

AGENDA ITEM #4

MEETING: Planning and Community Development Committee

DATE: August 26, 2021

DEPARTMENT:

Neighborhood & Housing Services Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD:

Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:

Citywide

SUMMARY:

Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) and Eviction Prevention Update

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On April 23, 2020, City Council approved the creation of the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP). The program provides eligible applicants rental, mortgage, and utility assistance.

The EHAP is administered by the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD). As of August 19, 2021, the City has approved \$132.6 million in assistance to over 45,099 households seeking emergency rental, mortgage, and utility assistance.

The total budget for the EHAP is \$189.3 million. This includes Phases I-IV of the EHAP.

Current EHAP Budget by Phase:

Phase I approved April 23, 2020	\$25,595,299.00
Phase II approved June 4, 2020	\$26,944,551.00
Phase III approved September 17, 2020 amended January 21, 2020	\$34,311,149.82
Phase IV approved February 18, 2021 amended June 17, 2021	\$102,450,163
Total	\$189,301,162.82

As of August 19, 2021, the City has approved \$132.6 million in assistance to over 45,099 households seeking emergency rental, mortgage, and utility assistance.

The below chart provides the breakout by City Council District.

Emergency Housing Assistance Program				
CD	Avg AMI %	Approved	Avg HH Size	Approved \$
1	27.2	4,189	2	\$11,742,078
2	27.7	6,177	3	\$17,679,742
3	28.3	4,956	3	\$13,976,332
4	29.0	3,970	3	\$11,988,409
5	24.4	3,316	3	\$8,717,696
6	31.5	4,369	3	\$13,232,365
7	28.7	4,901	3	\$14,119,207
8	30.5	4,963	2	\$14,696,297
9	30.9	3,135	2	\$9,596,912
10	30.9	3,863	2	\$11,851,835
County	29.2	1,260	3	\$4,954,351
Totals		45,099		\$132,555,223

ISSUE:

Applicants seeking rental, mortgage and utility assistance are eligible for up to 9 months of assistance based on the following eligibility criteria utilized to determine assistance for the EHAP applicants, all applicants must:

- ☞ Reside within the San Antonio or Bexar County
- ☞ Provide documentation of hardship due to COVID-19
- ☞ Make less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI)

Assistance is tiered based on the applicant's AMI:

- ☞ If an applicant's income is at or below 50% AMI, the applicant is eligible for up to 9 months of rental or mortgage assistance and the current bill amount for utility bill (SAWS, CPS Energy, Internet) assistance.
- ☞ If an applicant's income is between 51% and 80% AMI, the applicant is eligible for up to 6 months of rental or mortgage assistance and the current bill amount for utility bill (SAWS, CPS Energy, Internet) assistance.

Center for Disease Control Moratorium

The Center for Disease Control announced a new moratorium on August 3, 2021, that temporarily halts evictions in counties with heightened levels of community transmission through October 3, 2021. This order applies in San Antonio based on current transmission levels. If Bexar County falls below a heightened level of transmission for a two-week period, then the order may be removed. 3 of the 4 Bexar County Courts have expressed written support of this moratorium.

Under the federal order, tenants with incomes below \$99,000 (or \$198,000 for a two-earner household) who have been had a loss of income due to the pandemic can give their landlord a signed declaration to prevent eviction for non-payment of rent. In the declaration, tenants must state that they have made efforts to pay their rent, such as through partial payments or applying for assistance programs. Landlords who receive a valid declaration cannot evict their tenant for non-payment of rent until the end of the moratorium. Landlords who believe the declaration given to them is invalid can challenge it in court.

Eviction Intervention Team

The moratorium does not apply to other types of evictions such as those for lease violations or in rare cases criminal acts. It also does not prevent landlords from charging late fees or interest. Many leases are structured so that past-due late fees are considered lease violations. Evictions for lease violations are not prohibited under the pandemic.

The Eviction Intervention Program has now been active in the Bexar County Justice of the Peace courts since the courts reopened in June 2020. The team is present in every hearing and offices out of the courts even when hearings are not in session to be accessible for landlords and tenants. The team makes referrals to EHAP, the Texas Rent Relief Program, Right to Counsel Program and other services as needed. The team recently hit a milestone of 1,000 dismissals and 1,425 resets of pending evictions

In addition to in-court services, the team of housing navigators regularly conducts outreach at property leasing offices, public events, and in various announced public spaces through the year. Examples include supporting a drive-up event with Districts 5 and 7, vaccination pop-up sites at Fiesta, Pride, and neighborhood events, as well as outreach to complexes with specific issues such as high rates of eviction such as the Edge Apartments in District 2 and Star Club Apartments complexes in District 10.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

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RECOMMENDATION:

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