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Encampment Resolution Strategy & Response Protocol Progress Report | August 31, 2021 – December 31, 2023

The Encampment Resolution Strategy and Encampment Response Protocol approved by the County of Santa Barbara’s Board of Supervisors is 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 metrics initially approved anticipated counting encampments in large clusters. Mapping software and independent locations have changed the metrics to counting each encampment site rather than larger clusters.



*Client Moves from
Encampments into Housing*

The collective efforts to resolve encampments among County, cities, Caltrans, and railroad partners from July 1, 2021 – August 31, 2023 resulted in removal/clearing of approximately 700 active encampments, including 321 led by County efforts, 226 of which were on county-controlled property:

- South county: 169 sites on county-controlled property, including Montecito beaches (31), unincorporated area creeks and open spaces (123), and Isla Vista (25)
- Mid county: 20 sites on county-controlled property in the Santa Ynez riverbed near Lompoc
- North county: 37 sites on county-controlled property in the Santa Maria riverbed

The metrics above specify physical encampment sites and the performance measures detail client successes (e.g. persons moving to shelter/housing). Of the persons residing in the removed/cleared encampments, 289 have relocated to shelter or housing (143 have been permanently housed, 146 have relocated to interim housing/emergency shelter), and there has been a 13% decrease in calls for service (County Fire). These efforts and results were funded by ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA) and California Encampment Resolution Funding (CERF) Program.



Former Encampment Site Undergoing Environmental Restoration



County Fire Assesses an Encampment

Beginning in Year 2, the contracted sanitation services provider (Qwik Response) carefully tracked waste removal. Year 2 totals removed from encampment sites include: 70.76 tons (51 dumpsters/truck loads) of waste, 4.75 pounds (5.75 gallons) of needles, 145 pounds (70 gallons) of bio-hazard waste, and 73 propane tanks.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and performance measures set forth in the Encampment Resolution Strategy are intended 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. The Encampment Response Coordinator tracks demographics in camps to limit inequities or disparities in service and outreach, such as the need for outreach targeted to monolingual Spanish-speaking persons in encampments.

Challenges:

- Lack of shelter beds: Shelter must be made available for persons to move from unsheltered encampments. While there is still a gap in shelter beds, the opening of Hope Village and La Posada opening increases the number of beds significantly, and will collectively resolve over 150 encampments countywide by June 30, 2024.
- 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.
- Need for more Permanent Supportive Housing units: Many of the persons residing in encampments are prioritized for Permanent Supportive Housing, which the system of care



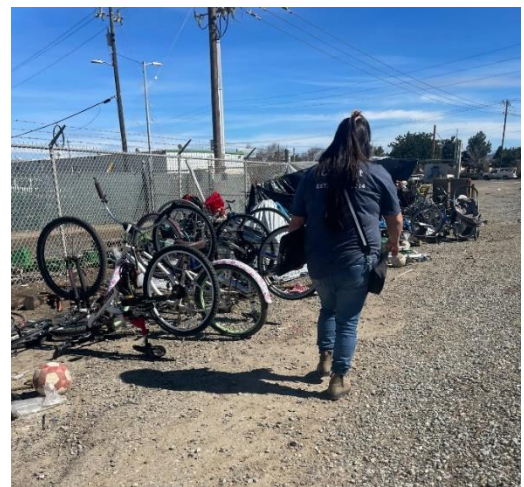
Active Encampment Site

currently lacks; additional units are being developed through Homekey, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and local jurisdictional investments and efforts.

- Limited Board and Care 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.
- Deaths: Unsheltered persons living in encampments experience death from train and car strikes, as well as drug overdoses; persons in encampments are prioritized for interim housing beds currently being developed which will prevent deaths by providing safe spaces for shelter and connections with supportive services.

Successes:

- Expanded robust outreach: A person-centered approach of targeted outreach to specific populations (encampments near waterways, groupings of vehicles) has provided an increase in program enrollment: since August 31, 2021, 902 people have enrolled in services through one of the encampment outreach teams.
- Increased rate of movement into shelter and housing: As reflected in the performance measures in this report, more people are moving into shelter and housing because expanded outreach teams have capacity to navigate service and housing plans with clients.
- Dedicated funding to resolve encampments: New competitive funding awards (\$8.52 million) have enhanced the local investments in shelter, services, and housing.
- New developments in the pipeline: New permanent and interim housing developments opening in 2024 (partially funded by ARPA and competitive State funding awards), will move people from unsheltered homelessness, resolving encampments.



Street Outreach

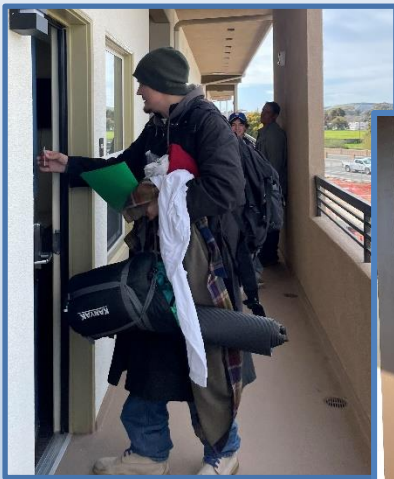


Re-housed Client with their Support Team

- Partnership with County Fire: As a part of the Encampment Response Team with staff countywide, County Fire will begin posting notices to vacate at the direction of the Encampment Response Coordinator, which will allow for more efficient coordination.

