



CITY OF PALO ALTO OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

June 10, 2019

The Honorable City Council
Palo Alto, California

Colleagues Memo on Safe Parking at the Los Altos Water Treatment Plant Located on 1275 San Antonio Road

Issue and background:

The number of people living in vehicles has grown substantially in the last decade. RVs and other vehicles can be found on main thoroughfares and quiet residential streets for extended periods of time. The City of Palo Alto must address this matter from a health and safety standpoint. The effort must be made to find immediate short and long term solutions. The ultimate goal is to provide assistance to people to get them back on the path to stable housing.

The goal is to understand who is living in vehicles, the needs of those living in vehicles and to provide a managed program with safe spaces for overnight parking for low income individuals. The managed program should be run by an organization supported by the city (similar to East Palo Alto). We also need to understand if there are higher incomes or transient workers who are using vehicle dwelling as a lifestyle choice who should be directed to other types of residences or locations.

Recommendation:

Refer this item to Policy and Services and/or create a sub-committee or task force to craft program details to bring back to Council. Such a program should include elements such as:

1. Identify and determine interest in expanding vehicle dwelling management and transition services with local area nonprofits such as Project WeHope, Samaritan House, Life Moves, and Abode Services, who can partner with the city to manage a Vehicle Dweller program.

2. Identify large commercial lots that could be used for a managed overnight program such as on Bayshore and in the Research Park and a plan to reach out to property owners.
3. Seed the program using city-owned land located at 1237 San Antonio Road, formerly known as the Los Altos Water Treatment Plant and/or other potential sites. Explore bathroom construction and/or portable bathroom/shower services on identified Palo Alto city sites.
4. Engage the County of Santa Clara to explore funding assistance and for additional programs to support enabling individuals to find employment and housing.
5. Staff should propose additional steps to distinguish between high and low income individuals, and manage parking on streets once managed spots are available for low income individuals.

Resource Impact:

A new program addressing the regional issue of RV parking and living in vehicles more broadly has the potential to require significant city resources. Staff will advise the City Council through its discussions to scope steps ahead in order to manage resource needs. As this is not currently a budgeted activity, resources would need to be identified and appropriated by the Palo Alto City Council. The associated costs could include, but are not limited to: research into options and results of programs in other cities, community outreach to the public at large as well as to those living in vehicles, capital costs for improvements required to modify city-owned property for overnight parking use, negotiation of agreements with public agencies and private partners, ongoing management of a program, and any associated enforcement responsibilities.

A number of specific issues would need to be addressed regarding the City property at 1237 San Antonio Road. There are a number of current and episodic City uses of the site that would likely be impacted by the proposed use. This includes use by the City's refuse collection contractor Green Waste for staging, revenue-generating leases to private firms, and planned

construction staging for the upcoming 101 Bike/Pedestrian Bridge project. Given the land's proximity to wetlands, construction activities or increased intensity of use may require permits from regulatory agencies and possibly environmental review. Other city-owned and privately-owned sites may also be candidates for the proposed use, such as the City-owned property at 2000 Geng Road. Further analysis is necessary to determine suitability for any specific location, including outreach to nearby property owners.

Department Head: Beth Minor, City Clerk

