



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

City of Austin Commission on Veterans Affairs
Recommendation Number: 20200706-D002
Kiro Action Veterans Transitional Housing Program (KAVTHP)

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Commission on Veterans Affairs was chartered in 2013 by City Council to advocate solutions to Austin Veterans homelessness, housing, employment, education/training, women issues, PTSD/mental health and counseling.

WHEREAS, the Commission on Veteran Affairs, (Commission) is authorized by Austin City Code 2-1-126 to serve as an advisory body to council concerning the well-being of military veterans in the Austin area.

WHEREAS, Veterans homelessness in Austin is complicated by the lack of affordable housing leases within Austin with close proximity to resource providers, employers and infrastructure. Vouchers and third-party lease payments often are not enough to lease acceptable housing within Austin, further, public transportation with access to Veterans service providers and work are a challenge and limit housing options for Veterans.

WHEREAS, Veterans employment, education, training, women and family counseling, PTSD/mental health, healthcare, and VA benefits counseling are scattered throughout Austin and decentralized; making access to vital and necessary services difficult for some Veterans with disabilities, limited economic, mobility and transportation resources.

WHEREAS, the Commission is specifically authorized to recommend programs designed to support the well-being of military veterans in Austin. Veteran homelessness has been a particular issue affecting veterans nationally, and Austin, as a whole. At the date of drafting the Commission recommendation in Austin, there are 123 unsheltered veterans on a high-priority list to receive housing due to medical conditions and physical disabilities, 103 on the normal list to receive housing and an average of thirty-eight (38) veterans that become homeless every month in Travis County. All the homeless veterans referenced are signed-up in assistance programs, but will continue to stay homeless upwards of 90-days until housing is found and is dependent on current market rental and affordable housing in Austin.

WHEREAS, the Commission received a request from the Kiro Action Group, to create program called the “Kiro Action Veterans Transitional Housing Program”, (KAVTHP). The program will house one-hundred (100) veterans in need of transitional housing in a pilot program with the goal of expanding the program on successful deployment. KAVTHP asks for assistance and support in their request from the City of Austin. KAVTHP requests assistance from the City of Austin to dedicate under-utilized city-owned land to deploy Kiro Action homes in 3-10 locations spread across districts in the city and locations chosen in partnership with city officials, council members and COA staff. The City of Austin allows permission for Kiro Action homes to be deployed on additional lands part of religious organization or private land for use of the pilot to house unsheltered veterans under the direction of the City Manager’s Office and COA City Staff. The City of Austin expedites the permitting for the Kiro Action home structure and design, on agreed upon sizes or options, to be built offsite and deployed with engineer sign-off of each Kiro Action approved design. The City of Austin connects utility, wastewater and water connections on deployed city-owned sites at their expense, including labor and design, and at no cost to pilot program, Kiro Action or other entity. The City of Austin, if deployment happens on religious organization land or private land, will connect utility, wastewater and water connections, including labor and design, and at no cost to pilot program, Kiro Action, religious institute or other entity. The City of Austin will waive any fees for utility connections on units used in pilot KAVTHP program, identify city-owned lands in the city that can be used throughout the various districts, and expedite the permitting on Kiro Action units in-order to be deployed to help house the over 200 veterans awaiting housing and currently homeless. The first phase of the pilot is outlined to be 50-homes to house 100-veterans and expansion of the program will occur under the direction of the City Manager’s Office and COA City Staff on the success of the first phase of the pilot.

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that Austin, needs to be a national leader in addressing the myriad needs of Veterans and be at the forefront of addressing poverty, homelessness, social injustice and promote rehabilitation through a longer-term housing program until more permanent housing can be achieved.

WHEREAS, the KAVTHP pilot will bring in local wraparound services, organizations and religious institutions to address the needs of Veterans including, but not limited to, counseling, mental health assistance, job placement and various other critical services.

WHEREAS, Kiro Action Veterans Transitional Housing Program (KAVTHP) is in alignment with the aim to prevent veteran homelessness within Austin, by creating a transitional housing program that can be quickly deployed where needed and be continually used for veteran homelessness to reduce wait times until more permanent housing is established through assistance groups. This will aid Veterans and their families by creating a model built in Austin.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Austin Commission on Veterans Affairs recommends the Austin City Council to allocate funds in the amount of 1.3 million (1,300,000USD) per year for a period of five-years for the purchase of 50 (fifty) Kiro Action homes each year, sold “at cost” to the COA with city staff choosing the necessary options of the homes, including ADA options. Of the 1.3 million total budget, 300k is budgeted for the cost of wraparound services at roughly 3k per Veteran in addition, to State and Federal grants for the 100 Veterans going through the program each year. Additional funds can be used for utility, service and pilot program costs that arise. To this goal, the Commission recommends the following steps:

1. KAVTHP requests assistance from the City of Austin to dedicate under-utilized and unutilized city-owned land to deploy Kiro Action homes in 3-10 locations spread across districts in the city and locations chosen in partnership with city officials, council members and COA staff. Since Kiro Action homes can be put up and taken down in hours, the land can be reclaimed at any point by the city and homes can be moved to a new site. COA will continue owning the land with operations of the sites falling under the control of COA City Staff, wraparound service provider and KAVTHP program.
2. The City of Austin allows permission for Kiro Action homes to be deployed on additional lands part of religious organization or private land for use of the pilot to house unsheltered veterans under the direction of the City Manager’s Office and COA City Staff.
3. The smaller Kiro Action home is permitted under current rules in Austin. If there is need for additional permitting, the City of Austin expedites the permitting for the Kiro Action home structure and design, on agreed upon sizes or options, to be built offsite and deployed with engineer sign-off of each Kiro Action approved design.
4. The City of Austin connects utility, wastewater and water connections on deployed city-owned sites at their expense, including labor and design, and at no cost to pilot program, Kiro Action or other entity. The City of Austin, if deployment happens on religious organization land or private land, will connect utility, wastewater and water connections, including labor and design, and at no cost to pilot program, Kiro Action, religious institute or other entity.
5. The City of Austin will waive fees and costs for utility connections on units used in pilot KAVTHP program, identify city-owned lands in the city that can be used throughout the various districts, and expedite the permitting on Kiro Action units in-order to be deployed to help house the over 200 veterans awaiting housing and currently homeless.
6. The first phase of the pilot is outlined to be 50-homes each year for five-years to house 100-veterans and expansion of the program will be occur under the direction of the City Manager’s Office and COA City Staff on the success of the program.
7. This proactive and comprehensive program would keep Austin in the forefront of addressing our Veteran’s issues and provide a model and roadmap for other communities across the country to meet the needs of those whom have given so much of their lives on behalf of the American people.
8. The KAVTHP pilot can be used to address general unsheltered needs and create a model to address the needs of the homeless, irrespective if they’re Veterans or not.

Date of Approval: July 6, 2020

Record of the Vote: Approved on a 7-0 vote with 4 board members absent (Denny, Ehlinger, Collura-Rosenberg, Hinds)

Attest:  _____