Report on the Santa Clara County Community Summit on Homelessness

December 2019

Overview of the summit and summary of key topics, themes, and ideas from participants.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 1
About the Report ................................................................................................................ 2
Creating a Space for Open Dialogue .................................................................................. 2
Summit Experience ............................................................................................................. 4
Discussion Topics ............................................................................................................. 6

Methods ............................................................................................................................. 6

“How do you see the issue?” – Individuals ....................................................................... 6
“How do you see the issue?” – Societal and Social Determinants of Health ....................... 7
“How do you see the issue?” – Behavioral Health ............................................................. 9
“How do you see the issue?” – Economy .......................................................................... 9
“How do you see the issue?” – Policy .............................................................................. 10
“Who is responsible?” – Government ............................................................................. 10
“Who is responsible?” – Community .............................................................................. 11
“Who is responsible?” – Companies and Corporations ................................................... 12
“What should be done?” – Policy and Legislation ........................................................... 12
“What should be done?” – Increase Housing Options .................................................... 13
“What should be done?” – Improve Health and Support Services .................................. 17
“What should be done?” – Changes to Housing Restrictions .......................................... 19
“What should be done?” – Short-term Solutions ............................................................. 20

Next Steps .......................................................................................................................... 21

Future Summits ................................................................................................................ 21
Ensuring Diverse Participation ......................................................................................... 22
Education ........................................................................................................................... 22
Recommended Solutions ................................................................................................ 22
Action Taken Post Summit .............................................................................................. 22

Attachment A: Summit Agenda and Overview Handout for Participants ............................ 24
Attachment B: Summit Self-Selected Group Topics .......................................................... 25
Attachment C: Summit Video Links .................................................................................. 26
Attachment D: Homeless Summit Themes: Facilitator Reports ......................................... 27
Attachment E: Summit Solution Recommendations ......................................................... 28
Executive Summary

The 2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey reported an increase of 31% of persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County since their 2017 report. In recognition of how Housing and Homelessness is one of the biggest challenges facing the county, Supervisor Dave Cortese developed and hosted the Santa Clara County Community Summit on Homelessness on September 21st, 2019. A diverse group of county residents came together to connect, listen, share and engage on this important topic. The event was attended by approximately 250 individuals comprised of service providers, government leaders, law enforcement, public health representatives, housing leaders, developers, homeless advocates, homeless and recently housed individuals, community and neighborhood groups and educators attended the event located at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. Intentional and thoughtful outreach efforts led to the participation of approximately 60 individuals attending the event who live in shelters, tent camps and city streets to share their story and partner with others in the community to develop solutions.

The purpose of the Community Summit on Homelessness is for experiences to be shared, the public’s knowledge about homelessness to be enhanced and workshop ideas to be cultivated about how to prevent homelessness and house individuals experiencing homelessness.

Using a facilitated process encouraging open dialog, participants had the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of homelessness, to experience productive conversations with people who hold different viewpoints and identify next steps for community involvement and solutions in a productive and civil manner utilizing dialogue practices designed by American Leadership Forum.

As a result of this event, solution recommendations have been developed which were inspired by participants at the Community Summit on Homelessness as well as the Community online Survey sent out from the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese before the event. These recommended solutions are listed at the conclusion of this report.

This report aims to capture the process, testimonies, values, priorities and concerns shared at the Summit which will in turn be shared with the County Board of Supervisors, County departments/agencies, community agencies and the public at large.
About the Report

This community report will provide an overview of the key topics that were discussed at the Community Summit on Homelessness led by Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese in partnership with the American Leadership Forum. It is not possible for this report to capture every discussion, opinion, or view expressed by participants. However, this report does cover the commonly raised topics in conjunction with providing a summary of the viewpoints expressed on these topics. Identified themes were captured from input forms that were submitted by participants as well as a review of facilitator notes (228 input forms and facilitator notes). All participants and facilitators may not have submitted a form or may have submitted multiple forms, so the total number of forms is not representative of the total number of attendees at the event. In addition, issues discussed but not recorded on the forms are not able to be depicted in this report.

Direct quotes from the input forms and facilitator notes are utilized throughout this report to offer a glimpse of the summit experience and punctuate the voice of the community members who attended the summit. Especially noteworthy was the opportunity for the approximately 60 unhoused participants to share their lived experience with homelessness. All the quotes are provided verbatim to accurately portray the participant’s communication. Any changes to the exact quote are noted in brackets and were only made when necessary to preserve clarity. Any quoted statistics or facts have not been verified but are included as stated in order to reflect the individual’s understanding and beliefs.

Creating a Space for Open Dialogue

Supervisor Dave Cortese’s office conducted the planning for the Santa Clara County’s Community Summit on Homelessness. The American Leadership Forum was a key partner in planning and executing this event. American Leadership Forum’s experience in facilitating challenging dialogues and commitment to building diverse networks for community transformation was a large contributor to the success of the summit. Partnership with county and community stakeholders and their involvement in the design and planning process was also fundamental to the success of this event. One essential principle integrated into the design was the mindful intention for inclusivity of diverse organizations and community members. Great efforts were made by Supervisor Cortese’s office to ensure all interests were present and included in the summit; included were those in support of all efforts to house individuals experiencing homelessness in any way possible to those concerned with using public funds. Also included were those with unconventional ideas such as sanctioned encampments and tiny home use.
Intentional efforts were made to encourage the attendance of those with lived experience with homelessness. Involvement of unhoused advocates in the planning led to getting the word out about the event as well as endorsing the credibility of the event to the unhoused population. Further, thoughtful outreach to community and faith based organizations that serve the unhoused led to their willingness to encourage unhoused individuals to attend the event. Backing of the event by trusted sources was particularly important as the unhoused population can have a background of traumatic and stigmatizing experiences which has led to skepticism and distrust of government events and efforts. Private citizens and community based organizations were coordinated to shuttle unhoused individuals from shelters, homeless encampments, and service provider locations to the event. Blue Tarp Project’s “The faces of the Homeless” portraits as well as a wall of unhoused/or previously unhoused veterans were displayed at the event. Videos were developed for the event to showcase a diversity of perspectives through interviews with unhoused individuals, previously unhoused individuals, residents, policy makers, law enforcement and service providers. A free lunch was provided and a free dinner was also offered. At the end of the event, a resource fair took place which offered free backpacks, free bus tokens and portable showers. As a result of these intentional efforts, approximately 60 individuals with lived experience of homelessness attended the event along with service providers, government leaders, law enforcement, public health representatives, housing leaders, developers, homeless advocates, educators, and community and neighborhood groups.

