



JOEL ANDERSON
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: August 29, 2023

22

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

DEVELOPING A PILOT SHARED HOUSING PROGRAM TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Senior homelessness in San Diego County has reached a critical level, exacerbated by the region's high cost of living and a lack of attainable housing options. According to the Elder Index developed by UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research, 41% of San Diego's seniors struggle to afford basic necessities such as housing, food, healthcare, and transportation. The most recent Point in Time Count revealed that the number of unsheltered residents in San Diego County who are aged 55 years and older has risen to 29% of the total homeless individuals counted. This represents a 25% increase from last year with more than 2,000 seniors now living on our streets.

Those at increased risk of losing their homes tend to be older adults who live alone and on fixed incomes, with little to no savings. As California rents continue to rise, seniors' income streams, including Social Security benefits, have not kept pace. The senior homelessness crisis has been further aggravated by lengthy waiting lists for government housing programs and an inadequate prioritization of vulnerable older adults through program intake.

The County has recognized the need to assist this vulnerable population by approving a pilot shallow rent subsidy program, expected to keep 222 seniors in their homes. However, even with the funding increase for this program included in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 County budget, additional action is needed to help the more than 2,000 other individuals who have submitted applications. Implementing innovative and effective housing solutions for older adults is crucial to addressing our regional homelessness crisis. One idea is to establish a senior homeless prevention program that facilitates shared living arrangements. A shared senior living program coordinated by the County could offer innovative housing solutions for older adults by connecting them with compatible housemates, reducing their housing costs and fostering social supports. A shared housing program for seniors would also help to address our regional housing inventory challenges by optimizing the utilization of existing housing resources.

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING A PILOT SHARED HOUSING PROGRAM TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

To continue our efforts in addressing the growing homelessness crisis among older adults, I recommend that the Board direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a regional County shared housing program for adults who are aged 55 and over and are in need of affordable housing options or on the verge of homelessness.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)
SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON**

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a senior shared housing program, and to explore contracting or partnering with other successful programs that promote shared living arrangements and reduce individual housing costs for adults aged 55 and older, and return to the Board in 120 days with an implementation plan.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to identify a program scale and parameters for a shared housing program for older adults, the funding source, and staffing necessary to implement the program.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop an evaluation framework to determine program effectiveness and include this framework in the 120-day return back. The evaluation framework should include a logic model, anticipated short-term and medium-term results, programmatic output and outcome metrics that will be collected and tracked over time, and specific plans for evaluating the program's effectiveness.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

A shared housing program would help prevent financially vulnerable older adults from losing their housing and having to forgo basic needs that others can typically afford. Older adults of color are more likely to face extreme rent burden and are at a much greater risk of becoming homeless. By providing shared housing arrangements to aging individuals with limited income and no alternative housing or employment options, this preventive initiative will assist those on the verge of homelessness. It will help promote equitable living and uplift low-income older adults and communities of color.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Shared housing optimizes the use of existing housing resources by matching individuals with available living spaces. By utilizing unused or underutilized spaces, the program maximizes the efficient use of housing stock, reducing the need for new construction and minimizing environmental impacts.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There may be future fiscal impacts based on recommendations from today's action and any such recommendations would return back for consideration and approval by the Board. Upon return by staff, funding for future costs will need to be identified by the department and will proceed once identified. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING A PILOT SHARED HOUSING PROGRAM TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

A shared housing program would provide an effective solution to the housing challenges faced by older adults in San Diego. With rising rents and impacts of inflation, limited and fixed incomes make it difficult for older adults to afford to stay in their homes. Older adults can also face unique challenges in finding adequate housing due to a limited use of technology and being unable to easily locate listings and find other housing opportunities. By matching older adults with other older adults or appropriate home providers with excess rooms or space, we can provide additional affordable housing options for seniors who are struggling to support themselves and retain their housing. A shared housing program designed for older adults would help prevent homelessness, reduce individual and government costs, support aging in place, and offer means of companionship to those who live on their own.

There are several models of successful shared housing programs in California, including in San Diego County. Shared housing agreements typically outline different terms of the arrangement, including duration, financial responsibilities, household duties, and other guidelines. Home providers benefit from shared housing programs by being able to continue living in their own homes, saving money, and enjoying companionship, while older adult home seekers can find affordable housing in a home atmosphere, save money, and reduce housing and utility costs. Different program models also facilitate the utilization of older adults' extra space, where agreements are formed with home seekers who may not be elderly. Some existing shared living programs utilize a third party to connect home providers with spare rooms to individuals seeking affordable housing options, and ensure compatibility of individuals through the conducting of interviews with clients, providing of referrals, and assisting in completing Living Together Agreements between housemates.

To prevent senior homelessness in our region, the County should evaluate successful shared housing programs and develop a plan to implement a County of San Diego shared housing program for adults aged 55 and older. This plan should include an identified program scale, operation model and associated parameters, along with a potential funding source and staffing needs. Options may include contracting out with entities to administer the program and provide housing navigation for individuals. The County already facilitates the expenditure of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds on a shared housing program for the City of Poway, and the expanding of these efforts and partnership with our jurisdictions should be explored. Outreach for the program should be through avenues that are mindful of the technology challenges that older adults face, and should include mailers, television, and other means of communication.

In addition to benefiting older adults, shared housing programs optimize existing housing resources, reducing strain on emergency shelters, public services, and our limited housing inventory in the region. By leveraging shared housing as an alternative to traditional options, a

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING A PILOT SHARED HOUSING PROGRAM TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

shared housing program through the County of San Diego would enable older adults to age in place, maintain independence, and live affordably.

On February 8, 2022, our Board approved the creation of a shallow rental subsidy program for older adults which would help 222 individuals in need. With the passing of our budget in June, we doubled this funding and will help twice the number of individuals. Despite this, there are still over 2,000 applicants on the waiting list who are at risk of homelessness. With over 2,000 individuals aged 55 and older already living on our streets, the County must do more to address homelessness among our aging population. A shared housing program would provide another preventive solution in avoiding more older adults from ending up on the street due to a lack of housing stock and affordability.

It is urgent that we implement effective, immediate solutions to tackle the worsening homelessness crisis. A shared housing program is a sensible mechanism to help numerous seniors who face housing insecurity find a suitable place to live, while maximizing the use of existing housing in the region.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

A shared housing program aligns with the County's 2023-2028 strategic plan as it would help to reduce disproportionalities in homelessness by using a preventive, cost-effective approach of protecting older adults who are at risk of falling into homelessness and avoid displacement of other vulnerable individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Anderson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A