

Public Health Committee (PHC) Transcript – 12/14/2022

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[9:35:41 AM]

Two. That's right. Can't see the light. The tunnels. Things get strong. Tonight. I can't. This meeting to order at 9 36. We have a quorum, council members. Fuentes and harper-madison will not be here today, but I'm joined on the diocese by mayor Adler and council member kitchen and the first thing that we're going to do is approved the minutes from last week. If I have emotion. Mayor Adler moves approval council member kitchen seconds that all in favor. And that it passes unanimously with those who are here on the dais. We have 11 item on today's

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agenda, and that is to get an update and really a summary and an overview. On homelessness. This has been really a priority focus for all three of us here on the diets and in conversation . We agreed that today would be a good day to really take stock of some of the incredible work that our council has done and accomplished with with regard to this area, but with also an eye to the future and making sure that that the next council has a very clear sense of what has come before and what are the challenges and the initiatives that are still underway. And so Diana gray will be providing us with this presentation. I'm not saying you're here in the chamber. But she is virtual wonderful. Well miss gray. We are delighted. To have you with us. And we thank you again for your work. Unfortunately Mr Malika from echo was not able to be here. But he did provide us with some information, and I think some of it will be integrated into miss grey's

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presentation as well. I'm gonna recognize. I'm so sorry. Diana before we get started. I'm going to recognize mayor Adler to provide some framework as well. Chair I appreciate the way that you have set this up. And I appreciate the work and putting together the power point for us to see. And I don't. I like the way that you described what you were looking for today's meeting because it's what I would hope to be getting too. Which is kind of a high level view of where we were. What was the state of affairs and what we have done. So and where we need to go at a high level, I see the greatest value of this meeting. With the three of us here. Rolling off before we could actually react. Very much of anything that that's happening. As almost an archival moment as

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well as a opportunity for new council members or community mayors of the new mayor. To be able to pull back this video and kind of get a primer on that. Where we've been what we've done and where we need to go, and I know that the two of you commenting at that level would be really helpful. To the to the folks that are following us. This is like your last chance to mine as well to impart at that high level, so my hope is I see the power point. I appreciate the work. That they can agree. Didn't pulling it together. My need with beef or preference would be for her to work through that. Really quickly. But then get to more of the conversation that that might actually serve as a resource level set. For the community and those that are coming after us on this dance.

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Mayor and chair tovo. Thank you. I think that's really important. We've talked a lot about the importance of communication, and helping people understand the challenges of addressing, homelessness and also just the depth of the depth of the progress that the city has made. And so, and it's really hard to make that available to folks that kind of information, so I think that, the way that you all are characterizing today's meeting is spot on and very much needed, so appreciate the opportunity to participate. I think that sounds great. Alright well, miss gray. If you could start us off with the power point, and then we'll have a more, free flowing broad conversation afterwards. Absolutely so I do want to

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recognize that Laura lapuente, with the health, equity and community engagement division of Boston. Public health is present today and so I will pitch to her for a couple of slides. But before I start, and we dig into conversation after the slide show I do just want to say, I think that it's fitting and symbolic that the three of you are on the diess today. Much of the progress we have made over the last several years, has been driven by clearly by the whole council. But in many instances specifically by the marriage to

council members who are departing and seated on the diets today, so just in a spirit of gratitude for all of your efforts and recognition for the progress we've made with your support so as you said, we will move through this slight slide desk quite quickly today with a update on finding home 80 S, an

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update on the process of social service solicitations, which includes the obligation of rp funds dedicated to addressing homelessness. I'll give an overview of where we are with capacity building efforts. An update on progress in the hell initiative and then a couple of other quick updates about things happening in the system that we thought you might want to know about. You can go ahead and go to the next slide. So it's all of you well know that finding home 80 X initiative is not just a city initiative, but a community wide collaborative that came together to really establish and crystallized some goals around how we would address homelessness and make a significant impact from 2022 through 2024. Those high level

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goals include housing 3000 people creating 1300 new housing units and securing the other 1700 units in the private rental market with some incentives and partnerships with landlords and then broadly strengthening the homeless response system, focusing on equity on capacity building of additional nonprofits in the system. Improving our data and analysis and looking at ways for us to innovate, and bring further efficiencies into the system. We developed an overall investment plan for finding homemade T X, which totaled \$515 million from all sources and if we can advance to the next slide. As of November 2nd. So just over a month ago, we were at 87% of that total \$515 million goal and we're able to announce that in

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addition to the public funds committed to the effort we had secured just under \$50 million. The city the city's contribution to the overall funds secured today is 228 million. That's a combination of new general funds that had been committed during this period, general obligation bonds and other capital dollars but significantly 106.7 million in, funds from the American rescue plan act, which we are in the process of deploying now in the community, and we will speak more to as we move forward. Next slide. So I hear. I'm going to turn it over to Laurent lapuente, who is the assistant director for hissy who will speak both to the general solicitations that we've gone through this year around homelessness and then speak more specifically to the rp finds

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which represent expansions in our system. Okay? Good morning. Louder Lafuente, Austin public health assistant director for health equity community engagement. The slide before you, I think should be pretty familiar. We've shared this information before. So we are just providing you an update with the three various phases that we went through for the homeless solicitations. As a reminder this funding was both general fund, state and federal funding and also our funding. So in total during this past fiscal year, it was over \$72 million of investments are solicitations that were out into the community that resulted in over 44 new agreements. There was a breakdown kind of at the bottom of there were three new, permanent supportive housing agreements for rapid re housing agreements. And or a rapid re housing agreements with I would like to point out is that is our pilot this year for will be piloting paper performance. So this is a new process as we're looking for with the rapid re housing and paper performance model. And additional cr crisis

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response where we entered into six new emergency shelter agreements, five street outreach agreements and when you've set aside program and then for our phase three, which was supportive services. We have seven workforce development programs, five behavioral health programs and three benefit enrollment programs. So that was what went out the door or what we solicited what we are in the process of finalizing all the agreements. The majority have already been executed and are in place. If you can go to the next slide, please. Specifically we wanted to focus on the art, but and bring to your attention the darpa funding, so as we're talking about the art of funding, it was specifically about over \$53 million and they're broken down. Also in the various phases with about six million in rapid re housing, and that included funding for hell. Emergency shelter and street outreach and also in our phase three the various workforce development, so this is specifically just the art of funding. And as you'll note some

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of our agreements, we have, whether its general fund various agreements with some of our current partners or previous partners. But also we've added some new partners and in our portfolio of homeless services. Go to the next slide and I'll check it back to Diana. Thank you, Laura. So Laura has given S an overview of the commitment of funds that that flow through Austin public health and in particular, that last slide summarize the obligation of almost \$53 million for homeless social services and just as an indicator of the impact of that , in just one section, the rapid re housing programs we estimate that those funds will be sufficient to rehouse approximately 1000 people, so that is capacity over and above the baseline of our system. Previously those programs are ramping up now, the and so we

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will begin to see the impact of that in the coming months. We have deployed rp funds through several different departments in the city and in addition to a ph , another route that we have taken is through the innovation office. We have recognized that , in this space of needing to really aggressively increased the overall service capacity in our system we needed, both growth and existing providers and more providers and importantly, that to really have the impact on equity that we want to in a system in which African Americans in particular. Are far overrepresented in the homeless population. We needed to work with some smaller organizations who may not have historically had the infrastructure in place to access city funding or other public and private funding. So we conceptualized program, which

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essentially has three parts we selected organizations who did apply for the program. The first phase, which is where we are right now is that each organization goes through and capacity assessment process with a consultant. We then will have a variety of technical assistance and training opportunities to increase their capacity and build their internal systems. And then there will be small grant funds available to help them execute on the essentially business development and organizational. Development needs that they have you have a list of those participating organizations here. Next slide. So we have been giving you regular reports on the heel initiative. As you know, which is our initiative that targets encampments of unsheltered individuals. That

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present present the highest health and safety risks. We are able in those specific encampments to offer individuals direct transfer to shelter. Bridge shelter, which currently exists in two converted hotels with, committed access to longer term housing supports so case manager with rental subsidies, who will help them find a unit. This initiative was approved in February of 21. We resolved our first encampment in June of that year. Since that time we have decommissioned 11 encampments moving over 400 people into shelter and 100 and 62 people into housing. I will note here also that we continue to have a very high shelter acceptance rate, meaning that when individuals are offered transfer to bridge shelter, 87% thus far have accepted next slide. Let's