60 people were trained by the American Leadership Forum in advance of the Summit, on how to facilitate round table discussions in a way that created a safe space, supported inclusivity of all perspectives, and helped to foster human connection between people who live in “different worlds”1. Emphasis was placed upon cultivating a culture of empathy and compassionate listening in a trauma informed manner. This training empowered facilitators to lead participants through five rounds of facilitated conversations. Greg Ranstrom, Consultant for American Leadership Forum, and Protima Pandey, Director of the County’s Office of Women’s Policy, served as the chief facilitators and oversaw the entire process.

For the first round of conversations at the Summit, facilitators led participants through exercises focused on building self-awareness, how to listen to understand, and how to have a productive dialogue. These exercises set the tone and helped orient participants on the goals of the day which included sharing, listening and understanding different perspectives rather than debating, convincing or consensus building.

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1 American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley “Conversation and Action”
After these exercises, a video entitled “Seeing” was shown to participants as an introduction to the second round of conversation that focused on how participants see the issue of homelessness. A video titled “Doing” served to transition participants to Round 3’s focus on responsibility and action steps. The facilitator’s role in these conversations was to ensure high quality listening and conversation and ensure all participants had a chance to listen and speak.

In Round 4, participants had the opportunity to choose a topic related to homelessness to discuss at the round tables. Participants were free to choose the conversation topic from a list and were encouraged to move between tables to find a topic of specific interest to them. Round 5 was a continuation of these topic specific conversations. The final two rounds of conversation for the day (Rounds 6 and 7) were not led by the trained facilitators. Instead, participants had the opportunity to select a topic of their choosing and self-facilitate these conversations, in the way that had been modeled in earlier rounds, and to approach facilitation with openness, honesty and high-quality listening to understand. The Summit agenda and overview that were provided to participants are available in Attachment A.

Participants were asked to share their opinions and ideas on any of the topics of their choosing on the input forms. Facilitators were asked to take notes on areas of convergence and divergence within the groups. The input forms and facilitator notes were the primary sources of information used to capture and summarize the themes of the day.

Summit Experience

Participants came to the Summit from diverse backgrounds and had a variety of viewpoints on homelessness; for example neighbors who support “sweeps” of encampments and those that oppose them. Participants also occupied a range of housing status’ from currently experiencing homelessness, experienced homelessness in the past, at risk of homelessness as well as stably housed. Despite these differences, many of the participants, facilitators, and organizers provided positive feedback regarding achieving the Summit’s overarching objective of fostering a space for the community to gather, connect, listen and ask questions to gain an understanding of diverse values, beliefs and experiences about homelessness. American Leadership Forum (ALF) Facilitators shared that the table talk conversations were sometimes uncomfortable and emotional but always respectful.

“This has been so far a great opportunity to talk to people with differing situations. It has helped to expand my awareness of a lot regarding the issue of homelessness.”

Special attention was given to ensure a diversity of viewpoints at each table including representation of individuals with lived experiences with homelessness. For many participants,
the opportunity to connect with homeless individuals in this forum and hear their stories and opinions was powerful and offered the opportunity to increase connection, relatability and understanding of the homelessness experience. Further, it is recognized that the inclusion of the voice of the homelessness is essential not only to promote clarity about the homelessness experience and recognize the diversity that exists among homeless individuals but also to develop effective solutions.

“I heard many people at my table talking about the stigma of not having a home. “We scare them.” “Sometimes I think God has forsaken me.” “People see us homeless and they are scared it could happen to them.””

“It was powerful to have 2 former homeless individuals at our table. They shared their experience and perspective that was very revealing and informed our discussion.”

The tone of the participant input forms reflected the diversity of viewpoints represented at the summit and reflected the sharing and learning-oriented flavor of the day. The focus on the two talking points of 1) what we see is happening and 2) what we can do about it was an effective strategy to build high quality listening and conversation. Audio technical issues occurred during the use of videos titled “Seeing” and “Doing” and constructive feedback was provided to increase effective messaging.

Participants had the opportunity to self-select a topic group according to their interest. There were a wide range of topics including:

- Faith community response,
- Accountability of system,
- Have the state declare an emergency,
- Short-term solutions,
- Stabilizers,
- interim solutions,
- Developing navigation centers from homelessness to housing,
- Affordable housing,
- Accessory dwelling units/granny units,
- Apprenticeship and employment,
- Impact of large tech companies and displacement,
- Lockers and chargers,
- Mental health accessing services and availability,
- Law enforcement assistance,
- Training of life skills for young adults and Housing for immigrants.
Overall, the experience of the summit appeared to be positive with an interest in future events and continued dialogue as well as educating the public.

