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Encampment Resolution Strategy & Response Protocol 3-year Report | August 31, 2021 – August 31, 2024

The Encampment Resolution Strategy and Encampment Response Protocol approved by the County of Santa Barbara's Board of Supervisors was a 3-year effort (2021-2024) with the initial goal of resolving 45 encampments of varying size and impact on county-owned or county-controlled property. The protocol underscores the importance of responding to issues of homelessness with compassion and care and is intended to serve as part of the County's larger strategies to address homelessness and efforts to:

- Increase access to shelter
- Leverage long-term rental subsidies
- Create new permanent housing units
- Ensure robust outreach and engagement and
- Sustain adequate funding

The collective efforts to resolve encampments among County, cities, Caltrans, and railroad partners in the third and final year (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024) resulted in removal/clearing of approximately 400 active encampments, including 182 on county-controlled property:

- South county: 117 sites on county-owned property, including Montecito beaches (16), unincorporated area creeks and open spaces (82), and Isla Vista (19)
- North county: 65 sites on county-owned property in the Santa Maria riverbed – nearly all of which were outside of the County's jurisdiction.
- Mid county: 45 sites on private or State property. *

*While the 45 encampments in Mid County were outside of the County's jurisdiction, the encampment response team supported the process and have since began work in the Santa Ynez Riverbed near Lompoc and Highway 246.

Of the persons residing in the removed/cleared encampments, 175 have relocated to shelter or housing (45 have been permanently housed, 130 have relocated to interim housing/emergency shelter). These efforts and results were funded by ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA) and California Encampment Resolution Funding (CERF) Program.

Over the last 3 years, through investment and acquisition of competitive funding in the amount of \$26.2million, we have secured dedicated funds for sanitation services and debris removal, increased outreach and engagement teams, and created over 200 new interim housing beds

resulting in the removal of 1,100 encampments among County, cities, Caltrans, and railroad partners, including 408 on county-controlled property. Of those persons residing in the encampments, 464 relocated to shelter or housing (188 moved into housing, 276 entered shelter).

Successes:

- Expanded robust outreach: A person-centered approach of targeted outreach to specific populations (encampments near waterways, groupings of vehicles) have provided an increase in program enrollment: Total Investment over \$14 million
- Increased rate of movement into shelter and housing: As demonstrated in the 2025 PIT results, the development of 200/300 beds decreased the number of persons that are unsheltered and increased the number of persons who moved into shelter. Not only is a direct result of the availability of the beds, but the number of outreach teams able to connect with people in encampments. The non-congregate model is proving to be the preferred options for individuals and the most effective in creating a safe stable environment. Simultaneously, the opening of new permanent supportive housing allows for adequate movement from living outdoors into shelters and then into housing. Total investment: \$11 million (IH and PSH units, beds funded by ARPA CERF)

Challenges:

- Lack of long-term subsidies
- Increase in serving persons who are undocumented
- Low shelter retention rate: Shelter policies such as curfews, limited transportation, and inability to serve companion animals are often barriers to entry for persons who are currently in unsheltered encampments; many shelters also lack the resources to implement robust daytime programming to engage persons in a pathway to housing through activities such as employment training and connections with benefits. The County and Continuum of Care continue to support enhancement of existing emergency shelter, including development of shelter retention strategies, in an effort to engage persons in activities that will support their move to permanent housing.
- Limited Board and Care, treatment facilities: Many of the persons residing in encampments have complex needs that cannot be met in Santa Barbara County's shelter spaces; there is a need for the right level of care at the local level.

The goals and performance measures set forth in the Encampment Resolution Strategy are aimed to:

- 1) improve the safety and cleanliness of streets and open spaces;
- 2) meet the housing, shelter, and service referral needs of individuals experiencing homelessness;

- 3) improve the medical and behavioral health of individuals experiencing homelessness; and,
- 4) deliver coordinated services to effectively address and resolve encampments by developing efficient means to manage calls for service and prioritize resources and effectively share information and coordinate resources countywide.

Goals and Performance Measures

	<u>Goal Totals</u>	<u>Year 1 Actual</u>	<u>Year 2 Actual</u>	<u>Year 3 Actual</u>
# of encampments assessed	20	380	370	350
# of encampments resolved	15	154	167	182
# of persons identified in assessed encampments	50	231	180	300
# of persons identified in resolved encampments	N/A	112	114	224

	<u>Goal Totals</u>	<u>Year 1 Actual</u>	<u>Year 2 Actual</u>	<u>Year 3 Actual</u>
Participants in resolved encampments who accept alternate shelter/housing	60%	15%	20%	64%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 3-months	90%	90%	80%	80%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 6-months	80%	50%	70%	70%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 12-months	75%	N/A	60%	60%

County Fire calls for services are detailed below:

Timeframe	Transient-related incidents	Medical-related	Fire-related
Jul 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2021	387	265/387	47/387
Jul 1, 2021 – Jun 30, 2022	337 (13% decrease)	196/337	45/337
Jul 1, 2022 – Jun 30, 2023	335*	236/335	73/335
July 1, 2023 – Jun 30, 2024	381	189/381	64**/381

*While the decrease in overall calls was maintained, there was a significant increase in fire-related calls.

**Even though there was an increase in calls from the previous year, it was the same amount from original goal, and there was a 10% decrease in fire-related calls.

Debris Removal

In year 3, the contracted sanitation services provider (Qwik Response) spent an estimated 2865 hours collecting and remove trash from encampments on county-controlled parcels. The total amount of trash removed from all County sites adds up to approximately 340.6 tons. Cost for debris removal during this period was \$560K.

Total break out for debris type is as follows:

Bio Waste: 540 lbs. of bio waste were discovered and safely contained in 94.5 5-gallon containers designed for hazardous waste disposal. These containers were handled with the utmost care to minimize any potential health risks.

Liquids: 13 pounds of unidentified liquids were discovered and properly disposed of.

Propane Tanks: A total of 113 5-gallon and 65 3-gallon propane tanks were identified and safely removed from the encampment. These tanks posed a significant safety hazard and were disposed of following appropriate safety protocols.

Aerosols: 105 lbs. of Aerosols were collected and properly disposed of.

Vehicle Batteries: 100 pounds of car batteries were discovered amongst all the debris. One abandoned, burnt vehicle was also found. These items were removed and disposed of.

Needles: Over 7 pounds of needles and sharps were collected and secured for safe disposal in biohazard containers.