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go ahead and move to the next side just in the interest of time. I think you know what we have begun to do here is to look at these by cohorts. So we see. Look at the number of people who were relocated in a single year the number of camps that were decommissioned when they move into shelter. The number of folks who have been assigned and are working with the case manager and eventually those who move into housing. And subsequently will stop receiving case management and housing rental assistance but remain housed. So this represents, the fiscal year 22 cohort where we decommissioned six encampments and moved 220 people which was over and above our 200% goal. Next slide. What this slide demonstrates as the disposition

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of the entire entire you people served through the initiative. Here we are looking at 398 total and duplicated clients. We still have, of course of people who have been brought into the heel initiative. Almost 100 still in in shelter, and this was as of the 30th of November. We had had 100 and 27 returns to unsheltered homelessness, but I think it's important to point out that of those. Some number do remain connected with a case manager and actively working on locating housing. Of the total 150 are in permanent housing. 120 of those are still working with the case manager and have rental assistance 20 to have completed the program and are now living independently without ongoing services, at least from this program. And eight

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individuals who are able to self resolved, through connection to family or the stability that they was afforded to them enbridge shelter. Etcetera. So on the whole 70% of clients who have engaged in hell since its inception are either housed in shelter or may have exited to homelessness but still engaged in a housing search. Next slide. So this provides us a map of the locations in which we have, implemented the hell initiative note that of the 11 sites thus far seven our parks and recreation sites. We have a couple of sites that are transportation oriented and under the control of tech start , a library site and then, public site managed by building services department. Next slide.

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One of the things that we've looked closely at as as directed by counseling, and we think it's really important is the demographics of the folks who were serving through hell. And I this what this shows is that the demographics of the individual encampments very significantly by ethnicity, and so different encampments have different characters, but what we want to make sure of overall is that we are not under serving. In particular African Americans who are just proportionately represented in the system. Next slide. And what this slide shows is that the number the percentage of people, served by race and

ethnicity in hell is similar to that that we see in the overall unsheltered homeless population. Next slide. We'll move now to a couple of quick updates. You will recall that,

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the emergency shelter emergency contracts. Excuse me for both south bridge and the arch were approved in July and were executed in effective October. 1st urban alchemy has assumed operations at the arch and Austin area urban league. Has assumed operations at south bridge. In both cases, the new operators were able to hire 90% or more of the existing front steps staff at those two shelters. They have established grievance requirements and processes as required. Both by council direction and memorialized in their contracts, and the first quarterly reports are expected by January 15th. So we'd be prepared to report to council soon thereafter. We are also in the process of working with the operators to carry out guest surveys. Staff both by folks

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from within homeless strategy, division and staff of the organizations themselves were consulting with the Austin homeless advisory council. And really, collecting that information to both understand how things are going in the shelters right now. And to inform a planning process which we are approaching next slide. The planning process that I referred to also stems from the direction from council that was given in late July. At the time of the approval of the emergency contracts for the two shelters, we were directed to engage in a process where we assessed our shelter system community wide. And come up with some principles and vision for our future efforts in the shelter arena. We have begun that process have

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been able to work with eco, and engage with, I cf international's consulting firm funded by hud technical assistance, and so we're actually kicking off that process formally tomorrow. And have begun the community engagement process. Going first people who are experiencing homelessness who are either previous or or current users of shelters or are unsheltered and then we'll expand that community engagement to other stakeholders in the community expect to complete this process. By the end of quarter one of calendar year 23 or soon thereafter. Next slide. So we have not had a physical, in person point in time count for a couple of years. Hud requires that local. Lead

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agencies. In this case eco, our local homeless coalition administer what is essentially a one night census of people experiencing homelessness in the community. We did not do it in 2021 because of the pandemic. And so this year for the first time since 2019 will be carrying out a point in time count. Eco coordinates this effort. It is a huge effort staffed almost entirely by volunteers, including many city staff and often elected echo that also analyzes the data that is gathered through the point in time count, which gives us important information about trends within our homeless population. At the same time we look at what is called the housing inventory chart, which helps us identify the current capacity of our shelter system as well as some of our other

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housing systems. You'll see here a Q R code, which will allow folks to sign up to volunteer directly, and we will be continuing to communicate over the next weeks to help drive that volunteer effort and invite folks to contact us. Also, certainly, if they'd like to participate, we can help you, connect with echo and get organized to do that. Next time. That wraps up the updates and happy to take any questions and have further discussions. Do you want to go? First mayor. I'm happy to her deferred to you. If you want to go first, I have a number of different things to talk about. So I'll talk about one. And then we can, first off, Diana, thank you very much. This is very, very helpful. It's a good overview. I think for folks

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to see the different pieces, so I think that's very helpful. And, I do want to talk about mention two things in particular and we can start in whatever order I think we need to. I think it would be very helpful to provide some context. And an overview of the city's response to public space management. And I know that that's an area that is managed by other aspects of the city. But I would be interested in hearing from you, Diana and where you see, that is right now. It's sort of the it is the place at which most of the public sees. Sees the city's response to homelessness. And for a lot of people, it's all they see. So I think it's helpful for people to understand what the city is doing in that regard and how that fits. With, with our primary. With our

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primary focus, which is helping connect people to housing and services. So could you speak to that for a moment? Yes, council member. I'm happy to do so. And I think that I'd like to contextualize this a bit in terms of sort of this question of where we are where we have been. And what are our main charges and challenges are going forward. I joined the city almost exactly two years ago. And you know we at that

time, of course we're in the sort of full impact of the pandemic. We, like many large American cities had seen a significant increase in unsheltered homelessness over the previous 3 to 4 years and that was seen particularly markedly in high cost cities, which we which we are we had a strong cadre of nonprofit providers who in their

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individual programs demonstrably we're being successful at re housing people and keeping them rehoused. However, we had a very visible increase it. We had a very much increased visibility in unsheltered homelessness, both because of the frank increase, and because at that time public campaign had been decriminalized. And we were having a bit of trouble. I think articulating to the community what are combination of strategies were that we were going to execute on to address this issue. There was already underway at that time. The planning for what would become finding home 80 X in mid 2021. We were able to establish those high level goals that we spoke to about the people who were re housed units we wanted to create , and, that there would be an explicit approach and focus on unsheltered homelessness. So we

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have made very significant progress. We now have 1300 units of housing in the pipeline that will serve people experiencing homelessness. You heard assistant director Lafuente speak to the contracts that we have just approved and are now executing that are going to significantly. Bring us to scale in terms of providing the services that people need to be re housed. The challenge now, I think is a executing on a very ambitious, agenda of creating housing and services and expanding it and managing the day today, impacts of homelessness on our community and on the people who are experiencing in particular unsheltered homelessness. So. Or two pieces here, I think. One is that we have hell has been such

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an important model for showing how we can effectively intervene in encampments and connect people to services. Its scale is still quite limited. We've done you know. Last year we were able to do six encampments, with about 200 people and the, primary constraint. There is access to bridge shelter beds, and that is in turn impacted by , the timeline on which we can get people into permanent housing. What do we so we are working on that we hope to sustain and or expand hell. But what do we do about all of the rest of the unsanctioned encampments in in the community? What we found. Was that particularly in for the end of 2021 when the camping ordinances were reinstated, or many, many

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city departments were getting requests for response at whether that be for legal enforcement or for pick up of refuse or concerns about fire risk etcetera, and the demand for exceeded the ability of staff to respond. It does still exceed the ability of staff to respond to every single encampment immediately, but we needed to be very thoughtful and intentional about how we organized our resources and prioritized that work. So. Last year, we started a process with the office of performance management to look at the creation of a structure that would allow us to organize our work based on data. And really an understanding of where the problems were most concerning and that we would prioritize and we would work

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together and ensure that we were not duplicating effort or not leveraging effectively the partnership of the other departments. So we created what is now known as the homeless encampment management team. That is again a structure that has about a dozen departments involved. It is staffed by a program manager in my division. And we do a number of things there. One is that what a tool that we developed that we think it's very important is a mobile encampment assessment tool. It's about 40 criteria that look at health safety. Fire risk plug brisk. Impact on public infrastructure, etcetera and essentially give us a score that tells us sort of the acuity if you will, with that that encampment armed with that data , we have a leadership team that looks at, those encampments that are rising to the top in terms of urgency, and, and risk. And

