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**Date:** June 21, 2021

**To:** **Councilmember Andrew Lewis, Chair, Select Committee on Homelessness Strategies & Investments**

**From:** Tess Colby, Deputy Director, Human Services Department (HSD)

**Subject:** HSI/HOPE Team Update: Wildfire Smoke Shelters, Rapid Re-Housing, and HOPE Team Role During Removals

### **Wildfire Smoke Shelter Update**

- HSD's response to wildfire smoke falls under HSD's "Inclement Weather" planning, which encompasses response work to support vulnerable communities during severe weather/climate events, including snow, cold temperatures, excessive heat, and poor air quality such as impacts from wildfire smoke.
- HSD's Homeless Strategies and Investments (HSI) Division is engaged in planning and preparation, in partnership with Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and King County and Public Health Seattle King County (PHSKC), in the event of a wildfire smoke event.
- In the case of a poor air quality event, such as severe wildfire smoke, HSD will open [cleaner air shelters](#) in accordance with the [Inclement Weather Plan](#) and have identified shelter locations, such as Fisher Pavilion and Exhibition Hall, which have the air filtration systems necessary to comply with smoke and COVID-19 public health protocols. Under current COVID-19 public health protocols, these shelters have capacity to serve up to 230 individuals combined.
- The City contracts with the Salvation Army to operate inclement weather shelters, including cleaner air shelters.
- HSI has identified potential cleaner air shelter locations outside of the downtown core as second tier locations, however, as mentioned during our last presentation before the Select Committee on Homelessness Strategies and Investments, provider capacity remains a challenge throughout our shelter system.
- The use of other/additional facilities requires air filtration systems similar to the systems found at Fisher Pavilion and Exhibition Hall, which narrows the number of appropriate facilities to utilize as cleaner-air shelters.
- Last September, during the dual crisis of COVID-19 and wildfire smoke, HSD, in partnership with PHSKC, opened a 24-hour smoke relief shelter in SoDo operated by the Salvation Army with capacity for 100 individuals. Efforts to open additional spaces were restricted due to provider capacity, the need for additional COVID-19 safety protocols, and potential cleaner air shelter spaces being utilized as de-intensification shelters.
- Through OEM, emergency managers are also working on updating the City's heat/smoke response plans, including the cooling/cleaner air plans.
- Due to recent investments in enhanced shelter such as the new Kings Inn and Executive Hotel Pacific hotel-based shelters, the City currently funds 2,463 shelter spaces, almost 400 more

spaces compared to Q4 2020, with 89% of those spaces being enhanced shelter or tiny houses, which provide 24/7 access and wraparound onsite services. This compares to 77% in Q4 2020.

### **Hotel-based Enhanced Shelter Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Program Update**

- Executive Hotel Pacific
  - Currently, the Executive Hotel Pacific is at 100% occupancy with 153 persons in the shelter.
  - Participants are working with LIHI case managers to identify their best housing solution.
  - Rapid Re-housing -- 71 persons have enrolled in the Catholic Community Services (CCS) RRH Program (as of June 21).
    - 61 currently enrolled in program but have not yet been placed in an apartment.
    - 10 from the program have been placed in apartments leased as part of the RRH program.
  - Three other hotel clients have exited to permanent housing.
- Kings Inn
  - Currently, the Kings Inn is at 100% occupancy with 69 persons in the shelter.
  - Chief Seattle Club case managers are working with participants to identify the best housing solution.
  - Two exits to permanent housing as of June 21.
  - The RRH program, operated at this location by Chief Seattle Club, is ramping up as it became fully staffed within the past three weeks.
- Both hotel-based shelters are pilot programs that are approximately two and a half months old operationally. Many clients at the Executive Hotel Pacific and Kings Inn have been enrolled for less than two months.
- Residents staying at the hotels are being connected to a number of housing solutions in addition to RRH, including permanent housing, CEA enrollment, transitional housing, etc., with the goal of having every person exiting the hotels into housing.
- We anticipate the number of RRH enrollments to increase as people at these hotels have time to stabilize and the Kings Inn program is fully staffed.
- The hotels are operated like all enhanced shelters with the only differences being a) the time-limited nature of the programs; and b) the availability of a pool of ESG-CV funded rapid re-housing resources.
- Exits from the hotels will benefit from the anticipated 1,300 new affordable housing units for individuals experiencing homelessness.

### **HOPE Team Role at Potential Encampment Removal Sites**

- Since the funding of the HOPE Team in the 2021 budget, HSD reconfigured its outreach role from direct outreach (former Navigation Team) to coordinating advanced outreach to identified high priority encampments in partnership with City property-owning departments.
- This work has led to successful advance outreach at high priority sites such as Miller Playfield (46 shelter referrals), Gilman Playground (30 shelter referrals), University Playground (19 shelter referrals) and Albert Davis Park (25 shelter referrals), with 84% of referrals from these sites to [new hotel-based shelter resources](#).

- At certain encampment site types, there is a requirement to have documented offers of shelter prior to a removal.
- Providers have recently expressed unwillingness to commit to being present once a notice has been posted for a potential removal and/or on the day of a potential removal.
- As a result, Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington has agreed to have the HOPE Team System Navigators take the lead on engagement and service/shelter referral once an encampment site is posted for removal. Contracted outreach providers were pleased with this decision.
- The HOPE Team will continue to coordinate advanced outreach among provider partners at locations subject to removal, with no requirement that they are present the day of the removal.
- System Navigators will continue to coordinate referrals to HOPE Team set-aside shelter beds by outreach providers from locations citywide.
- In coordination with the HOPE Team's outreach partners, since the beginning of the year through May, the HOPE Team has made 505 referrals to shelter citywide. Since the end of March, over 240 referrals have been into new hotel-based shelter resources.