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### THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM TAPS URBAN ALCHEMY TO MANAGE A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM

*HEART Program to Serve Homeless Birminghamians in Crisis*

**BIRMINGHAM, AL** – The City of Birmingham has selected California-based organization Urban Alchemy to lead a new program focused on serving unhoused residents in crisis. Urban Alchemy has a demonstrated track record of providing an innovative approach to addressing homelessness, crime, and challenging street conditions faced by communities nationwide. The Homeless Engagement Assistance Response Team (HEART) is a community-based public safety program that will begin responding to non-emergency situations involving this population. Previously, police handled such non-emergency calls.

“We are excited about serving alongside Urban Alchemy to support our unhoused communities,” said Birmingham Mayor Randall L. Woodfin. “These residents deserve specialized services and care, and we aim to support them using our best resources and our heart.”

HEART Birmingham will be transformative for our unhoused community and for Birmingham at large.”

Urban Alchemy successfully operates similar programs in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Austin. Its team members will respond to non-emergency 911 and 311 calls relating to unhoused residents. The team has seen high success in de-escalating situations, connecting people to resources and making neighborhood residents – housed and unhoused alike – feel safer.

“When an unhoused neighbor is experiencing a crisis, they often panic when an armed, uniformed law enforcement officer shows up, which can lead to unnecessary escalation that can have tragic outcomes,” said **Kirkpatrick Tyler, Urban Alchemy’s Chief of Community and Government Relations**. “Our team members are trained to empathize and calm everyone involved down. They then offer to connect the person in crisis to resources they may need, such as shelter and medical care.”

Urban Alchemy’s team members are successful at de-escalating situations involving unhoused people in crisis because many of them share similar lived experience. More than 90% of Urban Alchemy’s team has overcome long-term incarceration, homelessness, mental illness and/or drug addiction. They join the organization because they want to give back and offer others the same help they needed or wanted.

In other cities, law enforcement has praised their experiences with the HEART program because it frees their officers to respond to other calls where their expertise is needed. HEART team members will contact emergency services directly when they respond to a call that becomes violent or requires medical intervention.

The HEART program is tentatively scheduled to launch at the beginning of 2025 and employ a team of nearly 20 people. Teams will respond to calls from 7 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

For more information about HEART Birmingham, go to [www.birminghamal.gov/heart](http://www.birminghamal.gov/heart).

More information about Urban Alchemy’s programs in [San Francisco](#), [Los Angeles](#) and [Austin](#) is available at [www.urban-alchemy.us](http://www.urban-alchemy.us).

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**About Urban Alchemy**

Founded in 2018, Urban Alchemy brings a fresh approach to the problems of homelessness, crime, and challenging street conditions faced by communities throughout the nation. Currently operating in and around San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, and Austin, Urban Alchemy's unique approach provides meaningful, well-paid jobs to the formerly incarcerated. These Practitioners leverage their emotional intelligence and leadership skills to empathize and de-escalate, helping create safe communities, clean communities, and housed communities.