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that we then developed in concert with the landholding department, a clear plan for how we are operationalized work in that encampment. And that can be healed. In some cases, we are able, to implement heel in an encampment, which is, of course, what we'd rather do, whenever possible and offer people access to, shelter and housing. But even when hell is not possible, and there will be enforcement that we have an operational plan that clearly identifies how outreach is going to happen in that area, our understanding of the potential impacts of enforcement in one area on the likely displacement of people to other areas, other areas nearby. And who will be responsible for cleanup. And some of the potential environmental remediation, etcetera. So we are

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absolutely still iterating on this process. And we'll continue to refine it, but I think that we are in, a good place to really begin to understand, and to be able to have data not only about the current conditions in the encampments but about the resources that are being required across a number of city departments in the response thank you, Diana. That was a very helpful overview and explanation of where we're at, I want to say from I wanted first want to say thank you to our staff and to your staff. That have been working on public space management issues. As well as well as hell and I'll have a question or two about hell in a minute. But let me just say that that your staff the team, the homeless encampment management team, as well as a P D through our district representatives for south Austin, I want to name sergeant beck. Have been very

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responsive. Ah district five and I know district five is not the only area and maybe not even the largest area, but we have had significant significant issues around encampments in a number of different areas in south Austin. And the response of from the staff has been very, very helpful, and it has been prioritized. As you say, by health and safety risk. And there are a number of encampments that with the assistance of the homeless encampment management team with the assistance of a P D, and the assistance of others, have been, have been addressed. As as as our constituents know, in district five, and our neighbors know in district five. It is not a quick or easy solution, and it depends on what is happening in a particular area. But the. The

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neighbors in elista in district five have been willing to engage in interested in engaging with staff, which is what it takes. Ah to really address some of these circumstances so again understanding that the bottom line is housing. Ah, but as you said, as you said, there are capacity issues of that are that we're on trajectory to address and there are other issues that in some circumstances, there are individuals who are not in a place where they can take advantage of the services that are available, and those those circumstances present some challenging issues that have to be addressed. But anyway, thank you for your review and chair. I'll I'll come. You can come back to me later with some other questions. Sure thanks. And why don't we stay on that one for just a minute, so I think to kind of think through the guide the guiding the guidelines that the mayor suggested which I think are really good ones. You know, I would suggest that we ask questions. First about the

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presentation kind of informational questions if we have them as you have and then highlight and then try to go backwards and take stock of some of those big elements, but I want to pause on public

management public space management because you have definitely identified. I think an area that for all the reasons you said is one is one that is one that does capture a lot of community members intention attention and it is. I think, an area where there's there are two DUIs left. And so thank you for addressing them. Clearly housing is the issue, but but the streamlining work that the that your team is doing is really important. Diana would suggest that that that be something that's conveyed to the early early on to council members. I know in my district. There's not a week that passes where we don't hear from constituents about particular encampments that they believe are posing a safety risk. We have some recurring encampments that pose safety risks, both to those living living there as well as

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to others. One is the overpass. 38th street branches off into airport where there are individuals living in an encampment in a median. So it poses. I think great, great danger to them and then often, belongings are ending up on the access on the ramp, posing a danger to cars, so it is a very high high risk area for everyone involved. So I think the I think this work and conveying to two new council members how they can , how they can best highlight those areas of risk and danger, but also make sure that their constituents are experiencing homelessness within their district are getting are getting the services or at least that that information is making its way to this team so that those encampments can be assessed for services and resources. Mary, do you want to talk about this item before we before we kind of look, look at the presentation. See if there are any other informational questions and then we'll and then we'll begin as you suggested, with taking stock of some of the other hold most

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of the questions that I would normally ask from the presentation just because I think that the next group could could do that. And I'm not sure that it's helpful. The one exception that I would make to that is the one that I think you both have picked up on which is the issue that we heard in the campaign. Which was the question of better enforcing the camping ban. But I would like to reserve as much time as we can, even in this conversation that are really high level place for people that are coming into this conversation. No. Or trying to get a feel for where we are. So I guess my specific question with respect to camping ban as it relates to the report. And then my hope is really to get to a higher level view of where we've been and what we're doing and where we're going. Telescoping down into the camping ban question. Then if you could talk about the trade

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offs that are involved in that I mean, this is been one of the really tricky political issues for us to have people in the city don't like seeing intense. None of us do. So how do you how do you how do you get

rid of the tents? We could set up large or small or emergency shelter areas. You've looked at that. And there are pros and cons associated with doing that, in the context of actually ending homelessness in the city. But it's hard because if we're we have the capacity to take everybody who's in the tent right now off the street. We could do that. Now we put all our money towards that. But I have often heard you say that that's not the way to end homelessness. So there are tradeoffs involved and if you could discuss with those trade offs are for someone who is new to this discussion or debate. Because there is no right political answer. To this question is gonna be a hard

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choice. No matter which ones we do. But if you could talk about the challenge of. Getting everybody off the street and the context of actually ending homelessness. Thank you, sir. So I think I'd like to take this in in two parts, one of which is enforcement that is happening now and what happens in our community when enforcement curs that is not paired explicitly with. Either services or and especially some place for people to go. We do have enforcement we have had at my last check. I'm sure it's slightly higher now around 350 citations issued under the reinstated camping. Camping ordinance as well as, the prohibition on pan handling.

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Typically when, law enforcement officers approach folks and ask for compliance. They will get it so people do move. Having said that when we are working with a large encampment where there has been well established and we know that enforcement didn't happen during the pandemic because of under CDC guidelines , even in cases where at that time it was prohibited. That you know that simply having, officers come in and ask people to leave without attending to, the encampment itself. Or reaching out to them is likely to result either in re population. Or in moving to another location nearby. So we have to be clear about what enforcement means and what it gets us. We have had enforcement

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. Those citations are referred to the downtown Austin community court. Who do have some ability to connect individuals coming through the court to services. But. Enforcement I think happens. It does not mean that homelessness disappears. Just like enforcing speeding laws doesn't mean you don't have anyone speeding on the streets of Boston. In terms of what the resource application is of our our investments as a city and I think importantly, as a community, one of the things we need to continue to communicate is that this is not solely the city's responsibility. We are huge stakeholder in this an investor in this but it cannot be the city's role alone. That when we look at the costs of shelter and permanent housing the annual cost to do that. Aren't that different person?

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And so we want. To provide shelter. But to the degree, we don't have a place for people to go once they move to shelter, we will. Not really see a significant decrease on the streets, so it's very important that as we look at our shelter portfolio, we are really looking at our ability to move people through shelter and get them into permanent housing. That is the thing that is really going to move the needle in terms of seeing a decrease in population, on our streets and who are still in shelter, which is, of course, you know, not where we want folks to be long term. We want them to be in their homes. We historically have looked at have been very disinvested, or I should say under invested in permanent housing in this community. And so council has, I

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think appropriately over the years, focused on increasing our portfolio of permits. Supportive housing, and rapid re housing. The finding homemade tx effort really redoubles those efforts it does have some resources there to help us expand shelter. During this time, we are using some of the resources to operate, north bridge there. We are using some of the resources to support the expansion at Esperanza community operated by the other ones foundation. And we will continue to look at that mix, but I think that it's important for folks to understand that shelter or even some variation of a sanctioned in camp mint is not in and of itself a low cost intervention, so we really are balancing the long term needs with the crisis response. And I appreciate that

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answer. And you know it is there is no right answer. And I appreciate you pointing out a couple of things. First is there's a humanitarian issue and we have people on our streets. That we need to try to deal with his best we can. I think people reacting to that. That's important to note. It's also important to note that if you take someone off the street to put them just in an emergency shelter without a place or a plan to pull them through you may have dealt with the immediacy of the humanitarian issue. But you haven't dealt with the longer term humanitarian issue because you haven't moved them closer to actually getting off the street. I think that's important to note. It's important to note that the cost associated with putting someone in emergency shelter. And providing for that is not altogether different from the cost associated actually getting them. And a and a permanent shelter. Which is why our focus and priority has been to weight toward the more permanent answer. And just as in

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this side and you corrected me on the numbers, but it's my understanding that the city for the longest period of time, people were doing good work and dealing with the emergencies. Directly in front of us. Never having the resources to really be able to deal with is that scale. We were living as a city with like 500 units of permanent supportive housing for years and years and years. And now we're set to quadruple the number of permanent supportive housing units we have in about three years. Which would make a significant difference. I think that's important to note. As you pointed out as well. We've also tried to locate some emergency shelters. But obviously there's community resistance to that, and we haven't found the right formula or the right path, even if we wanted to open up. More of that. And that gets even more pronounced. If you're talking about sanctioned camp areas, as opposed to non congregate living

