

Agenda Report

April 7, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Department of Housing
SUBJECT: **REPORT ON RENT RELIEF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY THE EATON FIRE**

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for information only.

BACKGROUND:

The Eaton Fire destroyed 117 homes and caused substantial damage to another seven (7) homes and multifamily units in the City of Pasadena. Beyond the destruction and damage to these homes, the fire has caused an unknown number of Pasadena residents to be impacted financially through the loss or decrease of income derived from their employment. The fire destroyed a number of commercial businesses in Altadena resulting in the loss of income to their owners and job losses for individuals employed by those businesses. However, given the tremendous loss of residential properties resulting from the fire, those individuals who derive their income from that residential service economy were among those impacted financially by the fire. This includes individuals engaged in the provision of child and elderly care, housekeeping, and landscape maintenance who may have suffered a loss or decline in income due to the fire. The number of individuals who were or continue to be impacted in this manner is unknown.

On March 3, 2025, in an effort to support renters who have been adversely impacted by the Eaton Fire, the City Council approved a motion directing the City Attorney to prepare a temporary, emergency ordinance for tenant protections for a period of six months. The ordinance, which was adopted on March 24, 2025, provides a temporary affirmative defense to eviction proceedings for tenants unable to pay rent due to financial hardships directly related to the Eaton Fire, subject to certain qualifying criteria. Eligible tenants cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent that accrued between January 15th and July 31st, 2025, if they (1) meet the ordinance's eligibility requirements, (2) comply with the ordinance, and (3) prove both of those facts in any potential eviction case.

Concurrent with its March 3, 2025, motion to prepare the ordinance, the City Council directed City staff “to return with a mechanism to most effectively and expeditiously align with the Los Angeles County’s adopted protections for those impacted by the recent wildfires and modify as appropriate for Pasadena, encourage tenant-landlord mediation and potential repayment of some portion of rent through mediated terms, and report back within 30 days on potential funding sources for rental assistance”.

Staff subsequently conducted an analysis of potential funding sources. There are several external and internal funding streams available through the Housing Department that are designed to address homelessness. These funds are highly proscribed as to allowable uses and beneficiary eligibility. These funds are also fully subscribed, for the most part, as they are under contract with providers or programmed for eligible uses. An analysis of the identified funding sources and programs follows:

External Funding Sources and Programs

Federal Level

The FEMA Rental Assistance Program is a temporary grant available to FEMA applicants whose homes remain uninhabitable after the wildfires. The Program pays for temporary housing while the home is being repaired or rebuilt, or during the search for a new home to rent. The application deadline for this program closed on March 31.

State Level

The State of California has not established a rental assistance program for individuals impacted by the Eaton Fire.

Local Level

Los Angeles County allocated \$32.2 million to establish a Household Relief Grant to support individuals impacted by the Eaton and Palisades fires. The grant provides grants ranging from grants ranging from \$6,000 to \$18,000, depending on household size and composition. The application period closed on March 12.

Non-Profit Sector

- **Pasadena Community Foundation:** The Pasadena Community Foundation has distributed approximately \$3,000,000 to local non-profits supporting members of the community impacted by the Eaton Fire. These resources have been used to provide immediate relief through cash assistance, to support fire survivors with locating temporary long-term housing and providing the financial resources necessary to establish residence in those homes, and for support with long-term building efforts. The Foundation will continue to support the local non-profit community with resources that address these needs while also directing resources to programs related to childcare and mental health services for fire survivors. The Foundation recently announced the establishment of the Altadena Builds Back Foundation, which will focus on the long-term recovery

and rebuilding of Altadena. The Altadena Builds Back Foundation is supported by \$55 million in donations to support its efforts.