“Great dialogue but I wanted to see action and do my part to support that action”

Discussion Topics

This section of the report is a summary of the thoughts, beliefs, and values expressed by summit participants. This summary of comments is intended to capture a sample of the varied viewpoints on each topic discussed along with participants’ suggestions, ideas, or requests for related next steps.

Methods

The topics discussed during the facilitated round table discussions came from a facilitation guide that was provided to the facilitators, with the group free to choose any topic from the list (this list is available as Attachment B). As a result, many of the themes on the input forms centered on topics from this list, so the list was used as a basis for identifying themes for this report using a deductive approach. Topics from this list that were not raised on the input forms are not mentioned in this report. During the analysis of the input forms and facilitator notes, themes emerged that were not on the topic list, and using an inductive approach, these themes were included in this report.

For a topic to be considered a “theme” for the purposes of this report the topic needed to be mentioned on four or more input forms. There were additional topics that were mentioned on fewer forms, however with the purpose of this report being to capture a summary of the more commonly raised topics a topic had to be raised four or more times to be included as a “theme.” The quotes provided in each theme’s section were selected to demonstrate and represent the variety of views and beliefs within that theme and are not intended to be an exhaustive example of the views expressed.

“How do you see the issue?” – Individuals

The topic of individual factors that contribute to homelessness was raised in community input forms and in facilitator notes. These mentions converged around the interconnectedness and intersection of individual and societal factors that lead to or contribute to homelessness. Comments related to individuals as part of the issue also focused on the individuality of and diversity among people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. A theme that emerged is that there any many homeless people that are invisible or not seen, such as teachers and teacher aids, students, and ordinary people who do not fit stereotypes about
homeless individuals. Community participants with lived experience in homelessness shared their individual stories and experiences.

"The issues are interconnected both "individual" and "structural/societal."

"Homeless people should never be put into one category. Each person has a unique story. All are not drug addicts, all have not been to jail, all do not steal"

"I've been homeless off and on since 1972. I've learned to adapt and perform in environments within shorter periods of time than most. I have been asked by media (why should I help or assist you in gaining housing, if you aren't willing to basically conform) I said I'm needed out there to help others with survival."

Participants also commented on the detrimental effects of stigma and discrimination against individuals experiencing homelessness. Comments also related to the positive impact of showing kindness to and connecting with homeless neighbors.

"People who are homeless are human beings, not lepers," “We are like you.”

“We feel that people are afraid of us, do not trust us, and are disgusted by our appearance.”

“A little kindness goes a long way”

“How do you see the issue?” – Societal and Social Determinants of Health

Among those who provided comments related to seeing the issue of homelessness primarily through the lens of the role of society and social determinants of health, most focused on housing being a human right and therefore homelessness being a societal failing or a violation of human rights. There was agreement among the comments that housing is a critical factor for wellbeing and survival and concern for how people without stable housing can focus on their health, recovery and jobs when a basic need is going unmet. A small number of comments also focused on the social isolation suffered by individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness.

"I believe housing is a human right. I believe housing the unhoused is less expensive and better for communities. I believe that homelessness is a social failing, not a personal one."

"Society takes advantage of poor persons, especially of us."

"We are honest and hardworking people; yet we feel alone in this city"
Community and Public Health Safety
Safety for those experiencing homelessness was a primary concern expressed at the Summit. Participants mentioned many threats to safety including neighborhood violence, racism, gangs, and fear of being shot and killed. Comments in input forms also mentioned the lack of safety experienced by people living in their cars. Participants shared about some of the strategies that they have used to stay safe or increase safety while living on the streets or in shelters. These included sleeping near a cemetery because it is quiet and sleeping near the Sunnyvale Police Department. Fear of reporting safety violations or concerns was also expressed by participants, for example participants mentioned a lack of trust in police and fear of deportation.

"We need more protection from San Jose Police Department. We have nowhere else to go"

"We are afraid to report housing fraud because we do not wish to be deported"

“Safety/security was a theme from the formerly homeless at our table. What does it take to be safe? Are shelters safe? It doesn’t seem so from what I heard...”

A small number of input forms also mentioned concern for public health related to cleanliness and appropriate waste management. Most of these comments also included recommendations for supporting improved sanitation and hygiene, for example, by enhancing access to showers, bathrooms, and storage for personal items.

"It is difficult when areas are a mess. That’s when encampments get out of hand and what makes people get upset and intolerant of homeless. When people do inconsiderate things like when homeless people make a mess going through your garbage."

Domestic Violence
The topic of domestic violence and its relation to homelessness and housing insecurity was expressed in participant input forms and facilitator reports. Comments spoke to how domestic violence often leads to homelessness because people are forced to flee their homes to escape abuse and threats to personal safety. Participants expressed agreement that housing models being developed or proposed should consider options for families with children and displaced youth. Many comments related to domestic violence focused on the impact of domestic violence on women and children, and the need that this creates for shelters and housing that can accommodate and protect victims.

"I am a domestic violence survivor. Having somewhere to rest, recover and plan ahead is essential"
"Domestic violence has a role in homelessness"

Inequitable Society and Discrimination
There was a unified expression among comments in the input forms and facilitator reports regarding the experience of living in an inequitable society, particularly related to income and wealth disparities within the Bay Area. Some comments generally expressed frustration and confusion about how a wealthy society like Silicon Valley with a booming economy also has so many people living in poverty and unhoused. A small number of comments expressed a feeling of being left out or being pushed out of a thriving society.

