



# Administrative Report

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

**TO:** HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Carl Alameda, Interim City Manager

**DATE REPORT**

**PREPARED:** January 19, 2024

**MEETING DATE:** January 23, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Grant Application Seeking Competitive Grant Funding Under the State of California Encampment Resolution Funding Program, Round 3 (ERF-3-R).

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the City Council Authorize the City Manager to execute a Grant Application seeking competitive grant funding under the State of California Encampment Resolution Funding Program, Round 3 (ERF-3-R).

**Executive Summary**

The State of California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH) has made available \$400 Million in competitive funding under Round 3 of the Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Program. During the City Council Goals and Objectives meeting held on August 30, 2023 the City Hall encampment was identified as the top priority of the City Council and the ERF grant was identified as a key funding opportunity to support the efforts to address the issue of the unhoused and the City Hall encampment.

**Background**

The Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Program Round 3 of the ERF Program opened on November 27, 2023 with three application windows for review, as follows:

<u>ERF-3-R Window</u>	<u>Closing Date</u>
Application Window 1	January 31, 2024
Application Window 2	March 31, 2024
Application Window 3	June 30, 2024

The state Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Program was established to increase collaboration between the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH), local jurisdictions, and Continuums of Care for the following purposes:

1. Assist local jurisdictions in ensuring the safety and wellness of people experiencing homelessness in encampments.
2. Provide grants to local jurisdictions and Continuums of Care to resolve critical encampment concerns and transition individuals into safe and stable housing.
3. Encourage a data-informed, coordinated approach to address encampment concerns.

The Ojai Unhoused Task Force has collaborated with the County of Ventura and California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) program to provide future health and behavioral services, which would potentially be covered by the grant and include two onsite case workers. The Help of Ojai for supportive services and the County of Ventura Sheriff's Department for supplemental directed patrol and assistance in identifying viable private security onsite.

As the grant program is competitive, there is no grantee of funding. If a sufficient number of applications be submitted, scoring highly, within Window 1 there is a potential that a substantial amount of the funding is exhausted in the Window 1 review and award process. Jennifer Harkey, the Program Director for Ventura County Continuum of Care has assisted the City of Ojai in the preparations of the grant application and in the past has submitted applications for other municipalities in Ventura County, which have resulted in funding awards. Ms. Harkey has strongly advised the Ojai Unhoused Task Force that it is critical that the City's application is submitted within the Window 1 period for both the highest likelihood of award and maximum award amount.

It should be noted the City of Ojai application under the ERF-3-R funding window has an advantage by way of the proposed site. The fact that the City is offering City property for Phase One of the transition lends the City a higher level of credibility by the use of City property.

**Encampment Composition** – After the City Hall Encampment was identified as the top priority of the City Council at their Goals Setting meeting, the City hired a full-time Homeless Services Coordinator to lead the efforts on the ground and engage with the Unhoused Task Force. The Unhoused Task Force has taken a pre-active approach led by the City's Homeless Coordinator Rick Raines to build positive relationships and understand the population of the City Hall Encampment. One thing is very noteworthy in these efforts, the individuals living within the encampment are longtime Ojai unhoused, they are largely not from outside the City. Most of these individuals previously slept in Ojai City parks, under street overpasses, commercial areas, and vacant properties.

**Current Limitations on City's Ability to Clear Encampment** - The unhoused residents of the City Hall Encampment may not be compelled to enter shelter or housing services offered. The City has very limited ability to "evict" or "remove" individuals who are living on public land, even if it is City property. In order to do this the encampment must for be posted as closed to any new inhabitants for health and safety reasons (which was posted on December 4, 2023) and the City must provide alternative housing and the ability to store their property.

**Transitioning Unhoused to Temporary Shelter and Interim Housing** - The unhoused residents of the City Hall Encampment will be transitioned from the City Hall community garden in a Phased approach. As this process begins, the allowable space available for camping in the City Hall community garden will be reduced and eventually completely closed to all camping use.

*Phase One* – The first phase will be the introduction of “transitional shelters” and storage in the Kent Hall parking lot. These transitional shelters are wildness tents to be placed on platforms treated with fire retardant. The platforms are designed to keep the tents off the surface of the ground and out of future rain flows. Each tent will have its own detached storage shelter, with a limitation on property to what can be stored in a safe manner in the storage shelter and tent. These tents will be constructed over a series of weekends and are being completely built by volunteers. As members of the encampment are transitioned to the tents, the footprint of the allowable camping space in the City Hall community garden will be reduced, until it is completely closed at the conclusion of the Phase One transition.

*Phase Two* – The second phase will be the development of an “interim housing solution” at present time the City is engaging with Dignity Moves for the development of “tiny home” approximately 160 square feet in size. For the purposes of the ERF-3-R grant applicant the proposed site for this development is the Kent Hall parking lot, as the Dignity Moves team needs a site to cost the development. However, the City is not obligated to place the potential Dignity Moves units at the Kent Hall site, but may use alternate location(s) for the Dignity Moves project.


Phase Two would also address the providing of basic utility services to the site and centralize kitchen and restrooms. There would also be the additional of office space for an onsite manager and security.

