

SAFE PARK RICHMOND PROGRAM LAUNCH



WHAT IS SAFE PARK RICHMOND?

The City of Richmond Safe Parking Program was authorized by the City of Richmond City Council in February 2021 as a one year pilot project, located at Civic Center Plaza. The Safe Parking Pilot Program will provide a safe and secure place for unsheltered car and recreational vehicle dwellers to park and sleep, have access to services and amenities like trash disposal, showers, meals and case management. The program will also reduce the number of recreational vehicles and cars parked on city street and decrease enforcement actions by law enforcement. The Program is funded by City of Richmond Affordable Housing in-lieu dollars, and Contra Costa County Homeless Assistance Program funds, in addition to private donations and in-kind services.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OUTREACH

The goal of the program is to provide a safe haven and an opportunities to create a path to more permanent stability. Outreach for the programs will begin with the existing vehicle encampments. The program is open to adults (two adults per vehicle maximum) that meet the program criteria, and agree to abide by the program agreements. The program is open to employed and non-employed applicants. The project is managed by the Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB). For more information about the program visit: <https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/4027/Safe-Parking-Pilot-Program>

PROGRAM LAUNCH PHASE 1: MARCH 2021

- Capital improvements including fencing, power, lighting, trash disposal, and site inspections and footprint for the Civic Center Plaza begin and coordination with developing an off-street parking program, and coordinating with impacted stakeholders.
- HCEB and community partners begin outreach and assessment to vehicle communities to identify potential program applicants, assess their needs, and identify and barriers to program participation that can be lessened.
- Operational staff, site security, and program operators are identified, and begin to prepare to receive program participants.
- Staff makes presentations to local neighborhood and community groups to answer questions and solicit feedback.

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PROGRAM LAUNCH PHASE 2: APRIL- MAY 2021

- Capital Improvements and site plans are completed.
- Parking plans, coordination with any impacted stakeholders are put in place.
- Program participants are selected and begin move in.
- A community advisory process is implemented for the program to share updates and information about the program and connect with impacted groups.

PROGRAM LAUNCH PHASE 3: MAY 2021 – MARCH 2022

- Continued monitoring and evaluation of the program goals and success and coordination with the County COC Homeless System of Care
- Continued efforts to develop a scattered site model within the City for vehicle dwellers
- Fund development and identification of an appropriate long-term site
- Program “wind down” exiting dwellers to rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing and other

HOW CAN I HELP

If you are interested in donating in-kind services or funds to the program, please contact Marichelle Alcantara malcantara@hceb.org or Michelle Milam at mmilam@richmondpd.net

LAUNCH PRIORITY NEEDS

- Prepared Meal Delivery Services/ Fresh Produce Boxes
- Certified Mechanic Repair Services
- Employment Training Opportunities for Site Participants
- Storage Donation
- Laundry Service

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Safe Parking Frequently Asked Questions

Updates:

On February 23, 2021 the City Council authorized a one-year pilot program in the Civic Center Parking lot on Barrett and 25th to be managed by Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB).

What is a Safe Parking Pilot Program?

The Safe Parking Pilot Program is a parking program managed by a service provider. The Safe Parking Pilot Program would create a safe and secure place for car and recreation vehicle dwellers to park and sleep, increase access to available services, reduce traffic and the number of people living illegally in their vehicles on City streets, decrease enforcement actions and resulting legal costs to homeless individuals, and provide resources to secure permanent housing and economic stability. Please see the FAQ below. If you have additional questions please contact Michelle [Milam at mmilam@richmondpd.net](mailto:mmilam@richmondpd.net) or Emily Carroll at Emily_carroll@ci.richmond.ca.us. [For additional information related to homelessness in the City of Richmond please see this page.](#)

Why is this needed? Aren't there homeless shelters or other housing options?

Safe Parking is interim sheltering and just one strategy to address the crisis of the unsheltered. Others such as emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing for those unable to live unassisted, and permanent housing solutions are needed. Currently the pandemic has impacted the shelter bed availability city and countywide. Two emergency shelters are closed. Other services like our warming center which provided space to the unhoused during the evening are also closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Project Roomkey, the effort to move people into hotels is at 98% capacity. Before the pandemic the City conducted an RV survey and found that there were approximately 80 RV's parking nightly on city streets. As the pandemic continues, there are more people living in cars and vehicles without access to shelter.

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Why isn't this project being placed in a non-residential area?

The City looked at over 35 city owned and private non-residential sites for this project to determine if any were feasible given the capital improvements that needed to be made and provided the participants with access to services if needed. Placing a project further away from services requires more resources to bring them in, and poses accessibility challenges. Unfortunately, there wasn't a suitable location that met that criteria given the constraints.

