

City to Host Round-Table Town Hall Discussion on Homeless Encampments

Town Hall Planned for Tuesday, August 30, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Registration Deadline: Wednesday, August 24, 4 p.m.

The City of Santa Fe, along with community partners, service providers and members of the unsheltered community, will host a round-table discussion on homeless encampments on Tuesday, August 30, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The meeting will include:

- Presentation of current initiatives underway
- Breakout groups for round-table discussions
- Solicitation of ideas and feedback
- Dinner for attendees

The goal of the town hall is to have a respectful discussion about how unsanctioned camping is impacting our community, to listen to community concerns, and to solicit feedback on possible future actions to address concerns and support unsheltered residents in our community.

If you are interested in participating in the roundtable discussion, please register in advance by emailing amares@santafenm.gov or calling 505-955-6520.

The registration deadline is Wednesday, August 24, at 4 p.m.

Background Information:

The City of Santa Fe works collaboratively through local emergency shelters and housing providers – Interfaith Community Shelter at Pete’s Place, The Salvation Army, The Life Link, Consuelo’s Place, and St. Elizabeth’s Shelter and Supportive Housing – to provide emergency, temporary and permanent housing options to unsheltered individuals/families in our community, while connecting people to necessary supportive services.

Currently, there are 365 households in the Coordinated Entry System and only 101 shelter beds in use. Outreach workers estimate that there are around 150 people on the streets and other unsheltered locations in Santa Fe. Street outreach to unsheltered residents is provided by the following nonprofit organizations: The Life Link’s PATH Team, Youth Shelters and Family Services, Southwest Care Center, and other volunteer organizations such as Chaplain Joe’s Street Outreach. The MIHO

(SFFD Mobile Integrated Health Office) does some outreach to camps to locate individuals they are working with.

While people choose not to access formal shelter programs for a variety of reasons, additional challenges arise when individuals elect to live outdoors. Lack of access to sanitation, protection from weather, access to electricity and WiFi, and lack of other basic services make living outdoors a difficult situation for both unsheltered individuals and other community members such as businesses and homeowners.

The City of Santa Fe has explored the establishment of a Safe Outdoor Space (a trend that is growing nationwide given the significant lack of affordable housing options across the country) at the Midtown Campus, but is no longer pursuing this option given significant community pushback.

In alignment with the Built for Zero model, the City of Santa Fe has developed stronger partnerships with community service providers to further enhance the homeless response system. City staff participate in various working groups to address needs such as emergency shelter, housing development, outreach and data coordination. This work also includes deeper coordination with other funders and leaders including Santa Fe County, the State of New Mexico and private foundations who are working to support better alignment of system goals, metrics, and funded services.

In 2021, the City commissioned a study on unsanctioned encampments by St. Francis Homelessness Challenge. The report confirmed that many unsheltered people in Santa Fe, as well as other community members, are frustrated by the current lack of shelter/housing options available in the Santa Fe area.

To fully address homelessness in Santa Fe, we must work collaboratively and include the voices of people who are unsheltered in order to better understand the complexity of the issue and to develop effective strategies that engage individuals in a path toward becoming housed. By providing a variety of shelter options that acknowledge fears and meet the unique needs of a variety of individuals and circumstances, we can be more efficient in our efforts to quantify the scope of homelessness in the community while working to develop affordable housing options for all. We need to develop pathways to housing where there is “no wrong door” so we can better meet our community goal of ending homelessness in Santa Fe.

Successful initiatives to address homelessness in Santa Fe include the creation of Consuelo’s Place (the Midtown Emergency Non-Congregate Shelter), the conversion of the Santa Fe Suites to longer-term housing, and the Lamplighter Inn project. [Click here for more information on community-wide efforts to address and end homelessness.](#) Addressing unsheltered homelessness by supporting alternative shelter needs is one piece of a larger puzzle. The pieces of that puzzle must fit together to create strong pipelines from homelessness to housing.

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