

STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: July 13, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: Adam McGill, City Manager

 SUBJECT: **APPROVE MOU PROVIDING FOR DIRECT REFERRAL OF UP TO 15 NOVATO HOMELESS PERSONS TO HOMEWARD BOUND**
**REQUEST**

Authorize the City Manager to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Homeward Bound of Marin for services that include housing, food, case management assistance, medical coordination services, job placement/training, and transitional/ permanent housing referrals for up to 15 homeless individuals in Novato.

BACKGROUND

The City of Novato, like most cities, is experiencing an increasing number of homeless persons camping, living or loitering on various parcels of property owned by public agencies, including the City and the County of Marin. These circumstances are not only undesirable to the unhoused but have created an inability for other individuals to enjoy and benefit from public spaces, both for recreation and the continuity of essential government services.

As a result, the City Council adopted [Ordinance 1669](#) and [Ordinance 1670](#) at its regular scheduled City Council meeting of June 8, 2021. These ordinances are effective July 9, 2021, but in light of the existing COVID-19 public health emergency, the ordinances cannot be enforced to clear illegal encampments until the earlier of the following occurs:

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention amends or revokes its Interim Guidance on Unsheltered Homelessness and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for Homeless Service Providers and Local Official to no longer recommend local agencies allow individuals living unsheltered or in encampments to remain where they are; or
2. COVID-19 vaccinations are accessible for individuals experiencing homelessness, at least 90 percent of County residents 16 year and older have been fully vaccinated, as defined by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, and the County meets the State of California requirements for the Yellow (Minimal) Tier in place as of May 25, 2021.

DISCUSSION

The City has enjoyed a strong and lengthy partnership with Homeward Bound of Marin which is headquartered in Novato's Hamilton community. City and Homeward Bound staff have agreed to terms and conditions to facilitate the immediate housing and offering of services to those experiencing homelessness in Novato and occupying encampments within the City of Novato.

Specifically, up to fifteen (15) individuals currently experiencing homelessness within the City will be offered immediate placement into Homeward Bound's New Beginnings Center which will include all the services noted under the 'Request' header above.

This arrangement is a first of its kind and creates an unprecedented offering of immediate interim housing through direct referral from the City of Novato. If the number of homeless persons willing to accept such referrals exceeds 15 individuals, others will be referred to Homeward Bound's Kerner shelter in the City of San Rafael.

This provides the opportunity for Novato's homeless to remain, for the most part, in their home city and to immediately receive full wrap around services designed to aid in positively impacting their lives with a foundation that only Homeward Bound can offer. Those willing to participate and accept such services will remain eligible for housing vouchers and other services through the County's Housing First and Coordinated Entry Program for housing vouchers.

The City cannot require homeless individuals to participate in this this program but will encourage participation to the best of our ability. Staff is pleased to present this opportunity to the Council and the community and is proud to offer a compassionate alternative to the unhoused living in tents outdoors on public spaces with our partners at Homeward Bound of Marin.

The City will offer all persons who accept housing from the City the storage of their personal property up to two (2) twenty-seven (27) gallon plastic storage bins for up to sixty (60) days.

FISCAL IMPACT

In exchange for Homeward Bound providing such care, accommodations, and services to City Referred Persons (defined in the MOU) pursuant to the MOU, the City shall pay Homeward Bound a not to exceed amount of \$148,000 of which Staff recommends the use of American Rescue Plan dollars. An additional, authorization of \$12,000 of ARP funds is requested for expenses related to implementation of this arrangement such as police and public works staff, associated encampment clean up activity such as dumpsters, storage containers, and the storage of some valuables of the unhoused.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

This item helps further City Council Strategic Plan Living Well Together Workplan Item # 1, *Work with service providers and other agencies to coordinate response and solutions to homelessness including transitioning homeless Novatans into shelter and housing.*

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the City Manager to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Homeward Bound of Marin for Novato homeless individuals to be offered immediate services that includes housing, food, case management assistance, medical coordination services, job placement/training, and transitional/permanent housing referrals by direct City referral for an amount not to exceed \$148,000 and authorize allocating an additional \$12,000 (Total expense NTE \$160,000 of ARP funds) for related costs that include staffing, public space restoration, and the storage of some personal property of the unhoused.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not approve MOU and provide alternative direction to Staff.

ATTACHMENT

1. Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Novato and Homeward Bound of Marin