



Office of the City Manager

04

CONSENT CALENDAR
October 28, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager
Submitted by: Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager
Subject: Letter to Alameda County Board of Supervisors re: Opportunities to Collaborate with Alameda County on Homelessness Programs Outside of Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to send a letter from the City Council to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors regarding opportunities to partner on regional solutions to unsheltered homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There are no fiscal impacts associated with adopting this recommendation.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

This report responds in part to the City Council's referral from May 20, 2025 directing the City Manager as follows:

1. Direct the City Manager to report back to Council on "Opportunities to partner with Alameda County and other public agencies to utilize County, other governing jurisdictions, or state-owned land for temporary shelter and services outside of Berkeley's most heavily impacted neighborhoods."
2. "Support the City Manager in collaborating with Alameda County and other neighboring jurisdictions to identify potential sites outside of Berkeley city limits that may be suitable and more cost-effective than sites within Berkeley."

The City of Berkeley has made great strides in measurably reducing unsheltered homelessness. Since 2021, the City has drawn down over \$45M in State funding to rapidly convert motels to shelter and permanent housing, creating 164 interim and permanent beds in that time. Not surprisingly, the City saw a 45% decrease in unsheltered homelessness, and a 20% decrease in overall homelessness, between the 2022 and 2024 federal Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts.

For these reasons, staff were surprised to learn that, after declaring a goal to fund one such project in each region of the County, the County recently declined to fund the City-sponsored Measure W application from Episcopal Community Services (ECS) for new encampment-focused interim housing in Berkeley—the only such application in the North region of Alameda County—which the City proposed to match with local general funds for the purposes of resolving West Berkeley’s large and dangerous RV encampments along Dwight Way and Grayson St. Staff and ECS remain open revising and resubmitting the application to better meet the County’s expectations.

However, recent PIT counts have revealed another trend: of those experiencing homelessness in Berkeley in 2024, 43% reported that they were last housed outside the County at the time they became homeless—by far the largest such proportion amongst major cities in the County, and up from 33% in the 2022 PIT Count. The data suggest that Berkeley is experiencing an in-migration of people experiencing homelessness, more so than other communities in the County. Given the large ‘fiscal cliff’ the City faces for existing shelters dedicated to serving people from encampments (roughly \$5M over the next 4 years), in addition to the City’s structural general fund deficit, opening any new programs to serve Berkeley’s existing homeless population, let alone newcomers, will not be possible without outside funding sources from the State or County. The City of Berkeley is not considered large enough to be a direct recipient of the State’s principle source of homelessness funding, the Homelessness Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program.

Staff therefore recommend that the City Council approve the attached letter to the County Board of Supervisors, expressing Council’s direction to explore partnering with the County on programs outside Berkeley that could serve Berkeley’s unsheltered population, as well as collaborative engagement with the State to identify State land and State funding for this purpose.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, at a joint meeting of the Board of Supervisors and the Alameda County Conference of Mayors on homelessness, the City-County homelessness Technical Working Group (TWG) was created. This group was intended to enhance collaboration on homeless solutions between staff from Alameda County and its cities. Staff from the City Manager’s Office, Neighborhood Services Division, regularly represents Berkeley at these meetings. Over the past several months, these meetings have focused on the County’s planning to implement Measure W sales tax funding for homelessness. Berkeley staff will continue to participate at this table to advance regional approaches to unsheltered homelessness that also address Berkeley’s needs. City staff are also actively participating in various committees in the creation of the County’s Home Together 2030 Plan, the next iteration of the County’s strategic plan to address homelessness.

On May 20, 2025, the City Council passed a referral to the City Manager, “Alternative Housing Options for People Experiencing Homelessness.” This referral had multiple

parts, and the current report is responsive to one part of this referral. Staff actions in response to other aspects of this referral include:

- On May 28, the City Manager sent a letter on behalf of the Council to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, affirming the four policy principles outlined in the May 20, 2025 referral.
- On July 24, 2025, Council voted to support staff recommendations in the report, "Recommendations for County Measure W Funding." The adoptions of these recommendations resulted in a letter sent to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors outlining Berkeley's priorities for County Measure W sales tax funding.
- On July 29, 2025, at a special meeting, Council received a report from staff, "Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response System." This report responded to several aspects of Council's May 20, 2025 referral, including an overview of ongoing efforts to address homelessness; a resource needs and gaps analysis of the homeless system; a feasibility and cost analysis to support new homeless programs; and a geographic assessment of homeless service locations in the city. Due to technical difficulties, that special meeting was adjourned prior to the conclusion of staff's presentation on the report. The presentation was concluded during a special meeting on September 16, 2025.
- On October 14, 2025, the Council received an information report from the City Manager with a list of sites that could be feasible for replicating the Horizon Transitional Village Program shelter and SPARK safe parking model (previously co-located on Grayson St.), as well as sites that could host other models deemed successful by staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no environmental impacts associated with this report or recommendation.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Unsheltered homelessness is a regional issue that does not recognize arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries between cities; people experiencing homelessness migrate in and out of Berkeley for many reasons, just as commuters and other visitors to Berkeley do, so serving these individuals requires coordinated regional approaches to programming and funding. Staff believe that partnering with Berkeley's Alameda County Supervisor to engage in a discussion on coordinated regional approaches, in addition to city staff's ongoing participation in the Technical Working Group and the Alameda County Continuum of Care (CoC), are the best approaches to this discussion.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, 510 981-7045