California Encampment Resolution Fund

*The County of Santa Barbara was one of 19 communities statewide awarded in the first round of Encampment Resolution Funds. This initial investment in resolving encampments along the transit corridor, \$2.52 Million, was projected to shelter 75 people, and re-house 54. Over the past two years, the effort has served over 250 people, and has **resolved 95 encampments.***



Permanent Housing



68 people have moved into housing from encampments along the transit corridor. The County contracted with CityNet to provide outreach and housing navigation. Dozens more have moved into shelter/interim housing.



Environmental Restoration

The State award included \$150,000 for environmental rehabilitation. Following moves to shelter/ housing, sites once occupied by encampments have been restored to their natural state. Through a contract with Channel Islands Restoration, native and non-invasive plant species are installed in an effort to prevent re-encampment.

The mapping software allowed teams to record individual sites, which were most often found in clusters. Sites reported as inactive abandoned following movement to shelter, housing, or another unsheltered location, were assessed by the Encampment Response Coordinator and removed by the contracted sanitation services provider. Year 2 figures include both ARPA- and CERF-funded activities. A barrier to moving people from encampments in years 1 and 2 has been the lack of non-congregate shelter options.

| | <u>Year 1</u> <u>Goal</u> | <u>Year 1</u> <u>Actual</u> | <u>Year 2</u> <u>Goal</u> | <u>Year 2</u> <u>Actual</u> |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Number of encampments assessed | 20 | 380 | 20 | 370 |
| Number of encampments resolved | 15 | 154 | 15 | 167 |
| Number of persons identified in assessed encampments | 50 | 231 | 50 | 180 |
| Number of persons identified in resolved encampments | N/A | 112 | N/A | 114 |

Performance Measures

| | <u>Year 1</u> <u>Goal</u> | <u>Year 1</u> <u>Actual</u> | <u>Year 2</u> <u>Goal</u> | <u>Year 2</u> <u>Actual</u> |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Participants in resolved encampments who accept alternate shelter/housing | 60% | 15% | 60% | 20% |
| Participants who accept alternative shelter or services are permanently housed | 60% | 4% | 60% | 20% |
| Resolved encampments not re-established at 3-months | 90% | 90% | 90% | 80% |
| Resolved encampments not re-established at 6-months | 80% | 50% | 80% | 70% |
| Resolved encampments not re-established at 12-months | 75% | N/A | 75% | 60% |
| Reduce calls for service to encampment locations (incidents leading to service requests, reduce drug-related and criminal activity) | 30% | 13%* | 40% | 13%* |

*Reduction in calls for service to County Fire 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 |

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

Encampment Resolution Strategy Overview

The Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness, approved by the Board of Supervisors in February 2021, called for strengthening the regional support system to obtain and maintain housing. A key action of this strategy was to create a coordinated encampment response. The approved Encampment Resolution Strategy relies on an effective system of care that can ultimately provide shelter, housing, and services to meet the needs of persons experiencing homelessness.

Increasing access to shelter

Funding was allocated to complete 100 new shelter beds across three projects. This effort served 438 people through 50,474 bed nights, housed 96 people, and transitioned 100 people to other residential programs from July 1, 2021 – December 31, 2023.



Dignity
Moves Santa
Barbara
Street Village



Hedges
House of
Hope



Rainbow
Village

Leveraging long-term rental subsidies

Funding was allocated to provide the first year of housing retention and supportive services for 215 Emergency Housing Voucher holders in new permanent housing placements.

Creating new permanent housing units

Funding was allocated to increase permanent housing units, particularly leveraging State of CA Homekey and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funding. This has supported 59 new units at Buena Tierra in Goleta and 29 units at Vera Cruz Village in Santa Barbara.



Buena Tierra



Vera Cruz Village

Robust outreach and engagement

Funding was allocated to provide robust outreach and engagement services to connect people experiencing homelessness with shelter and housing opportunities. This effort has served 705, sheltered 146, and housed 143 through countywide street outreach (including vehicle/RV encampments) as of December 31, 2023. The Multi-Disciplinary Team has served 130 people, and sheltered/housed 42.

Sustained adequate funding

The Encampment Resolution Strategy and Response Protocol approved by the Board of Supervisors in August 2021 allocated \$1,935,000 in funding critical to facilitating encampment resolution. While county staff has leveraged this investment to be awarded an additional \$8.52 Million in competitive State funding. The county and State funding have supported components critical to encampment resolution: Encampment Response Coordinator to track reports of encampments, deploy the response team, coordinate interventions, and manage logistics; sanitation services (clearing and cleaning, including removal of biohazard) and environmental restoration; storage of personal property; mapping software to accurately track and report encampment locations and case management efforts as an extension of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Sustained adequate funding is needed to continue these efforts.



Street Outreach