"Income inequality is a major role in housing stability"

"We are confused – Silicon Valley is very rich and yet the government allows us to live in fear, underground, and with no permanent place to live"

"It is very clear that we are being pushed out of the city of San Jose"

“How do you see the issue?” — Behavioral Health
There were a few mentions of behavioral health in relation to the issue of homelessness. Most comments focused on mental illness and addiction to drugs and alcohol being contributing factors to homelessness. There was complete agreement in the value of behavioral health treatment programs and in supporting and enhancing such programs, particularly for those experiencing and who have experienced homelessness. Facilitator reports also demonstrated agreement among participants in a small group that homelessness creates trauma, a sense of chaos and disorderliness, and a feeling of threat to personal safety.

"Hopelessness, frustration, prejudice often makes people take up with drugs, alcohol - to self-medicate - since practically no housing available for no income and low-income people."

"All police must have mental health training program"

“How do you see the issue?” — Economy
Most participant comments related to the economy were in the context of income inequality, income instability, and the lack of resources.

Income Instability and Lack of Resources
Views related to the economy were focused on the state of the local economy, specifically regarding income inequity and instability in contrast with the high cost of living in Santa Clara County and the broader Bay Areas. Participants’ comments conveyed concern for how unaffordable housing has become and the lack of affordable housing resources within the region’s safety net.
"Houselessness in Santa Clara County has reached a crisis point"

“Earning the national median income of $60,000, I can barely afford a $1,800 studio in Campbell, CA to house myself and my 11-year-old son. If a fulltime professional like myself can barely afford to house my family, what are our fixed income and lower income folks to do? Where are they to live?”

"Housing is a human right, there are a lack of options”

“How do you see the issue?” – Policy
Participant comments related to seeing homelessness as an issue of policy converged around the themes of policies and law enforcement being too restrictive, lacking empathy or understanding, and criminalizing homelessness.

Restrictive Policies and Criminalization of Homelessness
Amongst those who provided comments related to policies, a main concern included negative interactions between law enforcement and homeless individuals. There was general agreement regarding the need for alternative solutions to the use of excessive force and destroying or taking away peoples’ property during sweeps. Comments also focused on ideas for providing training to law enforcement that could help improve interactions and relationships between law enforcement and members of the community who are experiencing homelessness.

"Excessive use of force when contacting homeless. Lack of empathy.”

"Stop sweeps based on complaints. Should only be done for health and sanitation" "Stop destroying peoples' tents and stealing property"

"We would like to see the police (SJPD) treat the homeless with dignity and respect."

"Police training needs to include training on homelessness"

“Who is responsible?” – Government
Participants shared different perspectives regarding who is ultimately responsible or shares responsibility for addressing the issue of homelessness. Most of the comments pointed to a shared responsibility among government, employers, corporations, and community. However, some comments specifically mentioned the role of government in addressing this issue. For example, some participants called on the government to take the lead and take swift action to address the housing shortage crisis. Other comments mentioned the amount of power the government has, such as power that comes through legislation and funding as a primary reason for why the government should be held accountable for providing solutions.
"Housing needs of the people need to be assessed and provided by the government"

"State and city need to address issue of student homelessness"

"Stop talking about solutions that have been discussed for years and take action. The County, city, state, etc. have the power to do anything they choose."

Local Government
Some participants specifically mentioned the responsibility that local government has in providing solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis. Participants expressed the need for County and city governments to coordinate housing services and to improve partnerships with non-profit and community-based organizations. Other comments mentioned the need for city governments to utilize policies and incentives to increase the number of affordable housing units, as well as to improve strategies for dealing with potential push back from constituents, such as the “not in my backyard” mentality.

“The County needs to coordinate, but cities, faith groups, nonprofits, and other can contribute in meaningful ways if directed.”

"Cities to require all developments (housing) to dedicate a % of units for homeless/low income families"

“Who is responsible?” – Community
There were many comments stating that the responsibility for addressing homelessness should be shared across all sectors and members of society. Participant feedback included a shared notion that proposed solutions should be inclusive and rooted in the belief that all members of the community are valuable and can be part of the solution. Facilitator reports noted that participants mentioned the need to engage youth in these discussions and ensure that their voice is represented in proposed programs and solutions. Comments related to community being responsible for addressing homelessness also pointed to the urgency of the issue and the need for all community residents to act. A small number of participants used their input forms to communicate willingness and readiness to act and asked what they can do to help.

“Solution needs to include community, corporations, businesses, residents, homeless”

"I feel a sense of community. Can you name 4 neighbors on each side of you? I can name 10 on each side. I help my neighbors and my neighbors help me."

"Society it is our issue! We all have a responsibility"
"#WeALLBelong" "We need to take pride in our whole city/community, not just our own neighborhoods. Each of our families will be safe and healthy when our whole community is safe and healthy (and housed)."

“Who is responsible?” – Companies and Corporations
Of the comments mentioning a responsible entity, many expressed that companies and corporations, particularly technology companies, have played a role in creating or worsening the housing crisis and should therefore be compelled to contribute to solutions. Some ideas included taxing companies or requiring that companies pay into a housing fund. Other ideas focused on requiring companies to build or subsidize housing for their employees.

"High tech companies have impacted the housing crisis. These companies should be required to support housing for teachers and other workers that are needed..."

"Corporations that come here should kick in on solutions towards homelessness. The breaks they give the companies should require targeted payment to homeless solutions. Government and big businesses need to be made accountable for the negative effect they've had on the rest of the population."

"Tech industry should be taxed a "housing tax" to create housing for their employees e.g., google, apple..."

"All of us - not just government - are responsible and needed to create solutions to homelessness. That includes corporations! The high-tech companies that have driven increased inequalities need to be part of creating solutions to the crisis and make systemic changes and investments to prevent further displacement and poverty."

