

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Administrative Code - Safe Sleeping Sites Program]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to establish a Safe Sleeping Sites Program to provide unsheltered persons with a safe place to sleep overnight; and affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Existing Law

Currently, there is no law requiring the City to operate outdoor sites where unsheltered people may sleep overnight and receive access to services.

Amendments to Current Law

The proposed ordinance, known as the “A Place for All Ordinance,” would establish that it is the policy of the City and County of San Francisco (“City”) to expeditiously establish and operate a network of temporary Safe Sleeping Sites where individuals may safely take shelter for the night, and would require the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (“HSH”) to establish a Safe Sleeping Sites Program.

Subject to the budgetary and fiscal provisions of the Charter, and within 18 months of the effective date of the ordinance, HSH would be required to open as many Safe Sleeping Sites as are necessary to accommodate all of the unsheltered people in San Francisco who are willing to accept a referral to such sites, with such excess capacity as may be necessary to ensure that a space at a Safe Sleeping Site shall generally be available for anyone accepting such placement. HSH would conduct an annual estimate of the number of unsheltered people willing to accept referral to a site to inform the number of Safe Sleeping Sites that must be opened.

Once opened, Safe Sleeping Sites would be required to accommodate up to 150 unsheltered individuals; prepare and implement a safety plan, intake plan, and exit plan; provide access to clean and regularly-serviced bathrooms; and be open and available for use from at least 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. In addition, HSH would be required to provide private transportation between Safe Sleeping Sites and designated HSH shelter reservation sites, access points, and other designated pick-up/drop-off locations to persons who have been assigned a reservation at a Safe Sleeping Site.

Background Information

As of January 2019, more than 8,035 people in San Francisco were experiencing homelessness. 5,180 of these individuals were unsheltered, 86% of whom were sleeping outdoors in streets, parks or tents.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the City's Shelter in Place response exacerbated street conditions and contributed to an increase in the number of tent encampments citywide, with large numbers of unhoused people seeking shelter in neighborhoods throughout the City. This was at least partly due to a 76% reduction in available shelter beds, and a halt on new admissions to the shelter system in the early days of the pandemic, in compliance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control requiring social distancing in the City's homeless shelters, thus necessitating a decrease in the shelter capacity. This reduction in shelter capacity is estimated to have forced nearly 1,000 unhoused people to return to City streets. From January to May 2020, the number of tents citywide increased by 71%.

On May 13, 2020, the City established its first sanctioned and supervised safe sleeping site on Fulton Street between the Asian Art Museum and the Main Library, which provides space for safely distanced tents, 24/7 access to bathrooms and handwashing stations, daily meals, and health care services. As of October 14, 2020, the City has opened six safe sleeping sites, five of which are active. In total, the active safe sleeping sites provide a place to sleep to approximately 213 unhoused individuals.

Safe sleeping sites are a preferred option of unhoused people. According to a survey of 584 unhoused individuals conducted by the Coalition on Homelessness between June 3 and August 30, 2020, 58% of unhoused people surveyed prefer a "legal free campsite" to existing shelters.

n:\legana\as2020\2000363\01487363.docx