



Office of the City Manager

January 23, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Re: Shelter for the Unhoused During Winter, Inclement Weather and Severe Cold

I want to provide you with an update on the range of shelter we provide to our community during the harshest season and difficult weather: Winter Shelter, Inclement Weather Shelter and Warming Centers.

We have gone through significant shifts over the past 5 years, led by Council's increased funding for shelter. In addition, City Staff have creatively and diligently navigated challenges posed by the pandemic to continue and even expand shelter.

For example, the shift to an ongoing shelter model has tripled the number of night beds available and expanded operations from 12 overnight hours to a 24/7 model during the nearly 7 rainiest and coldest months of the year.

This work poses challenges. City staff have been activated from HHCS as well as PRW to assist with the inclement weather shelter. More than 35 staff from these two departments have volunteered to be on a roster to cover needed shifts. In addition, the intensity of this Winter's rains means that the inclement weather shelter has been operating far more than usual, and staff will need to come back to Council soon to consider expanding coverage.

We also encourage those seeking short-term or immediate shelter to also call 211 or 510-495-0131 to connect to our coordinated entry system and onto the path for long-term housing.

Winter Shelter, a Pandemic Era Conversion of Inclement Shelter

These are the operating hours and address for the Winter Shelter:

City of Berkeley Winter Shelter
Address: Maudelle Shirek Building/Old City Hall – 2134 MLK Jr. Way

Hours: 24/7

Contact: North County Housing Resource Center for referral 510-495-0131

Prior to the pandemic, Dorothy Day House operated the Maudelle Shirek Building Old City Hall as an intermittent inclement weather shelter between late November and April 15 when conditions were cold or rainy. DDH also activated a daytime shelter during poor air quality events in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

During the pandemic, Berkeley shifted from the storm-activated inclement weather shelter model to an ongoing winter shelter model, which was open every day, 24/7 from late November to mid-April in 2020-2021 and again in 2021-2022. This year, with extra CARES Act funds, the winter shelter opened in early October as a nightly 24/7 shelter. It is scheduled to close in late April.

For the past two years, the City has funded Dorothy Day House to operate the ongoing winter shelter instead of 45 nights for an inclement weather shelter. This shift to an ongoing shelter model has tripled the number of night beds available and expanded operations from 12 hours overnight to 24/7. This helped to compensate for the loss of shelter beds due to COVID protocols that reduced overall shelter capacity.

Type of Shelter	Term	# of Nights	# of beds	Bednights
Inclement Weather	Late Nov-April 15	45	29 – pre COVID	1305
Winter Shelter	Oct-April 24/7	209	19 – COVID	3971

Warming Center (OES Activation)

The City activates nighttime Warming Centers if the National Weather Service issues a freeze warning affecting Berkeley for 3 days or more, and existing shelters are at capacity.

This step involves reassigning City staff away from their regular duties in order to add capacity to overnight shelter operations (this work is normally staffed by community partners). Nighttime warming center activation may also involve canceling scheduled community programming at the site(s) hosting shelter expansion.

Inclement Weather Shelter (non-OES Activation)

These are the operating hours and address for the emergency shelter used for inclement weather:

Inclement Weather Shelter
Address: North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Avenue
Hours: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. (First come, first served)
Contact: Dorothy Day House, 510-705-1325 (before 4 p.m.); 510-705-1516 (after 4 p.m.)

An overnight inclement weather shelter for adults is opened at the North Berkeley Senior Center when the nightly forecast is 45 degrees or lower or if there is at least a 50% chance of rain. This is operated by the Dorothy Day House with assistance from HHCS and PRW.

This shelter, coordinated by COB staff and operated by Dorothy Day House, provides another resource given the severe and extended cold and wet weather. While the City has expanded shelter during harsher conditions and winter months, overall shelter beds have declined, due in part to continued COVID-19 protocols and also loss of shelter beds at a Dwight Way shelter run by Berkeley Food and Housing Project (BFHP). These additional shelter activities are not in DDH's existing winter shelter contract, but they were able to quickly activate staff to open this additional overnight inclement weather shelter. Additionally, HHCS and PRW had to activate staff to act as building monitors on nights when the inclement weather shelter was activated.

Inclement weather shelter operations were originally budgeted for 45 nights of operation until the end of the season (April 15), supported by \$120,000 in Measure P funds. While 45 nights has generally been sufficient in past years, this winter's weather conditions have been much more severe. Since the inclement weather shelter's activation on December 5th, it has operated 45 nights through Jan. 19 – which equals 86% of the original estimated days of operation. HHCS and Dorothy Day House worked together to increase inclement weather shelter hours of operation to go from 6:30 pm to 8:00 am,

starting January 7. Hours previously ended at 6:30 am and have been expanded to reduce the time gap between shelter closure and daytime drop in center opening.

Due to the ongoing severe weather, it seems likely that weather conditions will indicate opening the shelter for more than 45 nights. The severe weather conditions combined with extended hours of operation and high participation (35-40 participants nightly) will require additional funds beyond the current appropriation. HHCS staff are reviewing the costs for increasing the number of nights and adding some budget for security, supplies, and materials such as food and bedding and expect to bring a recommendation to Council by February 14.

Staffing the Inclement Weather Shelter at NBSC

Both the City and DDH are working hard to secure the necessary staffing to active the overnight inclement weather shelter for cold/rainy conditions. However, DDH's staff are stretched thin and are typically working overtime shifts in order to cover the inclement weather shelter. Although they are doing their best to secure the staffing, there will likely be nights, when they are too short staffed to cover it, especially if staff are out sick. Over 35 HHCS/Parks staff have volunteered to be on a roster to cover building monitor shifts. We expect this will be sufficient to secure coverage moving forward.

In order to ensure staff and participant safety, the City is also pursuing an arrangement with Allied Universal to provide security services during shelter hours. Over the past few weeks, we have seen some participants damage property and be physically violent/aggressive. We believe paid security will minimize the need for police response

Budget

The AAO#1 adopted in December 2022 included \$120,000 in Measure P funds to fund inclement weather shelter, which is projected to cover 45 nights of operations. As described above under Inclement Shelter – Non-OES Activation, staff are working on a budget request that would increase the number of nights provided and add certain supplies to the budget, which is tentatively planned for the February 14, 2023 Council meeting.

Other Actions

- The Berkeley Food and Housing Project (BFHP) will add 10 men's shelter beds at the Hope Center by January 31 and another 4 beds by February 15 to get to the pre-COVID census of 32 men's beds total.
- Staff have requested that BOSS increase their family shelter capacity at Harrison House back to pre-COVID levels (14 instead of 10). BOSS has been able to accommodate two to three additional families.
- BFHP is meeting with the City of Emeryville to discuss additional alternate emergency sheltering options in the wake of Dwight Way closure.

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Re: Inclement Weather Shelter

cc:

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Lisa Warhuus, Director, Health, Housing, & Community Services
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