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## Staff Report

TO: Honorable Mayor Piko and Members of City Council

THROUGH: Matt Sturgeon, City Manager  
Elisha Thomas, Deputy City Manager  
Jonah Schneider, Strategic Initiatives Manager

FROM: Patrick Fleming, Management Analyst

MEETING DATE: June 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Homelessness Coordinator Position

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### **1. Executive Summary:**

The Centennial City Council has previously indicated a desire to positively impact the problem of homelessness in the community. As part of that effort, Staff was asked to explore and develop initial plans for a Homelessness Coordinator position, or similar position, that would provide support to individuals and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

At the May, 16, 2022, City Council meeting, Staff was directed to bring back to Council a report on how the City could partner with Arapahoe County on a position that would work within the Centennial community to link those experiencing homelessness with resources and support. Staff is seeking Council direction to work with Arapahoe County on an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that would formalize the Homelessness Coordinator position. The cost to the City is currently estimated at \$150,000 annually. A supplemental budget appropriation would be required if Council desires the position to start in 2022.

### **2. Recommendation:**

As this is a Council-initiated item, Staff does not have a recommendation for the position.

### **3. Background:**

Centennial has seen a visible increase in the number of homeless encampments and individuals along the City's streets, as evidenced by increasing numbers of calls to the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) and the City's Citizen Response Center (CRC). ACSO has made about 250 contacts with people based on the camping ban since June 2020. Those contacts have stretched across the city, from Broadway to Smoky Hill Road. The CRC has seen calls about encampments and homeless individuals increase from 34 calls in 2020 to 50 calls in 2021. According to the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, 32,233 people accessed services or housing support related to homelessness at least once between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 in metro Denver — nearly twice the number as the year before. The number of homeless individuals in Arapahoe County increased from 228 in 2019 to 523 last year.

Any person living in a temporary location, such as a shelter or a place not fit for human habitation (encampment, car, abandoned building, etc.), is considered homeless, according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. There are many reasons people can become homeless: a traumatic event, loss of a job, the inability to pay for needed health-care, previous offenses or convictions hindering job search, drugs or alcohol use, divorce or separation, domestic issues or violence, eviction, mental or physical health, medical condition, incarceration, and housing restrictions due to probation or parole, to name a few.

Many people associate homelessness with unsheltered single adults visible on the street, job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic against a backdrop of rising rents that are out of reach for many households, has increased housing instability among low-income families placing them into homelessness or at severe risk. While families may be able to hide their homeless status by temporarily staying at the home of a friend or family, these arrangements are not permanent, can be stressful, can fracture relationships, and in some cases, place children at-risk in unsafe environments. It is therefore important to reimagine a local homeless response that addresses the needs of unsheltered homeless adults and the needs of families experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.

While health and human services typically fall to county governments, the City of Centennial is committed to preventing and ending homelessness by connecting those without shelter to resources, support, and services to help them regain stability and improve well-being.

The Homelessness Coordinator position would provide support to individuals and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The position would serve as a liaison for the City to coordinate and strengthen partnerships between agencies (Arapahoe County, ACSO, other jurisdictions) and organizations that work on homelessness issues and/or provide direct services to the community. This position is expected to proactively contact homeless individuals and families in the field. Depending on the situation, this may involve ACSO accompanying the Coordinator to ensure their safety.

The position would be a County employee and work would be performed under administrative direction from Arapahoe County. The Coordinator would be expected to work with partners to implement an intentional, collaborative approach to rehousing and providing necessary supports and opportunities to people who are currently unsheltered. These efforts should all balance a focus on public health, public safety, and housing solutions. This position may also be asked to participate in planning processes to identify longer-term approaches for strengthening efforts to address unsheltered and family homelessness.

Goals for the Homelessness Coordinator Position:

- Decrease unsheltered homelessness
- Prevent and decrease youth and family homelessness
- Increase resident and business satisfaction with the City's response to homeless individuals and encampments

City Council approval of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Arapahoe County would be required to formalize the Homeless Coordinator position. An initial timeframe of three years is recommended, beginning on 2022 and ending in 2024, at which point it could be renewed for additional periods by written agreement.

**4. Alternatives:**

Council may provide alternate direction at any time.

**5. Fiscal Impact:**

The coordinator position is expected to cost up to \$150,000 annually. The position would likely be budgeted within the City's General Fund. No money has been budgeted for this position in 2022.

**6. Next Steps:**

Should Council provide direction, Staff will work with Arapahoe County to draft an IGA for the coordinator position and return to Council with an agreement and supplemental budget appropriation at a later date.

**7. Previous Actions:**

There are no previous Council actions regarding the Homelessness Coordinator position.

**8. Suggested Motions:**

No formal action required.

**9. Attachments:**

None