

"This week the City Council and I announced four sites for resource centers in Salt Lake City designed to help implement a new model of moving individuals from homelessness to housing. This decision was made after a two-year process involving stakeholders and the community. While this was an extremely difficult decision to make, we strongly believe the new model will better serve residents, businesses, and those in need in our community.

The current facility run by the Road Home on Rio Grande Street has done an incredible job of doing exactly what they were asked to do, and that is to provide shelter. But, the needs of those experiencing homelessness have changed. Our city has recognized for years that the facility and model currently being used are not sufficient to address the issues our state is facing 14;and it is time for change.

What is a resource center?

I know it is difficult to envision something different than what is currently in existence at the Rio Grande, but we do not need to look far for inspiration. The YWCA and VOA Youth Resource Center 14;both in vibrant and growing areas in Salt Lake City 14;are representative of the types of centers we intend to build. These centers are population specific, fit with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, provide day service, and are designed to be safe and secure for both clients and the surrounding community.

These unique centers have truly become assets in their neighborhood. Since 2012, property surrounding the YWCA has increased in value by more than 30%, matching overall growth in Salt Lake City. National studies also indicate that 14;when thoughtfully designed 14;human service facilities do not have a negative impact on surrounding areas (Read: Study Says Homeless Facilities May Increase Value).

Embracing a scattered site model also helps increase security. Chief Mike Brown has indicated that the area around the Rio Grande is a challenge because of the large numbers of people being drawn to the area. Smaller centers, capped at 150 people, with day services inside will help keep from needing to be on the street. Drawing down the population in the Rio Grande area with the construction of each new center, allows Chief Brown to redeploy the majority of the 70 SLCPD officers who patrol that area back into neighborhoods where they belong.

Affordable housing is key

My office and the City Council are also fully committed to aggressively expanding affordable housing options in Salt Lake City. Along with our service provider partners, the County, and the State, we understand the new service model relies on creating housing opportunities, and expanding other programs, like addiction treatment. We are moving away from a one-size fits all approach to addressing the unique needs of individuals 14;an approach we believe will increase our success.

Are we doing enough?

We have also heard from many in the community who are concerned that the four centers will not be enough to address the overall need. While the overall number of emergency shelter beds will go down 14;over the course of the next few years as the centers are built 14;it is important to remember we will be supplementing any shortfall with affordable and supportive housing, as well as treatment programs. Emergency shelter beds should be treated as such 14;emergency. Individuals who can succeed in affordable or supportive housing, or who need more intensive treatment, should not be forced to rely on shelter services for long periods of time.

This is not an issue Salt Lake City can or must address alone. Other cities across the State must also begin to implement programs to help those experiencing homelessness in their communities. Cities like Midvale, Murray, St. George, Ogden, and Countywide programs like 1c;Pay for Success 1d;, have already begun to expand options, which will continue to grow over the next few years.

What about public engagement?

In making this decision, the City Council and I worked together with community partners represented on the Homeless Services Site Evaluation Commission. We were guided in our decision making by zoning, environmental, and federal guidelines, as well as success criteria, which was developed through a series of public workshops. Over the summer, nearly 1,000 community members participated in person or online to help prioritize these criteria.

However, ultimately the Council and I made the final decision together. We did so out of a belief that presenting the community with a list of available properties around the city, and asking them to choose, would have only resulted in pitting one neighborhood against another. The residents of Salt Lake City elected each of us to make decisions in the best interest of the city, and to have the courage to face the realities of our time and work to transform our future.

### Next Steps

While the announcement this week was a huge milestone, there are still years of work to be done. One of the first steps is to determine which population will be served at each center. With 11 unique sub-populations, this work must be thoughtful and collaborative. We recognize that each area is unique, and our success will be determined by matching the right population to the right site. While we have ideas about who should be served at each site, we must work with our partners at the County 14; who will be implementing the programming 14; and get feedback from the community.

We are also hopeful the community will be instrumental in helping us design these new centers for success. Through a series of public workshops, we will gather ideas and concerns from the public, which will be provided to architects as they begin initial designs. The first of these workshops begin in January:

January 11th 1-3:00pm

January 11th 6-8:00pm

January 18th 6-8:00pm

All meetings will be hosted at the Public Safety Building at 475 East 500 South. Community specific meetings will also be held in the weeks to come.

We recognize many residents still have questions and concerns, and I encourage you to stay involved in the process. Multiple partners have worked tirelessly over the last two years to build a new model based on research, best practices, and compassion for those in need. We have every reason to want to get this right, and I truly believe if we work together, we can.

For more information on the sites, and some commonly asked questions, please visit:

[www.slccouncil.com/resource-centers](http://www.slccouncil.com/resource-centers)

or

<http://www.slccouncil.com/.../concerns-and-responses-about-h.../>

With warm regards,

Jackie Biskupski

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