid19.sanantonio.gov/evictions>> or in person at the Financial & Housing Recovery Centers and the Neighborhood & Housing Services Department. The City has also mailed the template to defendants and plaintiffs with eviction filings since June 1, CARES Act-subject properties, frequent evictors, registered mobile living parks, EHAP applicants, neighborhood associations, and council offices. NHSD is launching an information campaign that is aimed at providing information on the CDC order and directing them to resources including deceleration forms, right to counsel services, and emergency housing assistance. Information will be shared through a variety of social media, local media (TV, radio, and print), and community partners. Information will be shared in English and Spanish.

At this time, the Justice of the Peace courts who hear eviction cases are still continuing to do so on a reduced schedule. Hearings are reserved for emergency cases or those that haven't met the conditions of the CDC order at the time of the hearing. The Neighborhood & Housing Services staff working in the eviction courts mails a copy of the template with instructions to each person with a filing and also has copies of the declaration on hand to help defendants fill out for their landlord on the spot. Filings after the moratorium announcement fell significantly from nearly 300 to less than 100 a week.

In addition to the workforce development pillar, City Council called a Nov. 3 election, asking voters to consider a COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan that would be funded by redirecting a one-eighth cent sales tax to fund job training and education programs.

If approved by voters, an estimated 40,000 displaced workers will get access to retraining or additional education during the four-year life of the program, which builds upon the retraining program funded as part of the City's Recovery and Resiliency Plan.

ALTERNATIVES:

The item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

At this time, there is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.