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, which is more humane and safer and better so we have the next council that's coming in that is going to be wrestling with cause to end homelessness caused the deal with the immediacy of the humanitarian issue. And there are no easy quick answers. To those questions. And in the absence of having unlimited resources and having unlimited time. There's going to be forced choices that will leave us. Not being able to do everything that we would want to do, and the next council is going to have to pick priorities and focuses. I try to do that, as neutrally as I possibly can. I think I think that I think that makes sense. And I want to say just a few things about sanction camping because it has come up again and again and you know, our council has initiated looks at it, and it's proven to be you know, for all the reasons you suggested it, it is it is resource

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intensive. I think on the flip side of that the kinds of cleanup measures that we've done is all are also expensive. And you know, I remember when Esperanza was set up, there certainly was a lot of well, let me just say there were lots of conversations in the community about that. Place and what the state had done. One of the things though that has and it did not. You know, I went out there early on, and it did not have the resources that we would want people to have access to who are in a space like that it now over time has because of the work of various community groups, including really importantly, the other ones foundation. One of the things I do see in that area, though, is that the concentration of the focus has allowed for some of those resources to be delivered. Two. Two people who had been living in other encampments. And when I talked with residents, that was those were some of the things that they commented on that. Having some access to

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restrooms on a regular basis, having access to a level of security on site worth were things that had drawn them to that space. And so that is you know, those are as as the next council kind of considers the trade offs. I think those are those are some of the ones that they might consider. You know, as I drive around we have very large encampments with absolutely no access to a restroom facilities to freshwater to hand washing stations. You know, those are real serious concerns. So that's that's kind of the last thing I wanted to say about sanction encampments. It has been it has been not a. Conversation we've known what to do with exactly. I think we are also well. Yeah I'll mention storage later. Council member kitchen? Yes did you finish it in the okay, so I'm sorry. One more thing again and again. I think, too. We hear this repeated call for from police officers and others about

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you know, for asking people to leave one area. There is no other area to ask them to go. And we simply haven't there are no interim spaces where people can go. And I think that is still a huge need, whether whether it's an outdoor courtyard space as we've discussed at the arch or somewhere else in downtown or other kinds of spaces throughout the city. Where people can go and be safe and understand that they're not going to be asked to leave that space. I think I think that is a real need. Yeah , I'll be brief at my last comment is just that and thank you. Thank you, both for, sort of laying out the different aspects and you also dance, Diana. The pros and cons. You know of sanctioned campgrounds, and it's also a. It's a continuum, so it's not a black and white. So you know, so that is something for people to understand for the new council to understand and really work their way through the nuances.

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Because the bottom line is you know? Locations are difficult. Locations are difficult for shelters. And that has been one of the biggest challenges. The Esperanza community really started as a as a sanction encampment, but it's not that any longer. It has evolved. The esperanto community has now evolved to essentially a bridge shelter, and they are building. They're in the process of building tiny homes on it. So so it has been interesting to watch the evolution of the Esperanza community from a from a, you know. Parking lot area that people could come and pitch a camp on to what is now I would I would call it as much more of a of a bridge shelter, and perhaps it's evolving to more permanent housing. I'm not certain, but it is no longer a sanctioning campground. And so, so anyway, I

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think the bottom line I think we've articulated there's these are difficult questions. There's a lot of pros and cons, and there's no right answer. And there's no one answer. You know, it's a mix of things. So I could have 30 seconds. Because I think you you did point out the priority and the need and urge the setting of the priority to deal with that humanitarian issue. I would balance that if I were giving advice to the next group coming in. To really make sure that you're prioritizing ending homelessness in the city . And it's really important as best you can to deal with the kinds of challenges the council member tovo was addressing. But I would urge the council not to divert any funding away from actually ending homelessness. That long term if you're trying to get people out of tents and off our streets. The long term answer. Is going to be to provide the long term solution

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and were laid out on a path for that and proud that our community is raised almost 90% of that, and certainly the council in these council members of that on that and the county joined as well. But I urge the leaders coming in not to disrupt that path. And if anything to accelerate that path is as resources become available because that is really the only long term answer. Not have. To continue to fund the emergency levels that are necessary now, while we take care of that 3000 person. Bubble that we have the boa that eats the mouse. We have to handle that and take that off so we can get to more equilibrium state and so this might be a good time to kind of go back and talk about what were some of the resources and programs that were in place.

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Really, when we switch to the 10 1 system. And I want to get back to the point. Well let me just say mayor, I agree with you on making sure that our focus is laser. It's laser focused on and ending homelessness. I see the host team and storage and some of those some of those initiatives that have popped up, though, as ways of making sure that we're also tending to some of the emergency needs that are present among individuals experiencing homelessness, and I think it's to the next council to determine whether or not any kind of, safe camping areas are part of that kind of interim solution to so when I would just have been a real big fan of your work, and the councils were with respect to the host team, because I think that's been really important and quite frankly, you fought and were able to achieve funding for that at a time when getting funding for this whole area was like

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incredibly difficult thing to do , but I do agree with you. I think that's an integral part of our have our response and it was us to know who's on our streets and their names and what they need. And so that kind of outreach is just critical. The harder questions are the are the emergency. Places right are

expensive. Hard to locate. Don't actually get people off the street long term, but do deal with the immediately. The people see and there in lies the rub. Yeah and it is and it is because they're hard. Fought and controversial. They don't necessarily, I think, help us. Those conversations don't help us do what we really need to do, which is built community support and funding for the permanent solution. So it is a it is a path that may not be worth going down. So you know, before I would say there were multiple resources and efforts, and this

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you know, homelessness is definitely something that has a 10 1 council. We've probably we've talked more about, but I do want to acknowledge that in those years before the 10 1 council council members Riley mayor pro tem coal, we're really we're also really focused on raising raising this, so there was definitely a focus on permanent supportive housing. There were goals for the number of permanent supportive housing units to create the downtown density bonus program around that time was changed to benefit the creation of permanent supportive housing units are council with the resolution. I did changed it to also provide for vouchers so that those dollars can be used not just to construct ground up units but can also be used to help help individuals. Be housed in other other properties. And of course , we had the affordable housing trust fund, which are council expanded the ways in which that's funded through two different measures. And there were also there was a very strong and I want to say the downtown Austin alliance and others had had looked at permanent, supportive housing it

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would really been able to advocate successfully at the council for a commitment to using permanent supportive housing and recognizing the ways in which that benefited not just the individuals but also reduced costs to our criminal justice system to our health system to some of the other systems of care. That are that we're serving individuals who are experiencing homelessness. So there was a sense, you know, I think a real commitment of psh was the way it was what we wanted to be funding. And of course we had. We had some shelters. I think in all of those areas I have mentioned some we have expanded. And I can go into those, unless others want to talk about it, but we could maybe first talk about shelter. Because one of the important things that we've done with our emergency shelters we had several initiatives and funding efforts to expand the cities, the city owned women and children's shelter to provide

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for some more beds because we had multiple organizations come forward and point out that we had women dying on the streets of Boston. And needed safer spaces. We also provided funding and support

for the salvation Army's but of course, they did it primarily on their own. The salvation is creation of the family center, the wrath Gaber family center. At Tannehill right next to our cities, our cities, women and children's shelter, and I think really importantly, is the work that we did that our council did at the arch and how we think about shelter and that was in large part because we brought in some outside consultants. They took a look at the arch. They took a look at the area outside the arch, and they pointed out that one of the things this was a and introduced disciplinary conversation that involved our police and our folks across the entire city group. I think mayor . Your team had representation there. I was part of that. I think you're, staff attended as well council member kitchen and

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lots of non profits and one of the highlights. There are several imperatives that came out of that one was the need to really interrupt what had become a drug marketplace right outside the arch where people were coming down and praying on clients of the arch and guests of the arch and really making an unsafe environment for everybody around, but especially people who are trying to access services. They also pointed out the need for physical enhancements at the arch to create more space, more livable space within that. I think urban alchemy has really taken that to a new level and I haven't seen the changes, but I hear they've done some tremendous things at the arch, but we also provided case management. So it was so we really envisioned with the help of experts in this field we really envisioned and said that that those changes in place here at at our council of providing more money for case management make make sure that guests at the arch and are Salvation Army shelters were getting case management. We helped expand the spaces we helped, set a path for getting the individuals who are

