



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 15, 2021

**TO:** Mayor Todd Gloria

**FROM:** Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera  
Councilmember Joe LaCava  
Councilmember Chris Cate  
Councilmember Raul Campillo

**SUBJECT:** Request for the City to Develop Non-Congregate Shelter Program & Utilize FEMA 100% Reimbursement for Operations – Operation Shelter-to-Home 2.0

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Homelessness has been a longstanding crisis in San Diego that was compounded by COVID-19. Incredible efforts were made by many, including City staff, in the early days of the pandemic to protect unhoused people from COVID-19 and to prevent the ensuing economic crisis from leading to mass homelessness. The Biden Administration's recent offer to reimburse 100% of expenses for non-congregate shelters presents an unprecedented opportunity to rapidly, efficiently, and, most importantly, humanely build upon the work that has been done by putting hundreds of unhoused San Diegans on the path to being housed, healthy, and prosperous.

This has been referred to as an "all-hands on deck" effort and, with respect to the homeless service provider community, that has been true. The community-based organizations and religious institutions that serve unhoused San Diegans have put their all into this effort and have reached their capacity. That is why we are proposing we expand this effort beyond just those who have been shouldering the weight of this crisis up until this point. We need more hands on deck.

In addition to being an incredible opportunity to reduce homelessness, there is an added opportunity to leverage the investment in reducing homelessness to provide a lifeline to small local businesses and workers who have been impacted by COVID-19 and are looking at an ominous forecast for 2021. While we recognize the specialized skills provided by our homeless service providers, we also see many hardworking folks in the service sector and tourism industry with analogous skills who are ready and willing to be the added capacity needed to maximize non-congregate shelter opportunities.

The City of San Diego has the opportunity to access millions of dollars from the U.S. government for non-congregate shelter during the COVID-19 crisis. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is offering 100% reimbursement for numerous non-congregate shelter operation expenses.<sup>1</sup> The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 includes an estimated \$21 million for the City of San Diego, which can be used for non-congregate shelter units, which can be converted to permanent affordable housing.<sup>2</sup> Now is the time to work together towards developing a non-congregate shelter strategy – Operation Shelter-to-Home 2.0.

There are challenges that would make implementation of a new non-congregate shelter program difficult. We understand that we must find solutions to provide needed qualified service providers, support for additional coordination, and selection of appropriate sites. While these obstacles may make program implementation difficult, we want to do our parts to ensure our City does its due diligence to provide a road map for what would be needed for San Diego to receive the FEMA reimbursement.

We, and the organizations and individuals listed below, are extending our hands to support your office in the development of a program, identify initial funding, engage in strategic partnerships, coordinate with the State of California's Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) for technical assistance, and request FEMA reimbursement to make an effective non-congregate program a reality. With enough political will, potential roadblocks can be addressed, and the City can create a program that would provide significant long-term benefits to our unhoused neighbors.

It is our responsibility to develop solutions to our most difficult challenges. We provide the following steps to guide the pursuit of being able to put to use the opportunity to receive 100% reimbursement for providing non-congregate shelter:

- **Assessment of Potential Non-Congregate Shelter Residents:** We recognize that for a variety of reasons, some people experiencing homelessness may not be best served by a non-congregate setting. With this in mind, a thorough assessment of the type of programs and shelter opportunities that are appropriate for current shelter occupants and unsheltered individuals, including those living in cars, will help us determine who and how many people are needed to be planned for to pursue a non-congregate shelter opportunity. Additionally, for those who are not currently suited for a non-congregate setting, goals and a plan should be developed to transition those who may eventually benefit from this program before its expiration.
- **Assessment of Services Needed:** We must assess exactly what the needs are for the people who have been identified as potential beneficiaries of non-congregate shelter to determine what gaps exist to safely serve them in a non-congregate setting. Including in this analysis should be answers to the following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> FEMA Policy 104-009-18, Version 3, FEMA Emergency Non-Congregate Sheltering during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (Interim), Federal Emergency Management Agency [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_non-congregate-sheltering-during-the-covid-19-phe-v3\\_policy\\_1-29-2021.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_non-congregate-sheltering-during-the-covid-19-phe-v3_policy_1-29-2021.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> American Rescue Plan Act: Estimated Allocations of Homeless Assistance Grants (\$5 Billion), February 2021, National Low Income Housing Coalition, [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Estimated-Allocations-Homeless-Assistance\\_American-Rescue-Plan-Act.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Estimated-Allocations-Homeless-Assistance_American-Rescue-Plan-Act.pdf).

