



Santa Clara County Continuum of Care



Community Plan to End Homelessness 2020-24: Draft Strategies

The Strategies

Reaching the ambitious goal of ending homelessness will require a collaborative community response based on proven, evidence-based strategies to end homelessness as well as innovative approaches that maximize the resources available.

The strategies are organized into three areas of focus that make up the basic framework for the plan:

Strategy 1: Address the root causes of homelessness through system and policy change

In order to end homelessness in our community, we must seek to prevent it for as many people as possible by addressing the root causes of homelessness. This plan sets a goal of reducing the number of people who become unhoused through the strategies below, which are targeted to address these entrenched issues through transformative systemic and policy change.

1. Ensure that safety net agencies – child welfare, behavioral health, cash and food assistance programs, and health care systems – provide the supports and services needed to prevent people from becoming homeless.

- a. Develop comprehensive housing strategies within the safety net system so that no one leaving the safety net system becomes unhoused.
- b. Set housing outcomes for every client of our safety net systems.
- c. Determine potential inflow sources into homelessness and any racial disproportionalities that may exist.
- d. Incorporate screening and referrals for housing into every interaction with applicants and recipients, including during the intake, eligibility, and renewal processes, for CalWORKS, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Covered California, and the County's Medically Indigent Services Programs (Valley Kids Program, Primary Care Access Program, and Ability to Pay Determination Program).
- e. Work with key stakeholders, including County agencies, school districts, and cities, to inventory existing prevention resources and identify regulatory, statutory, and policy changes necessary to close gaps in the safety net system.



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2. Partner with the criminal justice system to prevent homelessness for families impacted by the criminal justice system and to successfully reintegrate people leaving probation, parole, jails, and prisons.

- a. Develop comprehensive housing strategies within the criminal justice system so that no one released from the criminal justice system becomes unhoused.
- b. Establish housing metrics as part of justice-involved services.
- c. Conduct comprehensive and regular training and education on trauma-informed care to empower criminal justice system staff to support persons at risk of homelessness.
- d. Increase investment in workforce development programs and case management for incarcerated persons to prevent homelessness upon reentry into the community.
- e. Work with key stakeholders to identify regulatory, statutory, and policy changes necessary to support the work.

3. Expand partnerships with corporations, philanthropic institutions, and individual donors to secure private funding to reduce and prevent homelessness.

- a. Raise additional private funding to leverage public funding to reach our targets for supportive and affordable housing development and dramatically expand prevention and supportive housing programs.
- b. Engage employees from local corporations and philanthropies to promote and support the development of affordable and supportive housing.
- c. 80% of all clients in Rapid Rehousing will be connected to a living wage job.

4. Remove local barriers to building extremely low-income housing in all areas of the county

- a. Support cities to achieve their Regional Housing Need Allocation goals for extremely low-income and very low-income households.
- b. Expedite local implementation of “by right” legislation that allows for streamlined approval processes and increased density for 100% affordable housing developments.
- c. Seek state exemptions from procedural reviews, such as those required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- d. Develop new and utilize existing land use tools to open up residential and non-residential parcels of land for dense multi-family housing.
- e. Engage every jurisdiction to play a role in meeting our targets for affordable and supportive housing development across the county.
- f. Dedicate at least 45% of all locally funded housing for extremely low-income households making 30% of Area Median Income or less.



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5. Protect residents from evictions, displacement, and housing discrimination.

- a. Partner with cities and the County to adopt and implement new Fair Housing Plans for the region.
- b. Expedite the implementation of new state policies on rent control and discrimination in state and federal housing voucher programs.
- c. Provide rental assistance in a fair and equitable manner, especially to populations which are disproportionately vulnerable to societal and historical injustices.
- d. Partner with cities to reduce displacement of low-income residents due to rising costs of living and gentrification.
- e. Provide greater protections (e.g., legal assistance or landlord mediation services) to ensure that individuals and families most severely impacted by the lack of affordable housing, namely people of color, have equal access to housing.
- f. Preserve existing deeply affordable housing stock by investing resources to ensure deed restrictions are extended and naturally occurring affordable housing is protected.
- g. Reduce eviction rates throughout the county.
- h. Align racial equity work in the homelessness sector with other racial equity initiatives in Santa Clara County.