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working at those spaces paid paid better and better training. I think that's still a lot to do. As I look at the two DUIs ahead of the next council, I think getting a living wage for those who are doing that important work is really critical. But those are some of the things that I see that we've done. That we did with with regard to shelter and of course, there were the kind of special initiatives that we did that one summer that were designed to support that and to try to interrupt that drug marketplace, but some of the things that we've said in place, but I think really need to continue. Are that the additional dollars for the case management the additional support for really making sure that the services are delivered better, that the individuals who are working there are have have good training. They feel valued and they have better salaries. Anything we want to say about yeah. And then. Council member kitchen, then the mayor. Yeah I would like to, I think that, I think we've. Really taking a

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look at it, you know it's shelter and made, significant progress towards trying to evolve shelter. To two best provide the services to fit its role in the picture, and I think, as Diana said earlier, there's a process going on right now, too. To continue that assessment. And you know in based on national understanding and our local understanding about what works best. I wanted to come in a bit on you know that. What we've been talking about is public space management and shelter, which are components of the bigger picture. And so I wanted to talk for a moment about the bigger picture as the as the mayor was mentioning, I think that, one of the things that I've really been ah, excited about that. We all have really worked on recently is what I see came forward out of the finding home 80 X effort. Because I think what? What that

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effort has done is put a is it is. Provide context and look at the whole system. And point out. What we need at each part each part of the system because homelessness response requires a system and a number of different areas of that's really helping someone who is unsheltered go through a process to permanent housing, and that requires a whole bunch of different steps along the way, and a bunch of different kinds of services. So, so what? I am hopeful is that the next council will embrace and further you know, with Diana and her team what has been started with finding home 80 X, which really recognized and I want which really recognize that this is a this is a community issue. It takes everyone coming to the table. And then the other aspect of that is. I really want

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to. I can't couldn't say this more strongly. We can do this. As a community, we can end homelessness. This is not hopeless. And I think that's I think that's a drumbeat that I'm hoping the new council will be repeating over and over again with the community. You know, I want to thank the mayor for helping initiate finding home 80 X. I want to thank the folks in the community that are pushing forward with the home of finding home 80 X, and I want to just emphasize that that community part of this is critical. And you know if I had to say one thing over and over again, it would just be we can end homelessness. And we need to keep our eye on the housing. So so I want to give Diana the opportunity to speak to funding home 80 X in the context it offers from a community perspective, because I know she's been very involved with that and just wanted to see if she had any comments before we

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could we do? Yeah. Before we get there. Could we hear from the mayor and I also wanna can I can I step us back one step there. So you're you raised a point that I think is critical, okay? Actually mayor you should go first, cause I called on you. I'm standing ahead. You go ahead and then I want to take us back

to the and maybe you want to address this plan. That you had asked some folks to do. Okay get to that. I just want to say and cancer. Dr. I think you did a really good job of listing the initiatives that were implemented even before the 10 1 counselor came in some some within but but even before the 10 1 council and one thing that we can say I think it was true is that we had great organizations doing really good work. The successful raided caritas has always been incredibly high, but just not them. I mean so many organizations working on this challenge. I think in real respect what the only the only

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real change that's happened here recently, and I think it's significant change. Is that wow . You and others were calling for funding at the scale of the challenge that never came. So we had organizations and people and they were doing great work. But not the tool or the capacity to be able to do. That were five times for five times as many people are 10 times. As many people so I don't think it's that we came up with anything. No. In terms of approach or need , going back to and Howard's days on the echo and your days as leadership. And the work that you were doing in the health where there's nothing new. What is new is for the very first time we have everybody in the community, not arguing with one another over which element to do. When we finally said that's actually fun, all the things that need to be done and not

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beat each other up on if you had to pick between these three things. Which one do you pick? When the answer to that question is, if you pick any one of those three things you will fail. That the only way to really do this is to do all of the pieces of the program because they're mutually reinforcing. And supporting. So I think that if anything that's happened is here recently is the resources are available to act as scale that's led to us not have to deal with with the realities of the competitions of poverty because everybody could get funded to do the important work. It gave us the ability to bring in as Diana was saying new partners new players. Increased capacity of organizations that have been here and have been biting at the bit doing great work but unable to scare I think that's what's changed, and that's what's magic about this moment. As we have the resources we have everybody on board pushing in the same direction. And we have the

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ability to do scale. Yeah, thank you. I think you really articulated that. So clearly and there are some changes in how we think about homelessness. One is kind of the movement away from shelter as the only solution. And I want to credit Mary. You had asked the different housing stakeholders to come together and come up with a plan and I think that work really helped us all. See that spectrum of need

really that that you have to fund across the whole and you're absolutely I'm so glad you captured the point that we had organizations that are that we're already doing great work. With with the clients they were working with and having great success in keeping those individuals and housing but not performing at scale, but it was that shift. I think to thinking about it too. What what? Probably those providers new but not necessarily the policymakers that it really had to be a spectrum of investments around there. And though you and I and others were calling for that

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private investment. There really wasn't. The community piece of that of involvement in that spectrum until finding home 80 X . And so that's a that's a really important important point and you captured really well, I think what what the difference is about that we can invest in have to across that, but I do want to do as we're kind of doing this chronology. I think that planned and homelessness which this council eventually passed was really a key to helping reshape how, at least at a city level, we think about those investments. Did you still want to hear from, Diana about finding home peace. If there's anything you want to add Diana just give you the opportunity for there's anything you want to add from your perspective. I think perhaps just that, I think you know the partnership represented by finding him. 80 X is important in in a number of ways. One is this very critical

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in terms of the stakeholders outside of the service provider community coming together and agreeing to support and overarching initiative. That looked at sort of appropriately resource in different parts of the system. And so that was, of course, the city. Clearly we've been talking about private funders, but very important partnership on the part of the county of our housing authorities, central health and leveraging funds from the feds and the state. But the other pieces that you know we have a broad strategy. I think that over time our community has done a really good job of identifying as you've spoken to, the city really supporting evidence based practices in this space? Through our contracting and the work that we do ourselves. You know, when we think about what's happening in the community right now, we have very significantly increase the resources available

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. So for the first time in my memory, and I've been doing this for 20 years or so, the you know the scale is going to approach the need. Our nonprofit partners are not only who executes most of this work, but they're really critical thought partners. And so I think that part of the challenge of the next couple of years is that now we are going to be in execution phase on some of the elements of this plan. Challenges will arise. I think you know, case in point is that we have a lot more resources to support people in

housing and the housing market that has ever ever tighter in terms of getting people into those units. So you know, part of our job as a city is to help be a partner in to define those broad strategies and sort of areas of investment. But also to troubleshoot and just be really committed to, you know, continuously asking. What

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can we do better as a system? How can the city play it's appropriate role in in, you know, working through the challenges that will inevitably come up as we implement of a very ambitious plan. And I think that really teased up. Well one of the things I wanted to make sure we captured in this discussion. Which is the work that that mayor Leffingwell started. But I think mayor Adler you really lead on with regard to the veterans initiative. And then, of course, there was a similar youth initiative. But I think it's the veterans initiative and some of those really innovative ways of trying to bring in the private partners that I think is a good model. Yeah I think it's a good as you look at the historical perspective on this. It was also one of the focus on veterans that that, mayor Leffingwell had pledged to do. Ah was really one of the first times that all of the different elements joined together. To achieve a really specific strategic. Goal there

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was really outside of their individual missions, so it was something that only be achieved by having lots of people working together. On a goal that was adopted different than their normal. And it did work well and it brought in the private sector. And we were one of the few cities in the country to get net effect of zero and veteran homelessness. What happened then was we thought we could scale up from that. You know the children were working wells, Susan McDonald and life works doing a great job getting half of the children on our streets without homes off our streets. Those projects demonstrated to us that we could, in fact, be successful if we're willing to put the resources against it. The challenge we had with veterans is that we learned that you know , while there was a lot of support for veterans, they're not so much for homelessness. And that's why I probably we had a lot of the support that we had for veteran homelessness, so we weren't able to translate it

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into scaling up the overall system. The lessons learned that we could be successful, real important. And quite frankly, as we're now going out to the private sector and asking for dollars, one of the things they look at as an evidence piece that it's worthy to contribute to finding home 80 X are those successes with veterans and children. Can you just highlight a couple of the strategies that you did working because you brought in partners partners like the apartment association and others who hadn't necessarily been at

the table working to end homelessness before and I just want to make sure that we capture that. Those and the risk fund, the risk mitigation fund that you developed. Right and I think that by looking at it, this challenge is one. That's a system. You can then say, where is it? That we're not moving? People forward. Where are people backing up? What are the challenges that are necessary to drive the entire system? And one of the challenges we faced. And quite frankly, it's a challenge being faced now, maybe even to a

