



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **City of Riverside Program to Help Prevent Seniors From Becoming Homeless**

*Pilot program designed to provide rental assistance to elderly residents struggling with rent*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Seeking to assist some of the city’s most vulnerable residents at risk of becoming homeless, the City Council on Tuesday (4/23) unanimously approved a pilot program designed to help senior citizens in the city pay their rent.

The Supplemental Rental Assistance Program for Seniors will provide Riverside residents ages 70 and up with as much as \$600 of supplemental rental assistance payments while they wait for a Section 8 voucher to be issued or for an affordable senior housing unit to become available. Payments can last as long as a year, with the program funded with \$900,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars.

“Our seniors on fixed incomes are especially vulnerable to the housing crisis in California,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “This program uses federal funds to bring stability to Riverside seniors who have been waiting for a Section 8 voucher.”

The council voted after hearing a report about how many seniors are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. For example, the 2023 Homeless Point-in-Time Count found within Riverside 109 homeless seniors between the age of 55-64 and 46 homeless seniors at or over the age of 65.

As of mid-February, 1,535 seniors ages 62 years and up were living in the City of Riverside and were on the county’s waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those 1,535 Riverside residents, 346 were age 70 or older and facing wait times for Section 8 housing of six months to a year.

Seniors at the greatest risk of homelessness live alone and are on a fixed income, often with little to no savings. Seniors across the state struggle with rent increases that exceed any increases in their fixed incomes, such as Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income.

“The difference between staying housed and becoming homeless can be a few hundred dollars a month for our seniors, and this program is designed to fill that gap,” Mayor Pro Tem Steve Hemenway said. “This is an opportunity to bring hope to some of our residents who really need it.”

To be eligible for the program, Riverside residents must have a household income that does not exceed 50% of area median income (AMI), which is \$36,250 for a one-person household, and must be paying more than 30% of their income towards rent. Applications from seniors at or over 70 years old with an income at or below 30% of AMI will be prioritized for rental assistance.

If, within six months of the program's launch, there are funds that have not been spent, and there are no applications pending for seniors at or over the age of 70 years old, the program will be made available to people ages 62 or older on the Section 8 wait list with incomes at or below 50% AMI, with priority given to households with incomes at or below 30% AMI.

The new program is separate from an existing citywide Homeless Prevention Program that is funded by the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention grant program. That existing program can only assist with up to three months of past due rent, which will not help seniors achieve housing stability.