



News from: **City of Oakland**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 5, 2020

City of Oakland Launches *Operation HomeBase* for Unsheltered Residents Vulnerable to COVID-19 ***67 new trailers will provide housing and services to support homeless older adults and medically vulnerable individuals***

Oakland, CA – Mayor Libby Schaaf, Vice Mayor Larry Reid, and City Councilmember Loren Taylor joined with community and philanthropic leaders today to announce the opening of *Operation HomeBase*, a new COVID-19 isolation trailer program located on Hegenberger Road in East Oakland.

Media Contacts:

Karen Boyd
Communications Director
City Administrator's Office
(510) 449-4401
KBoyd@oaklandca.gov

The new trailers were donated by the State of California to the City of Oakland. Of the 91 original trailers, *Operation HomeBase* will use 67 trailers as a public health-driven intervention; the other 24 trailers were provided to the cities of Alameda, Berkeley, and Hayward, which requested them for their unsheltered residents. The primary goal of *Operation HomeBase* is to provide a safe place for high-risk people to self-isolate and maintain their safety and health. The target population is Oaklanders who are who are medically vulnerable and/or 65+ years-old, and at risk of serious complications from COVID19.

“Our unsheltered residents are among the most vulnerable in our community. Many have underlying health conditions exacerbated by living outside on our streets. This intervention is a quick and compassionate step to slow the spread of COVID-19 and upgrade the living conditions of our unsheltered neighbors,” said **Mayor Libby Schaaf**. “I am grateful to Gov. Newsom and the State of California for the trailers, and I am thrilled to announce a grant award of \$500,000 dollars by Taube Philanthropies to support this important initiative. We are deeply grateful to **Tad and Dianne Taube** for their generosity.”

Vice Mayor Larry Reid, City Councilmember for District 7, said, “It’s critical to our collective health that the City is prioritizing residents in East Oakland who have historically been marginalized. COVID-19 has demonstrated that our most vulnerable Black and Brown populations—who already experience disproportionate levels of heart disease, asthma, lung disease, and hypertension, in addition to homelessness—are also most likely to become infected with and die of COVID-19. I am pleased that this intervention in deep East Oakland will help our community get the resources they need by opening a program specifically for them.”

The site will be operated by Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB), an experienced homeless services provider which currently operates the Lake Merritt Community Cabin site and two RV Safe Parking Sites for the City of Oakland (High Street and Coliseum).

HCEB will provide 24/7 site management as well as programmatic staff and light-touch housing navigation (housing-focused case management) support. HCEB is

prioritizing hiring staff with lived experience of homelessness including former residents of Community Cabins and Safe RV Parking sites.

Residents will be supported with:

- Medical support, including regular symptom screening and testing for COVID-19, provided on site by Roots Community Health Center
- Linkages to healthcare, mental health, and addiction recovery services
- Linkages to the mainstream homeless services system
- Assistance securing benefits, acquiring California ID, and seeking jobs

The program will provide all basic needs, including three meals a day, on-site laundry service, and free wireless internet. Each trailer is large enough to allow ample physical distancing, and residents will share a trailer with a chosen roommate or partner; physical distancing guidelines will be maintained in situations where roommates are not partners.

The program, which will serve a maximum of 134 people at any given time, offers:

- Security and privacy (one or two people per trailer with a lock on the door)
- Each trailer has hot and cold running water including a full bathroom with shower in each unit for maximum safety and dignity
- Each trailer has full electricity, a microwave and a refrigerator
- Storage within the trailer as well as additional storage on site
- Garbage service
- Community tent with television, microwave, and water

To be eligible to participate in *Operation HomeBase*, participants must be coming from one of the following living situations:

- Street/places not meant for habitation
- Congregate emergency shelter
- Transitional housing program for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Exiting a health care facility or other institution with no identified residence at time of discharge

Participants must be either:

- 65 years of age and older and/or
- Have one of several specific underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, chronic asthma, diabetes, or a compromised immune system

All referrals will come from designated street outreach providers (no walk-ins). All clients will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before being admitted to the program. Initial referrals will come from nearby East Oakland encampments.

Cost/Funding

The start-up cost of *Operation HomeBase* trailer program is approximately \$1.5M, with an annual operating cost of approximately \$1.8M. Funding for the program is coming from the State of California's Emergency COVID-19 response funds and a

generous \$500,000 grant from Taube Philanthropies, repurposed from the \$1.5 million grant pledged in January to support the family workforce trailers program with Roots Community Health Clinic. The City also anticipates some amount of FEMA reimbursement for *Operation HomeBase*.

Residents will be assisted to exit to permanent housing or to another stable transitional living situation. The City and Alameda County are committed to keep program participants from returning to the streets, and are in the process of developing exit strategies from trailers and hotels into transitional or permanent housing.

Acknowledgements

“I continue to be grateful to **Jim Moore** of Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods, and **Mike Pyatok** and **Gary Struthers** of Pyatok Architects, for their ongoing support of our various Community Cabin and Safe RV Parking sites. Their brilliant site planning and construction management expertise have made these projects possible,” said Mayor Schaaf.

“I also appreciate Alameda County Health Care Services Agency—Kathleen Clanon, Colleen Chawla, and Kerry Abbott—and especially Healthcare for the Homeless, for their leadership and partnership in addressing this crisis,” Mayor Schaaf said.

Background: The Homeless Crisis and Covid-19

- The 2019 point-in-time count estimated that there are **4,071 homeless people in Oakland**, up 47% from two years ago. This represents about half of the total number of unsheltered residents in Alameda County.
- People experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 as they have limited ability to safely shelter in place. Many unsheltered people also have underlying medical conditions which puts them at especially high risk of serious illness or death due from this disease.
- At minimum, 53% of people experiencing homelessness in Oakland are in the CDC-defined groups identified as being at high-risk for severe medical complications from a COVID-19 infection.
- The City, in partnership with the County, is supporting a wide variety of interventions to address the COVID-19 risk among unsheltered individuals. This includes establishing this trailer site for emergency COVID-19 response housing.

###