Who pays for these services? How would the project be funded?

The City has earmarked \$300,000 of housing in-lieu fees for the Homeless Taskforce to implement programs aimed at alleviating homelessness in the City. Contra Costa County has committed \$260,000 HEAP dollars towards a Safe Parking Program in the City of Richmond.

Contra Costa County received State of California Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) grant funding as a source of revenue designed to provide direct assistance to Continuums of Care (CoCs) to address the homelessness crisis in their communities. HEAP is authorized by SB 850, which was signed into law by former Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. on June 27, 2018. Contra Costa County Health, Housing and Homeless Services (H3), as the administrative entity on behalf of the Contra Costa CoC, applied for and was awarded \$7,196,770 in HEAP funding. Additionally, 100 percent of the funds must be expended by June 30, 2021.

The Homeless Coordinating Finance Council (HCFC) intentionally provided broad parameters for how HEAP funds may be used in order to encourage CoCs to be creative and craft programs that meet their specific needs. Among the list of examples of how funding can be used, the State included rental assistance, including for Rapid Rehousing programs, as well as the expansion of services to meet the needs of homeless youth or youth at risk of homelessness.

Additional information about HEAP is available on the HCFC website: https://www.bcsd.ca.gov/hcfc/aid_program.html

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Are there any strings attached to accept the County HEAP dollars?

In order to accept the County HEAP dollars the City must identify a site within the City of Richmond and contract directly with the service providers.

Wouldn't it be better to give money directly to people instead of creating a program?

The City has earmarked housing in-lieu fees which must be used for capital improvements or the provision of services. The HEAP dollars are allocated to the County, and the Homeless Coordinating Finance Council (HCFC) then allocates how the money is spent in Contra Costa County.

Who manages the program?

HCEB operates several safe parking program sites in Oakland as part of their HEAP State grant program. The City is in need of an operator with experience and capacity to run an additional safe park program site. HCEB is recognized for creating inclusive communities for individuals with developmental disabilities or other special needs through quality affordable housing in Alameda and Contra Costa County. HCEB fulfills this mission by providing housing outreach and support services; developing affordable housing, partnering with other nonprofit and for profit companies to secure set-asides within larger rental communities; and owning and operating special needs affordable housing.

HCEB manages numerous housing programs that serve low-income individuals with developmental disabilities or other special needs.

Site selection:

Based on best practices for safe parking program sites, the City's budget, and the HEAP grant deadline, an ideal host site is paved with sufficient emergency vehicle ingress and egress, accessible to transit, accessible to services, and has existing fencing, lighting, water and/or electrical hookups. Based on need and feedback received by operators, an ideal site would accommodate approximately 30 total vehicles, including RVs and cars, and a temporary trailer or tent for on-site service providers.

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As part of a (*)sites analysis(*), Staff evaluated 35 sites recommended by City Councilmembers, Homeless Task Force members, City staff, and the public. The sites range in size from 14,000 square feet to 25 acres, some are improved and others vacant and unimproved sites, some are located in dense neighborhoods and in remote industrial areas. Of the 35 sites analyzed, 15 are City owned, or are listed on the surplus property list. Five sites are owned by other public agencies such as Caltrans, East Bay Regional Parks District or BART. The remaining fifteen sites are privately owned.

Will the Farmer's Market or COVID-19 testing be displaced?

The goal is to keep the Farmer's market in the Civic Center Plaza and they've expressed interest in being located near their former location by the Library. The City does not plan on disrupting COVID-19 testing.

Can anyone park in the lot randomly?

No. Program participants will be screened. Parking will be fenced and restricted to program participants and monitored by staff and security.

Will this bring more crime and blight into the neighborhood?

A: Many of the Safe Parking Programs have not significantly increased neighborhood crime. To be proactive, this project will develop a site safety plan which will include security and monitoring, contact with the police, screening of applicants and a code of conduct for all participants. Violation of the code of conduct would mean that participants would be removed from the program. The program is largely self-contained. There will be trash and refuse pick up on site and storage of belongings. We also work closely with SOS Richmond and the Streets team that would be willing to help the neighborhood with beautification efforts.

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How will this impact parking?

The planning team is set to work with the stakeholders to implement a complementary parking plan that would aim to 1.) Serve those who need to access the area and make every effort to reduce impact, and 2.) Ensure that measures are taken to restrict overnight parking outside the program.

Who oversees the community?

