

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****October 27, 2020**

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SUBJECT: COLD WEATHER OVERFLOW SHELTERING DURING COVID-19

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide an update on cold weather overflow sheltering during COVID-19. Due to social distancing, no shelters are able to provide additional beds this year. Sycamore Community Center at 2525 E. Rosedale and Riverside Community Center at 3700 E. Belknap will serve as cold weather overflow shelter sites during weather trigger days between November 1 and March 31. A warehouse at 300 E. Vickery will also be used as a cold weather overflow site through December in order to serve up to 200 people per night at the three sites. While providing needed shelter so people don't freeze outside, the overflow shelters will also be responsive to neighborhood concerns.

Limited Scope

- Activation of these sites is limited to nights when certain weather triggers are met for three consecutive hours:
 - o 40 degrees in wet conditions
 - o 35 degrees in dry conditions
 - o wind chill below 32 degrees
- It is estimated sites will be activated less than 30 days over the five-month period based on last year's 24 nights of hitting weather triggers.
- These sites will not be used past March 31.

Loitering

- Sites will not provide showers or meals, thus encouraging people to return to the shelter area on East Lancaster for these services during the day.
- People must be screened for COVID at 1100 E. Lancaster each day and receive a wristband before going to the overflow sites. This should deter walk-ins showing up directly at overflow sites.

Effect on community activities

- Activities at both community centers end by 8:00 pm.
- Overflow guests are expected to start arriving between 8:00 pm – 10:00 pm, thus the sheltering operation will not interfere with planned activities at the community centers.
- Overflow guests will leave sites at 6:00 am.
- A contracted janitorial company will clean sites before community activities begin.

Security

- All sites will have one overnight contracted security guard.
- Fort Worth Police will have a patrol rotate between overflow sites throughout the night.
- All sites will have emergency radios so Police can be quickly contacted if needed.
- DRC Solutions will provide two to three shelter staff per site.

History

Usually Directions Home waits until all regular shelter beds are full before activating cold weather overflow beds. However, since shelters are operating at reduced capacity and fairly full already, the weather triggers alone will prompt activation this year.

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Due to budget constraints, Directions Home sought out free facilities. Because of COVID social distancing, multiple sites are necessary with an estimated three sites needed to serve up to 200 people.

In conversations with the Park & Recreation and Neighborhood Services departments, community centers were identified based on capacity and proximity to a bus stop. Two community centers meeting those criteria were Sycamore Community Center at 2525 E. Rosedale and Riverside Community Center at 3700 E. Belknap. For November and December, Directions Home will also be able to use 300 E. Vickery. January through March, two additional community centers, Fire Station Community Center at 1601 Lipscomb and Fellowship Corner Community Center at 1601 New York Ave., will be used.

Clients Served

Only individual men and women will be served at overflow shelters. There is a separate process for sheltering families during cold weather. If the family shelter at Salvation Army is full, families will be placed in motels.

Funding

No further action is needed from the Council. Funding for cold weather overflow was approved in the Directions Home budget (M&C 20-0651) and if needed additional funding was approved through Emergency Solutions Funds in the Neighborhood Services Department (M&C 20-0657).

If you have any questions, please contact Directions Home Manager Tara Perez at Tara.Perez@fortworthtexas.gov.

David Cooke
City Manager