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greater degree is how do we get spaces for people? There there are almost 500 people I understand in our community right now that have vouchers and supports that will pay for them to be in a place. But we have no place to put them in. We haven't where we're shy 500 landlords or 500, property owners or 500. Spaces for people that are willing to take a voucher that puts money in their bank account on the first of every month, the most regularly paint tendency to possibly have but what we did back then were tovo as we created a risk fund because we had heard from from from landlords that they were concerned they want to participate, but but what if someone came in that that trashed out the apartment or what if someone left and they lost red for two or three months because they they had to go through an eviction process. So we created and I think there would still be access to a risk mitigation fund operating

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outside of government. You know, the government where you can get caught for six months. With a pending applications for reimbursement. How about we had folks from the private sector create a fund. That made it to the landlord who had it was willing to be part of this. But how to challenge could call in the morning and get reimbursement check that afternoon to minimize their risks. And quite frankly, when we did that there were a lot of people that said don't do that, because your fund is going to get depleted. A matter of days. We made the leap of faith that really people weren't going to make those claims, and most challenges arose. And we also believe that those challenges would be few and far between. Both those things proved to be true. I think there are only one or two people that actually ultimately made a claim on the fund. Because as it turns out, tenants were not problem tenants and they were mixing well in their communities, and there wasn't a need for reimbursement.

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Great so where would we like to go next? I have a little list of some of the other initiatives that we've that we've done that I think are worth capturing and then I've got a little list going up two DUIs. And did you have a counselor? At some point whenever you're ready? I do want to ask some ask a question or two about hell. Yeah I think I think now might be a good time move into that one of the comments that I

wanted to be sure that I mentioned is council member kitchen. When you brought this forward, there were there was a lot of pushback and some real solid concerns from members of the community and some from the dais about whether this would be serving representative group, whether it would be an equitable approach. And you know, I want to credit you for working and Diana grave for your work to really make sure that that that that would be a guiding principle. But we would move on. And started. You know,

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I think sometimes, sometimes, and what I've learned on council is that you need to. You need to move forward and try something with the agreement that if it's not working, you know that these are going to be the ways in which we evaluate it and if it's and if it's not providing the equitable global approach that we've all committed to, then we would stop and regroup. And switch, but thank you for persevering and I was a solid sponsor and supporter of that, because it seemed to me an approach that could make a real huge impact. And it certainly has but I think it's also helpful to remember that not everybody was on board in the beginning and sometimes stepping forward and trying things with an agreement that we're going to stop if it's if those problems if those what Leila fireside once called and I totally different setting up, the parade of horrors actually occurs, you know that we're going to stop so anyway, I just wanted to mention that before before I forgot. Yes we started hell as a as a pilot program. First year was a pilot with for locations.

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And then after that made it permanent, as Diana mentioned earlier, it is a it is a small program. And I would advance and I think Diana said this also that it needs to be taken to scale. With that said it is one piece as we've been talking about when he'd to remember that all these all these initiatives that we're talking about our piece of a system. And the entire and you need every piece as the mayor said. Because if you just focus on one piece you're not going to be successful. So the I think what the hell? What would he was designed specifically to do was to look at a process from the perspective of the individual, and to focus on places. So to focus on encampments that are particularly, dangerous. Ah, ah! To focus on those in cameras that are particularly dangerous

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and what is different about it is the identifying the location and then offering everybody that is at that location, the opportunity to move together to bridge shelter combined with services and combined with the resources to move them to permanent housing. So it's a very it's a different approach in the sense that it is, it from an individual's perspective, it looks looks at and provides resources for every step of the

way for that individual. And at the same time and recognizes that there are places that people are camping that are particularly dangerous and it closes those places. So so that's the that's that's what's different about it. It certainly doesn't work for everybody. It's not intended to. It can't work for everybody. It's certainly not not the only only system that we would want to have in our system addressing homelessness, so I think we've learned a lot from it. I wanted

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to ask Diana what she feels like we've learned from it. The these statistics that 80 plus percent alright, maybe 35 plus percentage of people who are offered this say yes. I think is significant because one of the things that people say is that no one that people living on the streets wanna live on the streets, and that's just not accurate. They the data shows us that's not true. So some very high significant portion of people are interested in proceeding at shelter if it's offered to them. And interested in doing that with the folks that they have been camping around. So there's that. So then we look at well what? You know what now we're at the phase of this project where we're having starting to see some results about how it works in terms of getting folks all the way to permanent housing. So I would consider the 70% figure that we heard earlier success. 70% of people that have been engaged in

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hell or either moving on to home or moving on to permanent. Permanent housing either remaining through the bridge shelter or through other sources. So I'd like to ask, Diana to speak to that. I think that we've learned a lot from this program, and I'd like her to speak to what we've learned. From my perspective. I see that we've learned that this type of programs and what works for a significant number of people. It doesn't work for everybody. I would never expect it to work for everyone considering the different challenges that people have. So but I think 70% you know, which is where we're at right now is a very good percentage. So Diana, would you just share with us? What? You think that you all have learned and then and then I think we've had some conversations on in this committee about some additional two DUIs to further that to further that learn learning. Yes council member. I will speak to some things I that

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we have learned, and I think that we are still learning. And also I would like to set this in the context of, having by necessity during the pandemic stood up the protective lodges, which in many ways informed this model, right, we had a large, very vulnerable, population on the streets with often serious underlying health conditions who needed to be able to socially distance before the vaccines were available. And so the stick city stood up five protective lodges specifically for people who were

unsheltered and needed that space to, essentially distance. As we wound those down in in 2021. I think we've learned that people were much more effective at getting placed into housing when they were in the more stable environment of the shelter and that they were more stable in that shelter. In part because it was non

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congregate. And by which I mean people have in the hotels, the now bridge shelters, individual rooms. And so. The not the acceptance rate is 87% 87% of people are saying yes, and I want to clarify also that we're actually doing this intervention the encampments happening pretty quickly. So we're talking about an offer that in these cases is made, you know, probably over the course of 34 days. So those folks are saying yes without a ton of time to consider it. And so we do have people sometimes that say no. But later, you know , are are willing right? Because they know folks who have moved in. And who, who have had a positive experience. It has been one of the reasons that acceptance rate is so high is that this is low barrier shelter, and so we really look

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at some of the things that have kept folks out of your traditional sort of many, you know, multiple cops in a room type shelter and think about how we what we can adjust. People can bring their pets. If people are there's a couple they can stay together in the shelter. They are not separated. And as you mentioned, I think very importantly, we invite. If when, when we offer shelter to an entire encampment. People are not faced with leaving their entire, you know, social network from one day to the other. There is a curfew, but people don't have to leave during the day, right? They have they have free ability to come and go. On on site. And again we it's important that they have, a sense of what their path out of that shelter will be. I think

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some of the challenges we've had and things that we, in some cases have resolved in some cases are really still working on is understanding and getting , our our our resources aligned . So that case management managers can, engage with clients quickly once they had moved in. We know that the housing search itself is often taking quite a while now because of the market. And so we don't want people to lose. Their optimism that in their sense that in fact, they are going to be house because we think we do lose some people from shelter. When that occurs. I think. You know, really working through how we create community on the site. And have you know we're not here talking about the hard sort of,

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you know, or or more formal social worker case management, but how we build that community. And I think one of the, there. There are many, many advantages of having private spaces. But one of the potential downsides is the greater possibility of isolation for individuals. So those are things we continue to work on. We're happy to have another provider in this space now in the form of Austin area urban league. Where we can be working with them also about their experience and things that they are trying therefore are, for example, employing peers on site, so people with lived experience of homelessness or behavioral health conditions. And really, you know, I think that we have opportunities to continue to refine the model. Nationwide and here in Austin, our first experiment with this, at least for single adults. Has almost uniformly been in

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converted hotels because they could very quickly be, repurposed into shelter. And so I think one question I have for us in the longer term, particularly as we think about our shelter system and how it will evolve over time is whether we can take the best elements of what we have. Have been able to access using sort of an adaptive reuse of a former hotel. And apply those in some other settings that may make it easier or more efficient to operate. We may not need you know some of these rooms because they're extended stay. Hotels are essentially the size of us all small studio. So we might be able to gain some economies of scale. In the future, but that's something that will be continuing to explore. Thank you. So I think we're scheduled