**ERF-3-R Grant Support** - The most immediate eligible use of the funding if awarded would be the clean-up and restoration of the community garden space. Once the Phase One “transitional shelters” are placed the grant would support the operation, support services, and security of the premises. The ERF grant would support all of the activities of Phase Two if the award is sizable enough to cover the cost. Beyond the life of the grant, the City, at a point to be determined, could charge rent to the extent residents are able to pay, as most do receive minimal Social Security Income (SSI) benefits. The use of SSI benefits is an approach that other agencies have used to off-set the costs with managing such a site.

If the City is not successful with the ERF Grant, the City Council has allocated \$200,000 towards the efforts, which is sufficient to get Phase One of the project underway. Other sources of funding could be explored, but there are no known sources of outside funding available currently for this type of effort.

**Fiscal Impact**

There would be no fiscal impact at this time. The funding allocated of \$200,000 is sufficient to proceed with the phased approach as outlined in the staff report.



Prepared by:  
Carl Alameda, Interim City Manager



Submitted by:  
Carl Alameda, Interim City Manager

Attachments: A – City of Ojai Proposed Application under the State of California Encampment Resolution Funding Program, Round 3 (ERF-3-R).

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# PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

## People Served

Number of people currently residing in prioritized encampment site

Of people currently residing in prioritized encampment site, how many will be served by this proposal?

Given the potential for inflow of people into the prioritized encampment site, how many people are projected to be served across the entire grant period?

Of people projected to be served across the entire grant period, number of people projected to transition into interim shelters

Of people projected to be served across the entire grant period, number of people projected to transition into permanent housing

*This should include both people who transition directly into permanent housing **and** people who may first transition into interim shelter.*

Is the prioritized encampment site part of a larger encampment area?

Yes  No

## Encampment Information

1. Briefly describe the characteristics of the people residing within the prioritized encampment site. The description must include demographics and may include household compositions, disabilities, and projected service and housing needs. (1500-character limit)

The City of Ojai has one large homeless encampment surrounding City Hall with a total of 30 individuals experiencing homelessness. Local homeless service providers have provided outreach and HMIS assessments to determine the individual housing needs and wrap around services. The demographics include single adults, 20 male and 10 female. In addition, 89.4% of individuals are white, 10% are Hispanic/Latino and 0.6% are black. Based on the assessments conducted, the majority or 60% of individuals self-reported physical health conditions. Homeless service providers have documented the length of stay for chronic homelessness documentation. The majority will likely qualify for Permanent Supportive Housing with documented disabilities and would be prioritized through the Coordinated Entry System.

*If this proposal seeks to serve a particular target population, specify and describe.*

2. Briefly describe physical characteristics of the prioritized encampment site in which the people you are proposing to serve are residing. The description must include the specific location, physical size of the area, the types of structures people are residing in at the site, whether vehicles are present, and any other relevant or notable physical characteristics of the site. (1000-character limit)

The City of Ojai encampment is located at the City Hall campus of approximately 8 acres of open land. There are wood structures, tents and approximately 5 vehicles on the site. The site is unsanitary and serious health and environmental concerns have been raised due to the lack of running water, plumbing and garbage disposal and its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. There has also been concerns of fire risk due to the number of trees and close proximity to surrounding neighborhoods.

3. Why is this particular encampment site being prioritized? (1000-character limit)

There are serious environmental concerns with the lack of running water, plumbing and/or garbage disposal. Also, this encampment is located on the Ojai City Hall property which is open to the public for regular meetings as well public service. The encampment has steadily grown from approximately five to thirty unhoused people over the past year. The unique challenges at this site have been warming fires, unsanitary conditions and regular calls for service to law enforcement. Street outreach services are offered regularly to provide basic needs and medical services to those with health conditions.

Attachment: Map

Upload or drag files here.

*The provided map should clearly indicate the area of the prioritized encampment. The map may also indicate the location of other key service, shelter, and housing resources described in this proposal.*

4. Is the prioritized site on a state right-of-way?

No  Yes - partially  Yes - entirely

### Proposal's Outcomes

5. What are the outcomes this proposal seeks to accomplish by the grant close? If funded, what are the primary activities you are planning to implement to achieve the proposal's outcomes? (1000-character limit)

A 20 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) unit project will provide case management and permanent housing to those who are highly vulnerable from the encampment. Interim shelter would also be provided through motel vouchers for those who do not qualify for PSH. Wrap around services will include CalAIM health care and behavioral health services through the County of Ventura. The outcome goal will transition 95% of clients from interim shelter to permanent housing destinations. Housing navigators will assist with chronic homelessness documentation to prioritize clients for PSH units.

6. How will the applicant measure progress towards the proposal's outcomes? (1000-character limit)

Referrals will be made through the Coordinated Entry System and ensure data is collected in HMIS to track outcomes and performance. HMIS quarterly reporting will measure the number of clients served, the length of time homeless, the number connected to mainstream benefits, the number of exits to permanent housing destinations and measure housing retention once permanently housed. In addition, Housing and Service Plans for participants will be created together with case management to monitor status, adjust goals, and/or re-evaluate client needs and eligibility for housing-specific programs. Monthly follow up meetings with participants will help measure progress and ensure that engagement expectations are met.

7. Are there any local ordinances, resources, or other factors that may hinder achieving the proposal's outcomes? If so, how will the applicant navigate these challenges? (1000-character limit)

The City of Ojai City Council has already approved this proposed PSH unit project to transition the majority of clients from the encampments directly into permanent housing. The County of Ventura will provide assistance with this relocation through street outreach, backpack medicine and behavioral health services.