6. Ensure all residents who are able to work have access to living wage employment

- a. Support efforts to increase the minimum wage to a living wage in Santa Clara County.
- b. Partner with corporations to dedicate job opportunities for people eligible for benefits from the supportive housing system or safety net programs such as CalWORKS and Medi-Cal.
- c. Support improvement of hiring practices of Silicon Valley corporations so that people of color are afforded employment opportunities at all levels.
- d. Create partnerships with Silicon Valley businesses to provide training, internships, and mentorships for unhoused people to obtain access to living wage jobs.
- e. Develop employment initiatives targeted for specific demographics, such as youth, to break the generational poverty cycle.
- f. Invest in social enterprises that train and employ unhoused and recently housed persons.

7. Expand public support for ending and preventing homelessness.

- a. Increase community engagement in supporting affordable and supportive housing development.
- b. Collaborate with people with lived experience of homelessness to engage business and neighborhood associations to dispel misconceptions about homelessness.
- c. Create a county-wide education campaign that increases awareness of homelessness and its many human and community impacts, and offers opportunities for dialogue between housed and unhoused residents.



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Strategy 2: Expand homelessness prevention and housing programs to meet the need

While Goal 1 aims to close the gaps in our social safety net to prevent homelessness before it occurs for as many people as possible, we know that there will be some people over the next five years who still become homeless due to a severe shortage in affordable and accessible housing options. To end homelessness, we will need to build capacity to provide a broad array of housing and services over the next five years. A key piece of this will be developing 30,000 new units of affordable and supportive housing for the thousands of households experiencing homelessness and low-income households living on the brink.

1. Build 30,000 units of affordable and supportive housing that are easily accessible for low-income and unhoused residents.

- a. Build 12,000 units of housing for unhoused individuals and families.
- b. Build 18,000 units of housing affordable to extremely low-income (with income from 0 to 30 percent of Area Median Income) and very low-income households (with income from 30 to 50 percent of Area Median Income).
- c. Increase access to affordable housing for people of color by addressing the housing barriers that people of color are more likely to face, such as housing discrimination, racial disparities in the criminal justice system, or lack of access to treatment for medical and mental health conditions.
- d. Identify and convert underutilized city, County, school district, Valley Transit Authority and Caltrans properties to use for affordable housing.

2. Provide a broad range of supports to prevent homelessness and help people who are unhoused secure stable, permanent housing.

- a. Provide enough housing assistance to help all currently unhoused individuals and families obtain housing.
- b. Prevent homelessness for households who are at risk by providing targeted financial assistance and supportive services through the Homelessness Prevention System.
- c. Center the voices of people of color who have experienced homelessness in the policy and program design decisions of the supportive housing system.
- d. Develop programs to support early intervention and provide access to a spectrum of behavioral health services.
- e. Provide targeted financial resources to prevent homelessness and eviction for severely rent-burdened residents living in existing affordable units.



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- f. Develop programs tailored to the needs of specific populations of people experiencing homelessness, including:
 - o Youth and young adults,
 - o Older adults (55+) and seniors,
 - o Families with children,
 - o Adults without children age 25 to 54.

3. Continuously improve homelessness prevention and housing programs to create a state-of-the-art supportive housing system.

- a. Invest in professional development and more competitive pay to attract and retain a highly qualified workforce of homeless service provider staff.
- b. Incentivize hiring of people with lived experience of homelessness to reflect the client population – especially people of color and LGBTQI+ persons – and ensure people with lived experience are represented at all levels throughout the homeless system of care.
- c. Provide resources to build capacity to integrate best practices in service delivery, including trauma informed care and racial equity/anti-racism training, across all community partners involved in efforts to end homelessness.
- d. Build new partnerships to increase access to housing and services through the Coordinated Assessment System including for people of color, people with limited English proficiency, immigrant communities, LGBTQI+ persons, and youth and young adults.
- e. Ensure the way that the community prioritizes individuals and families for housing and services through the Coordinated Assessment System reduces racial disparities in the unhoused population.
- f. Better utilize data collected in the homeless system of care and across County departments to know what is working well, what programs need improvement, and to identify inequities in the system.
- g. Develop capabilities to share data across County safety net and criminal justice agencies and school districts, including establishment of data sharing agreements to improve coordination of services for currently and formerly unhoused people.