“What should be done?” – Policy and Legislation
A common theme regarding the use of policy to address homelessness included a recommendation to declare a state of emergency at the state and/or County level. Participants mentioned that declaring an emergency could allow for increased resources and decreased barriers such as eliminating outdated regulations. Comments included looking at models for emergency management after a natural disaster, such as best practices or solutions utilized by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"Santa Clara County homeless issue should be treated as an "emergency" crisis and planned for as a disaster"

"Declare California a State of Emergency regarding housing displacement prevention and placement"
"Mobile Home Parks like after FEMA disasters"

Those who viewed policies as a solution for homelessness also made recommendations for decreasing regulations and increasing incentives that will lead to an increase in affordable housing options. For example, there were many mentions of setting limits on rent increases and mandating or incentivizing acceptance of Section 8 housing vouchers.

"Eliminate layers of regulations making it easier to build housing including policy"

"Tax incentive for landlords to rent to low-income residents"

A re-evaluation of the process and queue for housing was also mentioned in input forms and facilitator notes. This recommendation was accompanied by concerns of a lack of transparency and fairness in the process and tools currently being used to determine who receives housing support. There were specific concerns regarding income limits and eligibility criteria being too restrictive and creating unintended consequences such as forcing people to quit their jobs, work fewer hours, and decline opportunities for career advancement due to fear of losing benefits. In addition to reviewing and changing policies and processes related to housing benefits, some comments also recommended co-designing policies and programs with people who have experienced homelessness and who have a unique perspective related to the access to and use of housing resources.

"Review government benefits and services to address changes needed"

“Reevaluate housing queue!!! It is broken and unfair to our homeless community.”

“We need a sliding scale system for support, so people don’t quit their jobs or decline raises so they don’t lose their benefits.”

"I am a service provider working in supportive housing with formerly homeless. We need people developing policies who have lived homeless experience."

“What should be done?” — Increase Housing Options

Most comments related to solutions for homelessness were around the theme of increasing housing options. Within these comments, some offered a variety of recommendations regarding the types of housing options that should be developed or provided while others focused on one type of housing option, for example on tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADU). Feedback also included mentions of vacant buildings, housing, and empty plots of land that could be used to provide housing.
"Need for more/varied housing options; safe parking, ADUs, sanctioned encampments and permanent affordable housing. Streamline processes for approval of all options. Current process is too slow, expensive and subject to community resistance"

"Housing strategy should focus on building community not just increasing housing units"

"Fixing what’s not working. Stopping predatory landlords. Building housing that also incorporates whole person treatment nearby."

"There are places ghost apartment, vacant buildings, storage facilities, hotels"

"One ADU per block in Santa Clara County can end homelessness, or at least put a huge dent in it."

Building and Providing Affordable Housing

The broad topic of affordable housing was raised in many of the community input forms and facilitator notes. The comments related to affordable housing expressed views related to the need to expand affordable housing options and make significant progress to maintain housing affordable for those at risk of becoming homeless. Participant comments mentioned the key role that shelters and emergency housing play in the community safety net, however most comments expressed needs for alternative solutions that provide a greater sense of housing security. For example, comments included the idea of building more community housing or housing in a group setting, like dorms or hostels. Participants expressed that these models are more cost effective than building individual units with bathrooms and kitchens. Additionally, there was shared agreement that a dorm or hostel-like model could lead to a greater sense of community since residents would share common living spaces. Building tiny homes and ADUs was also a commonly cited recommendation. Participants also mentioned the need to build small apartments and to ensure that housing is developed as mixed housing with studios and family units together in the same space. Housing first and rapid rehousing were also sub-themes within providing affordable housing. Other comments related to housing first and rapid rehousing focused on the need to minimize the amount of time people are on the streets or in unstable housing. These comments also mentioned the need to co-locate key supportive services with housing.

"HUD says that no more than 33% of one's income should go to housing. We must make housing available to the minimum wage earners in San Jose. At $15 per hour, one would make $600 per week and $2,400 per month. 33% of $2,400 is $800. Housing must be available at $800 per month for someone at the bottom of the economic ladder."
'"We need a lot more affordable housing to prevent people from becoming homeless"'

"Shelters for domestic violence survivors and families that lead to housing."

"Having been homeless and currently residing in transitional housing, finding a sense of community is vital to recovery. Providing a group setting, such as dormitory-style living, has helped me greatly and I feel that a high capacity apartment building or a grouping of tiny homes could help others greatly."

"How about using the "hostel" model - shared rooms and bathrooms, community kitchen - longer term solution"

"We need to realize that many homeless people do not need supportive housing, they need rapid rehousing to a more affordable apartment after a steep rent increase, quick links to new jobs after a job loss. They are perfectly capable of caring for themselves; they just need to recover from an unexpected situation. This is much cheaper than thinking everyone needs supportive housing. Then resources will be available for those who need more intensive help."

Providing Rental Assistance and Supporting Renters
Among the comments that mentioned rental assistance, there was agreement related to the value of providing this support. Community input forms mentioned the need to support renters facing housing insecurity by enhancing the types of rental assistance that is currently provided. A few comments recommended a community fund for loans or to provide rental deposit assistance. There were also recommendations of increasing funds available for emergency rental assistance and calls for simplifying the process for accessing emergency rental assistance. Comments related to supporting renters also recommended enhancing efforts to engage and educate landlords with the objective of increasing rental units available at affordable rates.

"Grant loans for rental deposit the way loans are available to buy homes."