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until about 11 30, so maybe we should should start shifting if there are other items that we want to talk about, but and then shift to kind of where we see some of the continued needs. I made a list of some of the other things that I that I so our council do. One was to create the mental health, the homeless wellness center to provide the funding that that the downtown Austin alliance was a partner with with us in and has scaled back, but it continues to provide a little bit of support for that for mental health services, behavioral health services for those individuals, particularly in the downtown area, who are who are in need and are interested in on the wait list for that, for that. I see that as a huge continued need. I think that's a program that we really could cease to scale up. You know, back to the conversation before about how we how we really make sure that we're meeting the immediate needs of individuals who are experiencing homelessness. We have two new resources. Several

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new resources that I think are really important. One is the storage program. The violet crown storage, which allows individuals to store their belongings safely and including ideas and other kinds of things that are really challenging to keep ahold of on the street. As the redevelopment that's currently in the health south parking lot, and so I want to highlight that that's something I know. The staff have been looking to create storage areas in other parts of town because we have people experiencing homelessness throughout the town, and so that geographic dispersal remains a need, but. There's going to eventually be a need to relocate the violet crown storage as well because it's in the site that's being redeveloped. Our council created restrooms and water fountains. Now those are designed to serve our entire community. But they are also serving those who are on housed who had need of them. I see that, a real need to continue. To continue that work in other

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parts of town. We especially started with the downtown, but I think we are council has also talked about wanting to see those water fountains. Throughout our city as we as we face climate change and an increasingly hard climate, we definitely need access to water throughout. But those those have provided resource that we didn't previously have two individuals in our downtown area who are in housed. And the sobering center is another important has been another important part of this. This again is serving our entire community. It, individuals who experiencing homelessness are not are not their primary clientele, but certainly certainly are part of the guests that they're serving at the sobering center and now are serving in different ways by by also holding over. Some of those individuals who have substance use issues and have expressed an interest in longer term care and entering a program. The sobering center has really very creatively and innovatively under their executive director, Laura Elmore, found a way to keep those individuals at the

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center for a couple of days, even though that's not what the center was devised for and until there is a bit available, and so that's I see that that is an area that's really going to need some support and expansion. But there is such a critical need, but definitely the services of the sobering center have been an important component. And in the resources that we're offering. And then I mentioned it, and the mayor talked about it before, too, as the host team. And this was created. And in large part under the leadership of the downtown Austin alliance, modeling it after something that Houston had done. It's an interdisciplinary team of we all know what it is. It's an intuitive culinary team that has police and case workers and others. But it too, I think represented a shift in how we think about what services we need to provide for individuals experiencing homelessness because it is really it is designed to meet those emergency needs to try to prevent crises, medical crises and other kinds of crises before before they. Or to recognize those kinds of

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issues before they become crises to connect with individuals to build relationships. So that at a minimum, when some of those individuals have a place that's ready for them on housing, there's somebody potentially on the host team. Who knows how to locate them. So the host team I see as part of part of the council of the city shift to not just funding actual units, actual shelter, but also looking at how we can help meet the needs of those who are experiencing homelessness who are in you know what is, unfortunately, a very long queue for housing. Are there other things that you all are aware of? That we should highlight as initiatives or programs. That our council started that. Maybe that that we want to acknowledge but also recognized as areas of need. I agree with the emphasis that you're giving to mental health support and intervention because that's just so key and

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so underfunded at the at the state and federal level, frankly, and my hope is that the state steps up to do a lot more in that area, and I would make that up. Lobbying push of the city council because there's been some indication that people on both sides of the aisle now recognizing I need. And just as a reminder that you know you can . We need to provide more immediate support for folks that are that are just needing help in or otherwise lost on our streets. But even when they get that initial moment of intervention, which is necessary they're immediately then becomes the need of then where do we put that person? There's got to be a home for that person on the backside of any intervention, and maybe it's integrated. With continued care and support. But we can't look at at the intervention by itself. It's got to be coupled as with all things and homelessness with a home on

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the back end for that, really, to be able to help. So I agree with you. I think that's deserving of emphasis. The other thing at a really high level. Because I would just point out again that while it's incredibly exciting to be 90% funded toward a three year operational plan that means there's still 10% still to go and there's \$65 million to be raised and there are conversations with private funders and foundations throughout our city. Have expressed interest in being part of those conversations, and those conversations need to continue and they need to expand and they need to reach more people. I think that was the most important things incoming leadership group could do would be to help support those people in the community that are continuing that effort with finding only 80 X and it's just really helpful to have the council and the commissioner's court putting their shoulder to that, too. It gives it legitimacy. That same level with some of the funders that companies and corporations. But

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I really do believe that we went through a period of time where most everybody in this city recognized the challenge was was was demanding action. And we're at the place right now, where there's a very easy, quick and multifaceted way for people to actually take the next step, which is to say. In addition to complaining or identifying the challenge, I want to be part of solving it. And at this point, there's no reason their excuse for someone or a company. Not to participate. There are so many different ways you can particularly pick your particular entity in particular particular. Project, you can pick up particular. Area that interests you that you think is important. You can find completely separate from any government involvement directly to organizations that are doing work. New organizations that are doing work. You can join a participate in what is being publicly funded because there's help there just so many there is

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no excuse. For someone in our community right now not participating in the solution. Thank you. Thank you for that one other area I want to say. So well to other things that I think are are still on the to do list. One is the mental health diversion center, which is something that we have, as a council expressed an interest in supporting Travis county and doing our support was limited to one policy action to look at at the potential piloting it at the sobering center, which did not turn out to be the best solution, but I think that expresses the city's interest in supporting such a method, and I know that Travis county commissioners, court and staff continue to explore that idea. I think it's very much needed. I mean conversations a lot with with various downtown stakeholders and others, and I think that that is a very necessary and very needed resource in our community, and I just want to highlight as I did

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at our last council meeting, the downtown Austin community court provides incredible incredible resources. Including two individuals experiencing homelessness, and they are continue to be in a need of permanent location. That's not something that that our council , was able to come to a consensus on and that's definitely a need in the future, and I want to also note that Pete Valdez, really leader at that organization just announced his retirement and we didn't have an opportunity to honor him that he is an extraordinary public servant. And this community is better off for his service. And so I know he will be much missed. And that was kind of on my list of two DULs are there other kinds of things that we want to highlight that the next council just just one item of the, that I'll mention that haven't before and it's a it's a emerging item. So as as Diana mentioned the there are

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efforts. Beginning to assess. The best practice and way to provide shelter. Similarly we have started down the road as a city to look at funding, street outrage. And, and what goes along with the question of street outreach is the question of navigation centers. And that is an area that has a city we have not. Ah! Discussed. Yet about how you offer those services. So this is this is a way to work with those in the community that are offering services. To people and encampments who are living in sheltered and, and so what's the best practice for that is that you know. Is that going to them through St out? Outreach is that a hotline? Sunrise churches is, or sunrise navigation center is

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, piloting, and it started a hotline effort. To that folks that are living in sheltered can use to help connect to services. So those, and this council passed direction that I brought forward? Just really recently to suggest, that this is an area for our homeless strategy office to consider. It is they they have a lot of work stacked up. So it is not the first thing so because they're working on the shelter question now. But but the question of what is the best way for this community to provide those kind of navigation services? And to provide that kind of street outrage is something that requires some further conversation. Ah and you know, perhaps over the next year or so, that'll be something the homeless strategy office can address. I think that I think

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what that points to me from a bigger picture is we've had a lot of learnings from these different programs about the best ways in which to offer services. This this is one piece just like shelters. One piece, and we're evolving our community. We're not evolving our community. We have a lot of best practices already occurring in our community. But this is a way to take a look at one particular area and say we're going to find some things. We have funded some things as a city. So is it working? Is there a better way to do it? Those kinds of things. To address respite. I know this is an area that you have. Thank you. A lot of attention on respite is another area that we need to that. We as a community, have have begun and have actually been working on for many years. So taking respite to scale is always been our challenge. And what is respite mean respite

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means on one level. It means if someone who is living on sheltered, is ends up in the hospital or the emergency room and is discharged fundamentally should not be discharged back to the street. And you're hearing me. You're hearing my passion for this. I just think it is ah , I just think it is not humane

and horrible to expect someone to recover. After a hospital stay or emergency room visit on the streets. So there's that aspect. There is also the aspect of respite that relates to someone who is just who is still on the streets. Someone who has the flu or respiratory illness or something else like that without respite, they just worsens. So, there are. This is an area that central health has begun a program. It needs to go to scale. I know they're working on that. Ah there have been other conversations also with

