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‘Homeward JXN’ homeless initiative nears launch

Charlie Drape
Mississippi Clarion Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jackson’s new homelessness initiative is set to begin in September.

The Jackson City Council cleared the final administrative hurdle Tuesday, Aug. 25 by approving a two-year, \$220,000 agreement with the Mississippi Housing Partnership. The two-year agreement names the Mississippi Housing Partnership as the third-party administrator and sponsor of a tenant-

based rental assistance program funded through the city’s federal HOME-ARP allocation.

Jackson’s Planning and Development Director Angela Brown called it the “last piece of administrative process” needed to launch the city’s new homelessness initiative.

“This is about closing the encampments that we have and moving people into stable housing options,” Brown said.

The council approved the agreement in a 5-1 vote. Ward 2 Councilwoman Ti-

na Clay cast the lone opposing vote, while Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes abstained. The vote followed a lengthy debate over whether the program could address the barriers facing people experiencing homelessness, including addiction, mental health conditions, unemployment and a lack of transportation.

The agreement is part of the local initiative developed with Houston-based Clutch Consulting Group, which Brown announced Tuesday will be called “Homeward JXN.” In July, the council

approved an \$80,000 contract with Clutch.

Mayor John Horhn first announced the proposed partnership with Clutch in March. The Houston-based consulting firm helped design that city’s homelessness response and has since worked with cities including Dallas, Austin, New Orleans and Atlanta.

The new homeless initiative was previously estimated to cost approximately \$10 million. Jackson has been

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John Tuttle flintknaps in a workshop behind his house in Natchez on Aug. 10. PHOTOS BY LAUREN WITTE/CLARION LEDGER

‘Every one is a challenge’

Natchez man has made stone arrowheads, knives for more than 60 years

Brian Broom
Mississippi Clarion Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

If you’re familiar with flintknapping, there’s a good chance you know the name John Tuttle. He lives in Natchez, and he has been making arrowheads and knives from stone for more than 60 years, something he still finds challenging to this day.

“Every rock is different,” Tuttle said. “No two rocks are the same. Every one of them is a challenge.”

While flintknapping has been a passion for him most of his life and at one point was even a full-time business, it all began with him finding a stone tool made by someone long ago and a grandmother who descended from indigenous people.

“I found an arrowhead when I was 12,” Tuttle said. “My grandmother was Choctaw and told me all she knew about it.”

After thinking about it, Tuttle said he wasn’t positive that she was Choctaw. He said she may have been Cherokee, but she died so long ago, he can’t remember which. Regardless of which tribe she descended from, she had an influence on him.

“She made me a bow and arrow when I was 10 years old,” Tuttle said. “I



John Tuttle shows two obsidian knives he made in a workshop behind his house in Natchez on Aug. 10.

thought it was the neatest thing in the world. That got me interested in shooting a bow.”

Learning to make stone arrowheads at the school of hard knocks

Finding an arrowhead had sparked an interest for Tuttle in making them,

but that was easier said than done. Tuttle, who is 79, said there just weren’t any resources for him to learn from when he was a teen, so he began experimenting.

Tuttle said he found a round rock while squirrel hunting one day and found a flat one as well. Tuttle said he

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Major bridge repairs coming to Jackson-area interstates

Pam Danks
Mississippi Clarion Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Mississippi Department of Transportation announced Tuesday, Aug. 25, its “Big Fix” project designed to repair and improve 36 bridges and 121 total lane miles along Interstate 20 and Interstate 55 in Hinds and Rankin counties.

MDOT will focus on both the Interstate 20 corridor from Wiggins Road in Jackson to the Pearson Road exit in Pearl and the Interstate 55 corridor from McDowell Road to north of High Street.

MDOT estimates the project will cost approximately \$400 million, with \$86.6 million funded by a U.S. Department of Transportation grant.

Construction is expected to take about two-and-a-half years, with work starting in September 2026 and ending in late 2028 or early 2029.

Mississippi Transportation Commission Chairman Willie Simmons said that while the system built in the 1950s-60s met standards for a good transportation network, vehicles have grown larger and freight traffic has surged. He added that more than 100,000 vehicles travel the interstates daily, including about 15,000 freight carriers.

Simmons said updating the structures are about meeting current demands and future needs.

“As with all construction, we know that this is going to be very challenging for the citizens and persons traveling in the area,” Simmons said. “It’s going to look like it’s inconvenient, but the long-term benefits from safety and efficiency to economic development throughout the heart of Jackson will be worth it in tenfold, for not only us but for many generations to come.”

Mississippi Department of Transportation Executive Director Brad White said the project will include two major Interstate 20 shutdowns during construction.

The westbound lanes are expected to close for 45 days during the summer of 2027, around the months of July or August, followed by another 45-day closure of the eastbound lanes during the summer of 2028.

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