"Immediately give rental assistance to people about to lose their housing to keep them housed while they address the problems"

"Enhance landlord engagement efforts to ensure people with housing vouchers can move into housing, can increase housing stock"

Focus on Prevention
There were many input forms in which the recommendation to focus on prevention was specifically mentioned. Within these comments, participants expressed concerns about the lack of focus on preventing homelessness and the need to include prevention in the overall strategy to address homelessness. Some of these comments related to providing rental assistance in
order to prevent loss of housing, while other comments focused on the need to limit rent increases and to develop programs that serve people with a fixed income, such as low-income senior residents.

"We need to focus on preventing homelessness by 1) stopping displacement due to unjust evictions, gentrification, destroying affordable apartments to build new expensive housing, etc. 2) providing support to low income people so they can maintain their housing and people who face crisis such as health, job loss, etc."

"I feel every month one paycheck away of becoming homeless, myself. Overall, we need to prevent homelessness. While one is being housed three more are losing home. So, what are we doing to break the cycle? We need to make a policy that prevents the increase of rent..."

Safe Parking and Sanctioned Encampments

While many of the input forms mentioned building affordable housing units, there were a lot of forms that mentioned safe parking and sanctioned encampments as part of the solution to homelessness. Comments related to safe parking for cars and recreational vehicles (RVs) focused on this solution being faster and easier to implement and more cost effective compared with other types of housing. Views expressed on this sub-theme also mentioned that safe parking could be a solution specifically targeted for college students, and that local college campuses, like San Jose State University, could serve as the site for safe parking. In addition, there were also many input forms that included sanctioned encampments and city-permitted villages as a recommendation for increasing housing options. Participant input forms and facilitator notes on this topic also included requests for providing safe parking and sanctioned encampments with the resources necessary for personal hygiene and waste management, for example, bathrooms, showers, waste disposal systems, and laundry facilities. Participant feedback also mentioned equipping these sites with charging stations for electronics and Wi-Fi.

"24 hour safe RV parking."

"If a safe park could be established on [college] campuses with access throughout the night to bathroom facilities that would alleviate the students parking on streets where they are vulnerable."

"Put portable toilets out where camps or RVs are congregating - and trash cans - instead of waiting till it’s a big mess and then complain."

"Why not leave the encampments, make them a safe space, don't do sweeps, and utilize them as a steppingstone into group homes."
"The Fairgrounds would be a great place to provide temporary housing and provide wrap-around services... Why not spend the money we spend on sweeping encampments to provide places for garbage, toilets, showers, and places to do laundry"

“...Shelters may be necessary as a point to access services but they are not an overall solution. Smaller scale communities need to be more of a model a la Hope Village or safe RV parking..."

“What should be done?” – Improve Health and Support Services
Another broad topic that was mentioned numerous times was health and support services. After increasing housing options, health and support services was the theme most commonly mentioned. General comments within this theme provided sentiments of acknowledging the role that these services play in improving the wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness. There was also agreement among comments in input forms about the desire to improve and expand these services, and in ensuring access for the most vulnerable populations.

"It's vital to find a feeling of belonging, and a whole person treatment plan has helped me immensely."

"Health services (mental and physical) need to be more readily available - more places."

"Housing is not enough, the housing should come with services. Housing homeless requires services to allow them to retain their housing."

Improve Service Reach
Participant input forms also provided more detail about specific concerns and recommendations related to insufficient reach to target audiences. Recommendations for addressing this barrier included conducting outreach and leveraging public locations and public workers who have the most contact with people experiencing homelessness. For example, by disseminating resource information on public transportation and providing training on community resources to bus drivers. Other recommendations included leveraging technology, for example by developing an app to help clients connect directly with services. Mobile clinics were also recommended as part of the solution to improving access.

"Put lists of resources on our buses. Cross train service providers so they know about other services."

"Equip bus drivers/and or buses with phone numbers of homeless services"

"Have support in all public businesses, churches, schools, YMCA, etc. Support in communication as to where services are available."
"Keep more mobile clinics"

Improve Access to Behavioral Health Treatment
There was convergence in the input forms and facilitator reports around the need to improve access to behavioral health and treatment for alcohol and drug use. Some of the comments mentioned that people experiencing homelessness are at higher risk for addiction and mental illness in part due to the trauma experienced while losing housing. There were also expressions of frustrations about the lack of behavioral health resources that are available in the County and the current process for accessing behavioral health treatment.

"It is very difficult and takes a long time to get those with mental health issues, help. Why do we only have one number for clients to call and then get referred somewhere? Why can't they call the mental health location directly?"

"Mental Health – not enough resources"

Coordination of Services and Navigation Support
Of the comments related to improving health and support services, many also expressed a unified desire to improve coordination among service providers and navigation services provided to clients. A small number of comments specifically mentioned that strategies to coordinate existing services should be prioritized over developing new programs. Some of these comments pointed to local government as a potential leader for service coordination, while others suggested mandating that organizations receiving public funding work together to improve service coordination and decrease barriers to access. A small number of comments also mentioned that service coordination and navigation is particularly lacking during transition points in people’s lives, such as post incarceration.

"I work at a non-profit in the community. I see a wide variety of available resources but see a disconnect in how those that need them can find out about them." "As part of a larger solution, improve service navigation. People who are unhoused and facing challenges need a better system of finding out what is available to them."

“Navigator/Coordinator/Ride to appointments. Not just a list of places.”

"Develop safe encampments and navigation centers so services can be more effectively provided"

"Lack of transition for people coming out of incarceration"
Services for Clients with Disabilities

Improving services for clients with disabilities also emerged as a sub-theme. The comments related to this sub-theme conveyed general recommendations for reviewing existing services to ensure inclusivity for clients with disabilities.