Strategy 3: Improve quality of life for unsheltered individuals & create healthier neighborhoods for all

The first two goals of the plan seek to end and prevent homelessness for as many people as possible over the next five years. However, the reality is that many people will remain unhoused due to an extreme housing crisis and increasing income inequality. To address this immediate crisis in our



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community, we must invest in health, safety and shelter services to better meet the needs of people living in unsheltered conditions and build connections to housing programs and safety net services offered throughout the County.

1. Diversify the welcoming temporary housing and shelter options available in every city in the county and increase capacity by 100%, to provide interim housing options for people awaiting permanent housing and address unmet shelter needs.

- a. Increase new partnerships to host temporary housing and crisis response programs in all areas of the county, which may include emergency shelter, safe places to park and access services, and sanctioned encampments that are not swept and include hygiene and supportive services.
- b. Improve the quality of existing services by updating emergency shelter programs and policies to ensure low barriers to entry, which may include allowing for pets, storage of personal items, greater privacy, longer stays, and higher levels of safety for residents.
- c. Expand hours at new and existing shelters to remain open during the day.
- d. Ensure that all families with minor children (under 18 years old) who are unhoused have access emergency shelter or temporary housing.
- e. Provide enhanced public services for neighborhoods hosting emergency shelter or temporary housing programs to ensure beautification of the neighborhood.

2. Increase the scale of street-based service connections, hygiene services, and transportation options to match the needs of unsheltered residents.

- a. Increase access to basic hygiene resources available throughout the county, which may include bathrooms, showers, and laundry.
- b. Increase the number UPLIFT Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) transit passes for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of losing their housing due to lack of transportation.
- c. Increase transportation options from emergency shelter facilities to frequently visited locations, including County social services offices, DMV, and medical appointments.
- d. Increase the number of street outreach case managers working in encampments and at emergency shelters, with longer terms of engagement and regional coordination across the county.
- e. Increase the number of opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness to provide peer-to-peer support.
- f. Ensure all street-based service providers receive racial equity/anti-racism and multicultural competency training.



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3. Increase resources available and access to services for those struggling with mental health and/or substance use disorders.

- a. Increase the number of mobile multi-disciplinary crisis teams, including clinical staff from health care, mental health, and behavioral health, and expand their deployment to 24 hours a day, to support local law enforcement in working with individuals experiencing severe mental health and substance use crises.
- b. Increase the number of beds available for substance use treatment and provide the follow-up supportive services needed to prevent relapses.
- c. Increase the number of access points for mental health and substance use services that are responsive to those seeking help when they need it.
- d. Develop a plan to eliminate service access and treatment gaps for unsheltered people struggling with chronic and severe mental illness.

4. Engage cities, law enforcement, behavioral and public health providers, transportation agencies, academic institutions, businesses, and community organizations to better coordinate and increase the resources necessary to address the needs of unsheltered residents.

- a. Provide trauma-informed care and racial equity/anti-racism training to all homeless sector community partners.
- b. Conduct comprehensive and regular outreach to public-facing city and County staff, business and neighborhood associations, and business districts, to ensure community members have the information they need to navigate available resources to assist unhoused neighbors.
- c. Engage the private sector to contribute funding and resources to support health and safety services and shelter for unsheltered residents.
- d. Increase coordination between agencies engaging unhoused people in encampments to ensure consistency and humane approaches to encampment resolution.
- e. Create a centralized referral system where unsheltered residents can access information and seek assistance, such as available interim housing options, social services, and coordinated assessment.

5. Ensure that community spaces, both public and private, are safe and welcoming and allow for increased street outreach activities to connect unsheltered residents to the services they need.

- a. Ensure that every community has an accessible and welcoming space that offers service connections to unsheltered residents during the day.
- b. Partner with new private sector, community-based, or faith-based organizations to create safe and welcoming community spaces for people to access services.



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- c. Work with community organizations, cities, County agencies, and neighborhood associations to ensure that public and private spaces remain clean, well-maintained, and welcoming to all.

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