Letter to Alameda County Board of Supervisors re: Homelessness Collaboration

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October 28, 2025

Attachments:

1: Letter to Alameda County Board of Supervisors



Office of the City Manager

October 29, 2025

Honorable Members of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors:

Thank you for your ongoing partnership to reduce homelessness. The City of Berkeley continues to focus diligently on the crisis of homelessness and has collaboratively made great strides. Over the past four years, the City has leveraged \$35M in local general funds to draw down over \$45M in State Homekey and Encampment Resolution Funding grants, resulting in the rapid creation of over 160 units of noncongregate interim and permanent housing. Alongside Oakland and Los Angeles, Berkeley is one of only three jurisdictions in the State to have received all three rounds of Encampment Resolution Funding, using these grants to open 93 units of interim, motel-based shelter dedicated to our largest and most unsafe encampments. The results have been remarkable: between 2022 and 2024, Berkeley had a 45% decrease in unsheltered homelessness and a 20% reduction in homelessness overall, the largest such declines for any major city in our County.

For these reasons, we were surprised to learn that, after declaring a goal to fund one such project in each region of the County, the County recently declined to fund the City-sponsored Measure W application from Episcopal Community Services (ECS) for new encampment-focused interim housing in Berkeley—the only such application in the North region of Alameda County—which the City proposed to match with local general funds for the purposes of housing people from West Berkeley's large and dangerous RV encampments along Dwight Way and Grayson St. Please know that we and ECS remain open to revising and resubmitting this proposal to better meet the needs and expectations of the County. We look forward to working with the County on this important and timely project.

Berkeley has deeply appreciated collaborating with the County and State to model proven solutions to homelessness, and we are all frustrated at the tenacity of the problem. It is a problem of deep human suffering throughout the city, county, state and country. Locally, recent PIT Count trends underscore this reality: of those experiencing homelessness in Berkeley in 2024, 43% reported that they were last housed outside the County at the time they became homeless—by far the largest such proportion amongst major cities in the County, and up from 33% in the 2022 PIT Count. Given the large 'fiscal cliff' the City faces for existing shelters dedicated to serving people from encampments (roughly \$5M over the next 4 years), in addition to the City's structural general fund deficit, opening any new programs to serve Berkeley's existing homeless population, let alone newcomers, will not be possible without outside funding sources from the State or County.

Berkeley is a State designated Pro-Housing jurisdiction that has approved many policies to change zoning and other regulations to allow for more and denser housing, which over time will

take pressure off the regional housing shortage that is directly contributing to our homelessness crisis. But this will take years, and the crisis of unsheltered homelessness needs a response now. While we will continue to push for more homeless housing in Berkeley, the city is densely-populated and largely built-out, and there are insufficient suitable locations (let alone local funding sources) to continue our effort to provide interim housing solutions at the pace we have or the pace that is needed to more significantly help people living on the streets move inside. Despite having among the highest per-capita rates of homelessness in the Bay Area, Berkeley is considered too small by the State of California to be a direct recipient of Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funding. If we are to continue making such measurable strides in solving homelessness, Berkeley and Alameda County must expand and increase our partnership, and we are eager to work with you towards that goal.

For these reasons, the Berkeley City Council voted unanimously on May 20, 2025, to adopt the following positions with respect to homelessness, and requested that I transmit it to you:

1. Direct the City Manager to report back to Council on "Opportunities to partner with Alameda County and other public agencies to utilize County, other governing jurisdictions, or state-owned land for temporary shelter and services outside of Berkeley's most heavily impacted neighborhoods."
2. "Support the City Manager in collaborating with Alameda County and other neighboring jurisdictions to identify potential sites outside of Berkeley city limits that may be suitable and more cost-effective than sites within Berkeley."

As you know, Berkeley city staff and many elected officials are actively engaged at all existing tables for city-county regional coordination on homelessness, including the Alameda County Mayor's Homeless Group (lead by Mayor Ishii), the Technical Working Group, various committees of the Home Together 2030 Plan creation, and the Alameda County Continuum of Care, and we will continue to partner with the County in these and other ways moving forward. We welcome any additional opportunities to work collaboratively with you and your colleagues on the Board of Supervisors and staff to find paths forward on utilizing County, other governing jurisdictions, or state-owned land for temporary and/or permanent shelter and services outside of Berkeley, as well as shared advocacy to our State leaders for more resources to solve this regional problem.

Thank you for your leadership and advocacy. We look forward to working with you to solve this crisis.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of the Berkeley City Council,

Paul Buddenhagen
City Manager

cc: Susan Muranishi, County Administrator
Berkeley Mayor Adena Ishii and All Berkeley Councilmembers