The program will be run by a program manager. The program manager will be responsible for the following:

- An operational plan that includes site security and other services offered to participants to be reviewed by the City. These services must provide the basic needs for individuals, including restrooms, water, security, and sanitation facilities. These may be in the form of portable and/or permanent facilities and should be budgeted accordingly (portable services must be considered).
- A service plan to cover intake of program participants, collaboration with stakeholders such as the Contra Costa County Department of Health and Human Services, housing navigation, mental health, employment development, and individualized service management plan for each program participant. The service plan should also assess individual program participant service needs, and maximize connections with existing county, city, private, federal and state assistance programs.
- A community development plan to maintain an environment of community, site stewardship, any hosts sites when applicable, and the surrounding neighborhood. This plan should also address creation of community standards for program participants within the park and within the surrounding community when applicable.
- A neighborhood response plan to address area neighbor concerns, should any arise.

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- An intake and assessment plan in partnership with the city, and any applicable host sites a plan to quickly to identify individuals who are the best fit for short term interim housing opportunities, and parking community living.

What is the screening process?

The screening process would be developed with five key principles in mind, in partnership with the onsite management entity. It would include:

- **DESIRE** – to be part of a safe parking program, and support community standards. This includes agreement to a comprehensive case management plan, community safety agreements and site rules, and COVID-19 county health order guidelines as part of program participation.
- **DEMONSTRATED NEED**- inability to find shelter or housing through other means.
- **DEFINED HOUSEHOLD**- Unhoused single with vehicles. Couples defined as two per vehicle at the time of entry.
- **PRIORITY** - Priority given to those who may have lost their housing in Richmond

Will there be 24/7 security or police patrol?

Yes, there will be 24/7 security provided at the site. The program manager will work with the Police Department, Fire Department and Office of Emergency Services to create safety and evacuation plans.

Will participants be required to utilize housing navigation services?

Yes, part of the program agreements will include a requirement to meet with case managers.

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What will happen if residents do not abide by the rules of the site?

If participants do not abide by the rules of the site they will be dismissed from the program after a clear written warning.

How can people access transportation?

Many people with RVs have an additional passenger vehicle that they use to go to work or run errands. Depending on the size of the site people may be able to have an RV and a personal vehicle. If participants need to access offsite services the CORE team may be able to transport them.

What are the program agreements?

The finalized program agreements must be reviewed by the housing management vendor, however it would include key elements such as:

- Abiding by the county health order pertaining to COVID-19.
- Prohibition of criminal acts or threats, towards staff, park members, service providers and community members. These actions can be cause for dismissal from the program.
- Commitment to community neighborliness to fellow participants, community members and staff by supporting guidelines for a safe and harmonious environment. Adherence to community mediation and dispute process.
- Adherence to a case management plan, and a navigation effort.
- Keeping vehicles in compliance with vehicle permits and guidelines.
- Adhering to site agreement plan, and vehicle parking guidelines.

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- Contributing and adherence to a clean, safe and organized environment, including properly disposing of trash, and maintenance of cleanliness and order of personal property and common areas.
- Creating a culture of inclusion, shared decision making and equity. Harassment of any member on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or ability is not permitted.
- Adherence to any safety guidelines including prohibition of any item that would endanger community health and safety standards, such as fire hazards, or hazardous materials.
- Commitment to the term period for parking. Once the 90 day term has expired, a request for additional time (no more than 90 days) can be considered.

What happens if people park outside the program hoping to get in? Will the program attract more people?

There will be strict enforcement by the Police Department and the CORE Team outside of the program site area.

What is the duration of the program? How would the City wind the program down?

The City has enough funding for a one-year pilot program. The program agreements would include expectations about this timeline.

What other cities have Safe Parking Programs?

Many other cities have safe parking programs including Oakland (hyperlink: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/news/2020/city-of-oakland-opens-3rd-safe-rv-parking-site>), Walnut Creek, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, San Leandro, Monterey (<http://www.onestarfisshsafeparking.org/our-story.html>), San Jose, San Diego(<https://www.dreamsforchange.org/category/safe->

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parking-program/) and more.

What can I do about homelessness in my community?

There are many ways that residents can impact homelessness:

VOLUNTEER – Volunteer your time or effort with programs that provide homeless services such as the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP), Safe Organized Spaces (SOS), local congregations.

SERVE - The City of Richmond has a homeless taskforce, and we invite residents to participate and share their policy suggestions with the taskforce. For more information contact Michelle Milam at mmilam@richmondpd.net

DONATE – There are many local efforts in need of funding, resources, land use, and other financial assistance to help with specific projects. Please feel free to contact us if you are looking to try and make a donation. mmilam@richmondpd.net

ADVOCATE – Use your voice to advocate to city and county and state policymakers on the need for homeless services.