- What resources exist in San Diego to provide these services?
- Can a national call be made for experienced case workers to assist in the effort to fill any service gaps?
- Can businesses and workers with applicable facilities, expertise, and skills be rapidly trained and supported by experienced service providers to fill the service gaps needed to move families and individuals into non-congregate shelter?
  - Please see the attached letters from UNITE HERE Local 30, The San Diego Foundation, UPLIFT, and Think Dignity offering to assist in the recruitment of the aforementioned businesses and workers. In addition, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and Steve Cushman offer their support.
- **Assessment of Potential Non-Congregate Sites:** In addition to the often-discussed potential use of hotel rooms, we should explore innovative sites that could fit FEMA’s definition of “non-congregate shelter.”
  - For example:
    - Could the City make a call to San Diegans to host an unhoused family, such as those currently sleeping in cars, with reimbursements for hosts for related expenses and a stipend?
    - Can vacated office space be rapidly converted into shelter for unhoused individuals and eventually become much needed permanent affordable housing? The American Rescue Plan Act funds provide the opportunity to develop a long-term strategy.

The FEMA reimbursement is currently scheduled to be available through September. That is plenty of time for the City to derive significant benefit from this opportunity – if we act quickly. While we pursue every avenue available to innovate and creatively find solutions to provide non-congregate shelter through September, we must also consider how this unique opportunity can contribute to long-term solutions in our capacity to serve and provide housing to our homeless population.

Our Council districts span from the beach & bay communities, to the Mid-City area and central core, up to the Northern boundaries of the City. Homelessness is an experience felt in each of our communities, and this is an opportunity that will benefit all San Diegans, especially those without a roof over their head.

It is our responsibility as a City to not leave any person experiencing homelessness behind. With Operation Shelter to Home winding down by the end of March 2021, we must be flexible in providing safe and habitable living situations for individuals experiencing homelessness.

**Supporters:**

UNITE HERE Local 30 (Support letter attached)  
 The San Diego Foundation (Support letter attached)  
 Think Dignity (Support letter attached)  
 UPLIFT (Support letter attached)  
 Downtown San Diego Partnership  
 Steve Cushman

CC: Jay Goldstone, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Mayor  
 Keely Halsey, Chief of Homelessness Strategies, Homelessness Strategies Division  
 Paola Avila, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor

Matthew Vespi, Chief Financial Officer  
Jessica Lawrence, Director of Policy, Office of the Mayor  
Nick Serrano, Assistant Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor  
Alia Khouri, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Mayor



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# Urban People Living In Faith & Trust Student Services & Homeless Services



Kids at Heart ▪ Swimming Upstream ▪ The Home Team ▪ Triple Cross

March 11, 2021

Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera  
City of San Diego  
202 C Street, 10th Floor  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Council Member Elo-Rivera,

Thank you for your attention to this opportunity. UPLIFT – Urban People Living in Faith & Trust, has served vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness in San Diego since 1987 and has served as Rock Church Homeless Ministry since 2015.

UPLIFT fully supports activation of expanded FEMA 100% reimbursed Non-Congregant Shelter (NCS) funds for additional COVID At-Risk lodging. The White House order January 21, 2021 increases reimbursement from 75% to 100%, retroactive to program start, through September 30, 2021, extended from the original end date of June 30, 2021.

Adding 100% FEMA COVID At-risk NCS lodging or motel funding has the potential to get hundreds more unsheltered off the street because CDC includes homeless & ethnic minority as COVID At-risk conditions - [CDC Persons needing extra COVID precautions](#). It is VERY rare people experiencing homelessness, even chronic, problematic folks, refuse a motel as shelter. FEMA NCS funding presents a HUGE opportunity for amazing progress.

The FEMA NCS funds DO cover everything from case management to food - [FEMA NCS Cost Eligibility](#), however there will be other resources required for mental health services, etc.

To fill any gaps, the UPLIFT and the Faith Community are happy to lead on:

1. scheduling compassionate, well trained Volunteers to assist professional case management
2. engaging local philanthropy and corporate fiscal partnership
3. providing added goods and services, CA IDs, clothing, career guidance, social activities
4. assisting with arrangements for safe housing placement & stability for FEMA NCS motel Residents now through the current program end date of September 30, 2021 and beyond for any remaining Residents

Please do not hesitate to ask for any support your office feels would be helpful in expanding the blessing of this FEMA funding to benefit our vulnerable unsheltered population and bring this much needed out of market revenue into the local economy as quickly as possible.

So grateful for your consideration,

*Monica Ball*

Monica Ball, Board President  
monica@upliftsandiego.org | cel 619-708-3512

# THINK DIGNITY

Hands-on Advocacy &  
Activism with the Homeless

March 11, 2021

Mitchelle Woodson, Esq.  
Think Dignity  
3525 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
San Diego, CA 92104

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## *Executive Director*

Mitchelle  
Woodson, Esq.