“Social safety net funding especially for disabilities and aging in place. Not everything is "mental health" sometimes the circumstance of getting older.”

"Services for homeless people with disabilities"

"Not enough help for people with disabilities"

"As a professional who has dealt with special needs, I believe most solutions offered do not consider the world of disabilities and have not developed effective protocols for intervention."

Jobs and Training

Providing career support and training was also a sub-theme that emerged in a small number of input forms. Mentions of increasing job and training included the idea of developing more paid internship programs for people experiencing homelessness. Although there was general agreement about the value of helping people to find and keep jobs and to provide career training, most of the comments within this sub-theme focused on some of the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness. For example, participants commented on how difficult the job application process is for people lacking stable housing because they cannot provide an address or do not have a safe place to store their belongings.

"We need an address that is not looked at as a homeless address. How do you look presentable for a job?"

“What should be done?” – Changes to Housing Restrictions

Changes to housing restrictions was a topic that emerged as a recommended solution to address homelessness. Participant comments under this theme included recommendations for planning new developments, approving developments and incentivizing development of affordable housing. There was agreement regarding the need to improve the current policies and processes used for affordable housing projects. For example, by taking preemptive action and housing people who will be displaced by new development projects and by reducing the processing time for permanent housing projects. Comments under this theme also mentioned the importance of building affordable and mixed housing projects across the County and not concentrating these projects in only some neighborhoods or geographical areas. Participants also expressed concern about the restrictiveness of income limits and eligibility criteria for housing support and recommended that these restrictions be reviewed and improved.
"Before redevelopment projects are approved plan for the number of people to be displaced and start early to help them find new housing. Relocation money is helpful but not enough - housing is difficult to find."

"Reduce processing time for permanent supportive housing projects. It takes time before construction begins for projects to get approved and it takes time after construction before people can move in to get coding/inspections completed."

"More vendors/providers to bid on projects for homeless projects. There are so few providers that it has interfered with project completion and absorbed a lot of money." Participant referenced the Evans Lane project as an example.

"The affordable and supportive housing should/must be dispersed throughout all cities of SCC equally. There shouldn't be concentrations of services and housing as this puts a stress on the surrounding community..." "This is not a good plan for diversity"

"People who live with subsidized income receiving SSI, SDI, GA, AFDC, TANF or in subsidized apartment are penalized if try to earn money to buy a car etc. even working part time as a school crossing guard."

“What should be done?” – Short-term Solutions
Of the many recommendations and ideas for addressing the issue of homelessness, some of these were identified as short-term solutions. For example, providing lockers and other forms of safe storage for personal belongings, making small-scale infrastructure modifications, and launching a community education campaign (see Next Steps for quotes related to recommendations for community education). Attachment E provides a list of short-term solutions that were recommended by Summit participants.

Lockers or alternative options for the safe storage of personal belongings were recommended in many input forms. Participants expressed that this recommendation is very low cost in comparison with building any type of housing, and therefore a low-effort, high-impact type of solution.

"Some at the table said they were afraid to leave their stuff in order to look for work or signing up for school. Can we provide lockers so people can secure their things in order to pursue employment or education?"

"Provide lockers."

"People are forced to carry their belongings on their back which it makes it difficult for them to apply for jobs. When they leave their belongings it is often
swept away by the police. Please provide safe places to store their belongings, access to bathrooms and showers to provide the homeless with some dignity."

Another short-term solution that was commonly mentioned was making small-scale infrastructure modifications to improve the lives of people currently living on the streets. Some of the ideas related to infrastructure modifications include adding portable toilets, garbage cans, charging stations, and sharps containers to existing camps or near areas where homeless people currently live.

"Helping encampments be a more sanitary environment i.e.: garbage cans, sharps containers, etc."

"Showers, trash cans, medical care"

“Provide phone chargers”

“Solar panels to contribute electricity; wifi access”

Next Steps

Future Summits

Not only was there a large turnout of approximately 250 participants at this summit but the input forms included a theme signifying interest in future events, continued dialogue and taking action.

“What if summit process continues. To get deeper into solutions, and reduce cynicism – we can meet ongoing, monthly, quarterly to assess, evaluate and deliberate over...and challenges and opportunities to find fundamental changes to the system. Get service providers, decision makers and users in the same room (ongoing community process).”

"Next Summit get it out in nature to allow for creativity"

"How can we continue to share our lived experiences with each other, in our neighborhoods, churches, schools, etc.?"

"More community interaction with our homeless neighbors"

During the summit, a strong theme emerged about policy, programs and legislation which revealed the participants’ interest and openness to address issues related to housing and homelessness at the local level as well as the state and federal level. Future efforts to engage the community about policies, programs and legislation are likely to be well attended by engaged participants. The topics that emerged from this summit could be used to help guide
discussions about these types of next steps to ensure these conversations are about the issues that matter most to the community.

Ensuring Diverse Participation
The focused and thoughtful outreach which led to the participation of approximately 60 individuals with lived experiences with homelessness contributed greatly to the success of the summit. Future efforts to enhance inclusivity and diversity could include the availability of ASL translators, focused efforts to engage residents who have concerns about housing solutions in their neighborhood as well as purposeful outreach to other vulnerable populations such as transition age youth, the LGBTQ community, individuals facing domestic violence and persons struggling with behavioral health issues to name a few.

“We need to gather the data on unaccompanied youth and young adults, select strategies to address their needs and measure it. Many of these youth are also LGTBQ, targeted for CSEL, and Foster Youth.”

Education
Many summit participants expressed a desire for additional information and education on a variety of topics related to homelessness and housing support services such as effective distribution of housing and supportive housing resource information and clarity on how unhoused individuals get selected for housing and housing services.