- **Union Station Homeless Services' Eaton Fire Housing Assistance Program:** One-time financial assistance (e.g., security deposit, essential furnishings, rental arrears, etc.), motel vouchers, and rental assistance are available. Income is taken into consideration when determining the amount and duration of assistance a household can receive.
- **Door of Hope's Eaton Fire Housing Assistance Program:** The program can provide up to \$10,000 to address financial and housing gaps not covered by FEMA or insurance, assistance in finding both immediate and long-term housing, assistance with completing FEMA and insurance applications, and connections to community resources such as therapy, healthcare, and job search assistance. Eligible households must have experienced a total loss of housing due to the Eaton fire, have at least one minor child, and have an income that does not exceed 80% of Los Angeles County area median income.
- **Pasadena Educational Foundation:** The Pasadena Educational Foundation has established the PEF Response Fund which has provided direct financial assistance to 1,600 PUSD families and staff, with additional relief efforts planned to support the PUSD community's most vulnerable individuals. In March, the PEF distributed more than \$1,700,000 in direct aid to PUSD students, families, and staff who are displaced or have suffered economic hardship because of the Eaton Fire.
- **Eaton Fire Collaborative** is a comprehensive resource for vital information related to support and recovery for Eaton Fire survivors established by members of the Altadena, Pasadena, and Sierra Madre communities. The Eaton Fire Collaborative connects survivors with an array of resources available in the non-profit sector, including rent relief and interest free loans.
- **Step Fund:** Interest-free loans to low-income residents of LA County who are facing eviction in the next 30 days due to a recent financial problem.
<https://www.thestepfund.org/>
- **Jewish Free Loan Association:** Wildfire Relief Loan - zero-interest, zero-fee loans. <https://www.jfla.org/>

Faith-Based Sector

Staff was unable to identify churches located in the City that are offering rent relief support on an open basis. However, many faith-based institutions are providing such support to members of their respective congregations. The Pasadena Community Clergy Coalition has established an Eaton Fire Relief program that provides financial support to impacted individuals and their families identified through local congregations.

Internal Funding Sources Administered Through the Housing Department

Federal Funds

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**
Approximately \$2,450,000 is budgeted in FY 2025 with all but \$250,000 committed to projects, programs, and administrative support. This annual funding entitlement is utilized to support community development programs/projects. Beneficiaries must be low income not exceeding 80% of the Los Angeles County area median income.
- **Continuum of Care**
Approximately \$939,000 is budgeted in FY 2025 for rapid rehousing programming which provides rental assistance and supportive services to households exiting homelessness. The funding is subcontracted to Union Station Homeless Services (\$214,000) and Volunteers of America Los Angeles (\$725,000), with the latter designated to serve households with a history of domestic violence.
- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)**
Approximately \$187,000 is budgeted in FY 2025. Beneficiaries must qualify as being at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Beneficiaries must be extremely low income, having an income that does not exceed 30% of the Los Angeles County area median income. The City is required to provide a 100% funding match.
- **ESG-Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (ESG-RUSH)**
Approximately \$1,000,000 are available to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness whose needs are exacerbated by disasters. Beneficiaries must be extremely low income, having an income that does not exceed 30% of the Los Angeles County area median income. A significant amount of this grant is being planned to provide rental assistance for eligible households experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

State Funds

- **Family Homelessness Challenge (FHC)**
The City was awarded \$789,473.68 for homelessness prevention programming which includes payment of rental arrears and short-term rental assistance to families with minor children at risk of homelessness. Beneficiaries must be extremely low income, having an income that does not exceed 30% of the Los Angeles County area median income. These funds are currently subcontracted to local non-profit Door of Hope.
- **Homeless, Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP)**
A total of \$458,000 of the City's HHAP grant funding is allocated for rapid rehousing programming which provides rental assistance, move-in costs, and

supportive services to households experiencing homelessness. The City has subcontracted \$80,000 of these funds to Union Station Homeless Services.

Local Funds Other Than The General Fund

- **Housing Successor Funds – City**

The projected end of FY 2025 balance is approximately \$478,000. These funds are restricted under state redevelopment dissolution law to be utilized for the development, rehabilitation, or preservation of affordable housing, homeless prevention, rapid rehousing services, and administrative costs.

- **Local Solutions Funds from Measure A – County**

It is anticipated that approximately \$875,000 will be allocated to the City in July. These funds could be used for rental assistance under the Measure A Homelessness Prevention category. Beneficiaries must be precariously housed and/or be at risk of eviction. Beneficiaries must be very low income not exceeding 50% of the Los Angeles County area median income.

Conclusion

Most of the identified funding sources are intended to address homelessness and are highly proscribed as to allowable uses and beneficiary eligibility. These funds are also fully subscribed, for the most part, as they are under contract with providers or programmed for eligible uses. Other funding sources that are not specifically targeted to address homelessness have relatively low fund balances. At this time, the external programs that were established to support fire survivors with rent relief, specifically those programs established by FEMA and Los Angeles County have closed. However, thanks to the amazing work being performed in the non-profit and faith-based sectors by the organizations identified in this report and many more, there continues to be a strong base of support to serve the needs of those impacted by the Eaton Fire.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMES WONG

Director of Housing

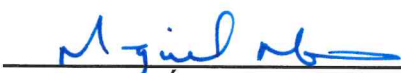
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