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other parts, other parts of the community about putting in place respite programs. But I would say that at this point in time our city is ah, woefully on. Under resourced. From. A respite perspective. And so the challenges have been not unlike the challenges that we've been talking about for other programs, a matter of capacity, a matter of who funds who's responsible. How does the community work together to bring that to scale and those are not, easy issues? If they were, they would have already been addressed. So and I do want to if we could take just a minute or so if Diana wants to say anything about respite. I don't know that I want to say anything about respite that you haven't already, said council member. I think that one of the things you signaled, is part and parcel of how we are thinking

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about our work going forward. We are, as you know, relatively young division we've existed for three years and the first year which was the first year the pandemic. We had an interim officer, largely holding down the fort on her own. Is that we? While we will be addressing issues as they come up and responding to direction from council. We also want to be really intentional about setting our work. It in a way that allows us to really make meaningful change in a particular area because there are so many areas to work in. We are very aware of needing to look at street outreach. How we coordinate it, how we can better support the work in the field and how that relates. For example, today resource center, which links to what council member tovo spoke about the storage resources. Certainly, you know, also are thinking about other elements of the

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system, in the permanent housing realm. And so I think that you know, I would mention that are related to the mental health diversion effort. The city does have representation. On the steering committee that is being led by, doctors, Jackowski and so we'll continue to look for opportunities for partnership. In whatever comes out of that that group's recommendation process and I would just add on, on the respite area. The central health is stepping up to the plate. And, and I appreciate their leadership. I consider, respite issue. I health care issue specifically, I consider all this health care, but I really am

pleased to see and would like to say that our healthcare community, is the best place to centralize a response to respite along with

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the other folks in our community that are working on these issues, so I appreciate central health stepping up to the plate. And I know that others in the community or having conversations about doing so. I greatly appreciate your your leadership on the issues of respite care, and I hope with your new appointment. You you, you're not going to be far from helping this city realize the answers to this because the pressure needs to be kept on in this area. Just two things I would point out real fast. One is someone goes into respite. We need the place for them so that they're not being discharging on our street. But as soon as they feel better, they're going to leave respite and where do they go? And if we don't have a housing for them again, they will be back on our streets and back in the emergency room and back in similar so once again, all roads leading to we actually need to get places for people to be and support for people in

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those places, and I'm encouraged by the opportunities that exist . I understand that community first is what make us spot available. In in that environment as part of phase if we get community players to step up you know, it's a difficult time right now. I know for hospital systems given what's happening in the market, but the suggestion of being able to move forward as it needs to happen, and it's something that really plays into I need those folks have and I've seen real successful models and other parts of the country where hospital and care operating systems and essence. Purchase beds in a facility that then serve them all. The price of the bed they pay is really 100 and 25% of what that bed really costs. 150% of what that bed really cost, but they always have a number of beds available to them. And with that little premium that they're paying their also beds than there are

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available to the community general. But we have to work through the challenges associated with finding and operating. Partner in those kinds of things. So again really important work. I just mentioned those particular. So if someone's watching this tape, they know where to where to the focus in thank you. Any other issues we should elevate or shall we? Wrap. Well, colleagues. I want to just say this has been an area of incredible importance to me professionally and personally into my district 19 and, you know, working alongside the two of you. With. With that commitment that I know you share has been just extraordinarily important and I want to thank our staff. Diana and. You know so many so many others of all of you who have supported that work. There's still a tremendous amount to do, and I think that's

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what makes this kind of conversation. Really challenging , because I know if we had six more months. We keep doing that that hard work together and continue to see this forward, but I think we've we have a good capable group coming on board and I hope that they prioritize this issue well as well as well as as the district. Council member in the area that that had for some time the largest percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness. I know these were this was an important constituency to me, and I want to really thank Shannon holly and Ashley Richardson on my staff who worked on this issue just day in and day out and really passionately as well. Council member kitchen. One other thing I do want to mention it's it is. It is a larger piece in the community. It impacts homelessness, to some extent, but it's much larger and that is the Austin cares program, which is the placing of mental health clinicians in the 911 call center. So that is a that's another piece in our community that recognizes the important of

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importance of emphasizing the most appropriate response to mental health crises. And by placing mental health clinicians, and that's that is a partnership with integral care with our, with R. M S department. It's a P D. And it is a very innovative nationally recognized, program at this point. I also want to think Ken Craig on my staff who really, helped lead the effort to get Austin cares going and also has been just an amazing, leader with regard to homelessness. And you know, my staff as a whole has tried to be very responsive as you have to what we hear in our community. And you know, all of them bring that to the table . But but Ken has been our lead. For our office, as well as the city in terms of helping constituents. Address homelessness in the community,

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so I want to thank him for that. And council member kitchen. I neglected in my comments really , to thank you for your extraordinary leadership and mayor for yours, and I see that you have comments and I'll let you close this out. And I appreciate that. And really, you know, we've we've had our moments collectively as we have. Argued between us on the best ways to get the places but I have always admired your leadership and felt that we were aligned and where we wanted to get to and I also know that the movement that the city is made in this area would not have happened without your both of you. Commitment to this area. One thing I would just like to mention only because we didn't out loud and the degree of this is a historical preservation moment. I wanted to talk a little bit about the camping ban and the work that we did indeed criminalizing homelessness. You know they didn't grow out of a desire to make any kind of broad

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statements or even to be particularly controversial. At the time. It was just a recognition that while somebody who is creating a public safety risk or public health harm should be. Ticketed or arrested. Somebody who is not doing those things whose it was only crime or offense was that he didn't have a place to live. Should not be someone that was getting ticketed for that or put in jail for that, that there just had to be a better solution. And we all recognize that and we're struggling with a system that was perhaps all too efficiently. Ticketing or putting people in jail when that was their their offense. Ah we were doing such a good job of that. That it was. People weren't people weren't recognizing. I think the extent of the challenge that was existing in our in our city. But having taken that the first action to decriminalize homelessness because it was the right thing to do. I think that

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when we learned lessons on how to do it, if we could do it over again, I think we would be managing. Shared public space is better than we did. But I believe in the reason that we moved in this way. And I also believe that when you look at other cities on the west coast that if we had continued to manage it the way we were the challenge. We continue to get larger and larger and more entrenched to the point that the scale of the challenge would be so great. We couldn't solid. I am one of the byproducts of going through what we went through and the disruption and discomfort associated with seeing people without the homes in our midst. The one that led to conversations about whether or not we have just created a lot of people experiencing homelessness. Or whether people were actually seeing now the challenge we had but I also believe fundamentally, that of our community actually saw the challenge. This is a community that would step forward. To fix it. And I believe we've done

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that. And I think we've done that in ways that most other cities in the country have not, and I think we have a chance to be the first city our size and our situation to actually end homelessness. I go back to your point. Kitchen weekend and this but the reason we're on this path is in part because we went through that cathartic. Disruption. I think that I'm not sure we would be in the place we're in right now. Had we not done that. And as a postscript, I would just point out the conversations that's taking place right now in Los Angeles. Brand new mayor Karen bass bass. Stepping forward, declaring an emergency in Los Angeles did deal with almost this. It was the number one issue in their city. Mayoral election. Because they did hide it for longer than we did in the scale did get so big that they're having trouble with dealing with it. But if you listen to her conversations right now and what they're going to be trying to do it just

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reaffirms for me the path the correctness and of the path that we're on. Because at this point is I hear mayor bass talk. I realized what's angelus is really a step or two behind where we are, and they're trying now to create the kind of the systemic response but in a world where it's going to be so difficult, I wish her and that city the best we've gone to school on those cities not to repeat what they did, but to try to avoid the path. That they Portland's San Francisco and Seattle were on and we're on that path now to avoid that. And. And while we went through disruptive times, I just think those disruptive times are now enabling us to be where we. Thank you, mayor. And if anyone on the new council here wants to look at that, I believe we passed a resolution asking our manager to evaluate just that very issue as well of whether

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declaring a crisis would would bring in new resources. Well again. Thank you colleagues for your extraordinary leadership in this area. Thank you to all of our city staff, current and past who have have really worked and continue to work day in and day out on these issues entire are many community partners and non profits were engaged in this work every day. Thank you. We stand adjourned at. 11 32 am. Thank you to our city hall staff.