“Increase outreach to educate the public about homelessness and who are the homeless. They are not all mentally ill. They are not all bad people”

"Change the conversation with residents. Talk about successful models. Have portals to share positive stories around homelessness”

"Show more diverse experiences of homelessness, and that all should be respected and deserve help."

"NIMBYs are a minority. They need to be educated, they need to be exposed to things like Second Street Apartments."

"Allow a committee of former homeless people to help with reaching out to encampments...."

Recommended Solutions
Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue. However, participants were able to identify short, medium- and long-term solutions for housing and homelessness. These recommendations were developed during Round 3 when discussing the topic of “What should be done?” Participant feedback and offered solutions conveyed a sense of urgency to take immediate action on short term solutions to capture “low hanging fruit”. The following
solution recommendations were inspired by participants at the Community Summit on Homelessness and the Community online Survey sent out from the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese leading up to the Summit:

- County of Santa Clara Task Force focused on immediate, short-term, transitional housing.
- Expand the SCC Behavioral Health Services Department’s Mobile Crisis Response Team.
- Provide sharps containers and lockers for the unhoused to keep their belongings.
- Fund more portable showers, portable laundry services, trash cans, and portable toilets for the unhoused.
- Provide more 24/7 safe parking options.
- Streamline the permit process at the County of Santa Clara to allow more ADU’s.
- Create ADU/Tiny Home Communities with Services on site.
- Offer grant to smaller Community Based Organizations who are unable to compete
- Increase funding for more mental health workers and drug and alcohol addiction counselors in the jails.
- Purchase a mobile office space trailer to provide privacy during intake assessments and addiction counseling at houseless encampments.
- Provide cell phones and chargers (solar charger option)
- Develop materials to educate the public about the diverse experiences of homelessness, successful models and positive stories
- Outreach strategies about homeless services and resource materials in effective settings (buses, clinics etc.)
- Engage individuals who are unhoused or formerly homeless in existing or new stakeholder groups focusing upon the issue of homelessness
- Evaluate the current state of homeless prevention resources to determine if additional resources are needed

Action Taken Post Summit
Attachment A: Summit Agenda and Overview Handout for Participants

SUPervisor Dave Cortese
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
And
American Leadership Forum
Present

Community Summit on Homelessness

September 21, 2019
Scc Fairgrounds
RSVP: www.sccgov.org/Summit-homelessness
(408) 299-5030
enrique.flores01@bos.sccgov.org

We are bringing together service providers, government leaders, law enforcement, public health representatives, housing leaders, developers, homeless advocates, homeless and recently housed individuals, community and neighborhood groups, and educators for a summit on housing and houseless individuals and families.

Purpose
- Share experiences
- Enhance the public's knowledge
- Workshop ideas related to preventing homelessness and housing the unhoused

Method
- Facilitated process for residents to connect, listen, share and engage in a civil environment

Outcome:
- Deeper understanding of the issues and solutions related to homelessness
- Experience of productive conversation among people with different points of view
- Identify next steps for community involvement
- A community report on the Summit to be shared with the County Board of Supervisors, county and community agencies, and the public at large

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Attachment B: Summit Self-Selected Group Topics

Self-Selected Topic Groups

Note: () indicates number of people engaging in every group

- Faith community response (5)
- Accountability of system (6)
- Have the state declare an emergency (9)
- Short-term solutions, stabilizers, interim solutions (14)
- Developing navigation centers from homelessness to housing (13)
- Affordable housing (7)
- Accessory dwelling units/granny units (5)
- Apprenticeship and employment (5)
- Impact of large tech companies and displacement (11)
- Lockers and chargers (5)
- Mental health accessing services and availability (8)
- Law enforcement assistance (8)
- Training of life skills for young adults (4)
- Housing for immigrants (3)
Attachment C: Summit Video Links

SANTA CLARA COUNTY COMMUNITY SUMMIT ON HOMELESSNESS
VIDEO LINKS

Video 1
https://youtu.be/DAwKWRdwjMI

Video 2
https://youtu.be/pBo4AI2imgA
Homelessness Summit Themes: Facilitator Reports

THEMES

- Fear and Anxiety
  - General populations feel homelessness in community colleges
  - Cost of living → pressure in trying to survive in expensive area
- School/University/Jr. College not providing for the homeless students.
  - Participant revealed he was homeless as a young teen to adult
  - University professors at SJSU are also homeless at times
- Mixed housing
  - Have studios as well as family housing so a sense of community can be included
  - Having only studios in residential neighborhoods is not healthy and does not build community.
- Systems Improvement required
  - RV’s inconveniences to people
  - NIMBY’s Approach/views
- Various comments from the video
  - Video was a commercial
    - Did not provide any information
    - Felt like a sell job at the taxpayers expense
    - The money used to make the video was wasted and could have been better used.
- Lots of homeless we don’t see
  - Examples: teacher’s aid, students, regular people
- Where are the young people in this situation
- Not all perspectives are included
- Are there any non-profits or churches involved?
- Nobody admitted that we are failing
- How does this compare to general pop reality? (60’s and suicide)
- Google does not want to help with this issue
- Domestic Violence has a role in homelessness
- Communication to homeless, housing, mental health, lack of health care reserve
- Tiny homes stability- step the circle decline
- First step transition
- Lots of discussion of voluntary safety barriers to work
- Aaron Pioh
Attachment E: Summit Solution Recommendations

Summit Solution Recommendations

- County of Santa Clara Task Force focused on immediate, short-term, transitional housing.
- Expand the SCC Behavioral Health Services Department’s Mobile Crisis Response Team.
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