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

I write on behalf of Think Dignity in support of the City of San Diego pursuing the maximum utilization of FEMA's reimbursement for non-congregate shelter. We strongly support this effort as an incredible opportunity to immediately improve the health, safety, and dignity of our unhoused neighbors while also putting San Diego on track to significantly reduce and prevent homelessness when we emerge from the COVID-19 health and economic crises.

As an organization Think Dignity has a mission to inspire, empower, and organize our community to advance basic dignity for those living on the streets. We embrace a vision where basic dignity is understood to be a universal human right; where everyone has a voice; and where those that suffer from a lack of services have a safe place from which they can be heard. Since 2006, Think Dignity has been an unwavering advocate standing alongside the homeless population demanding adequate housing, access to basic sanitation, supportive services and the decriminalization of life sustaining activities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, unsheltered individuals were left with extremely limited or no proper safety measures to protect their health and safety. With non-congregate housing options in short supply, homeless individuals were forced into congregate emergency shelters where they risked their health and safety. For too long San Diego has failed to effectively address our homeless crisis because we have not prioritized the needs of our homeless population. We have the responsibility to take meaningful steps to ensure that we are utilizing the resources available to provide essential access to non-congregate housing options for homeless San Diegans. We have the opportunity to make a powerful impact in drastically changing course and it is imperative that we take bold action to finally address the needs of our homeless community and take the steps to significantly reduce our homeless population.

We look forward to working with you in this very important effort.

Sincerely,



Mitchelle Woodson, Esq.  
Executive Director, Managing Attorney  
Think Dignity



2436 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92102 • (619) 516-3737 • Fax (619) 516-1383 • Local30@unitehere.org  
Together, We Will Make a Difference

Brigitte Browning  
President

Sincerely,

We look forward to working with you in this very important work.  
As an organization which advocates for better living and working conditions for our members. The majority are women and people of color. This could be an amazing opportunity to help address our homeless crises while creating good quality jobs. I write on behalf of UNITE HERE Local 30 in support of the City of San Diego pursuing the maximum utilization of FEMA's reimbursement for non-congregate shelter. We strongly support this effort as an incredible opportunity to immediately improve the health, safety, and dignity of our unhoused neighbors while also putting San Diego on track to significantly reduce and prevent homelessness when we emerge from the COVID-19 health and economic crises.

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers:

Honorable Mayor Todd Gloria  
Honorable City Councilmembers  
City Administration Building  
202 C Street  
San Diego, CA 92101

March 12, 2021



Affiliated with...  
AFL-CIO  
San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council  
State Federation of Labor  
State Culinary Alliance  
Union Label & Service Trades Council



March 12, 2021

Dear Honorable Mayor Todd Gloria and San Diego City Council:

I write on behalf of The San Diego Foundation in support of the City of San Diego pursuing the maximum utilization of FEMA's reimbursement for non-congregate shelter. We strongly support this effort as an incredible opportunity to immediately improve the health, safety, and dignity of our unhoused neighbors while also putting San Diego on track to significantly reduce and prevent homelessness when we emerge from the COVID-19 health and economic crises.

Since 1975, The San Diego Foundation has been helping passionate, socially minded citizens find ways to create positive impacts in communities across the San Diego region. Through more than 2,100 funds we manage, donors have generously given over \$1.3 billion to support nonprofit organizations which provide assistance and opportunity to people throughout our community. The San Diego Foundation offers donors and community partners seeking to invest in community solutions, deep community knowledge and unique experience and expertise in grant making, grants management and reporting.

The San Diego Foundation has a vision of just, equitable and resilient communities where San Diegans furthest from opportunity receive the support needed to feel they belong. Since launching our COVID-19 Community Response Fund on March 16, 2020, thanks to the generosity of thousands of donors, The Foundation has provided more than \$65 million in grants to hundreds of local nonprofits organizations who are addressing the devastating impacts of the pandemic. Thus far, nearly \$8.5 million have been distributed to organizations providing flexible financial assistance to San Diegans including organizations providing direct aid to our unsheltered, youth, families and adults.

The Foundation and many of our donors view homelessness as one of the most important issues facing our region. We appreciate the work the San Diego City Council has done to support our unsheltered community during the past year. Now, our region's leaders must come together to create a long-term strategy to significantly reduce homelessness in San Diego.

We look forward to working with you in this very important work.

Sincerely,  
Pamela Gray Payton  
Vice President, Chief Impact and Partnerships Officer  
The San Diego Foundation