



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Community Services
Department No.: 057
For Agenda Of: April 23, 2024
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 hour
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Jesús Armas, Community Services Director 805-568-2467
Director(s)
Contact Info: Joe Dzvonic, Deputy Director Housing and Community
Development 805-568-3523

SUBJECT: **Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness Update including
Encampment Resolution Strategy and 2024 Point in Time Count of Persons
Experiencing Homelessness**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

- a) Receive and file a presentation on homelessness in Santa Barbara County to ensure compliance with State of California and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements, including:
 - i. Local, State and Federal Funding to Address Homelessness Overview;
 - ii. Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness Year 3 Progress Report;
 - iii. 2024 Point in Time Count and Housing Inventory Chart Report;
 - iv. Encampment Resolution Strategy Year 2 Progress Report; and
- b) Approve continuing Encampment Resolution efforts for removal of debris and biohazards from encampments through June 30, 2026, utilizing existing 2021 American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (ARPA) approved by the Board for the Homeless Encampment Strategy; and
- c) Provide other direction, as appropriate; and
- d) Determine the above recommended actions are not the approval of a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), finding that the actions are organizational or

administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

Summary Text:

This report includes an overview of homeless response system trends, discussion of funding dedicated exclusively to homelessness, review of the Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness Year 3 Progress Report (Attachment A), the 2024 Point-In-Time Count Report (Attachment B), and Encampment Resolution Strategy Year 2 Progress Report (Attachment C).

Over 1,400 persons transitioned out of homelessness into permanent housing during calendar year 2023, and the County has opened two large interim housing projects in the last 30 days (Hope Village and La Posada), that are large enough in scale to significantly reduce unsheltered homelessness in their respective neighborhoods. However, the overall number of unhoused families and individuals increased during this same calendar year and the number of persons accessing services has increased from 3,323 in 2021 to 4,333 in 2023. Although there has been significant progress in expanding the system of care, a growing challenge is the increased rate of new individuals and families becoming homeless, 50% of whom are becoming homeless for the first time, such that it is outpacing the expansion of services and permanent housing opportunities. The lack of affordable housing, lingering inflation, the level of available wages versus rent costs, and the end of COVID-era eviction moratoriums, emergency housing vouchers and rental assistance programs are impacting the ability for people to remain housed in our community.

On the morning of January 24, 2024, 2,119 persons experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness were counted during the annual Point-in-Time Count across Santa Barbara County, representing a 12% increase when compared to the Point-In-Time Count conducted in January 2023. The overview presented in the previous paragraph indicates that, while our efforts to address homelessness through the Community Action Plan are demonstrating success for those already experiencing homelessness, the inflow of new cases into homelessness over the past calendar year has exceeded the pace of service provision and bed capacity expansion. There are over 300 other permanent housing units dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness in the development pipeline such as Buena Tierra that will create increased flow through interim housing projects. The opening of Hope Village and La Posada will greatly improve our ability to shelter persons experiencing homelessness. Efforts to address the increasing flow of our residents into “first time homelessness” must be undertaken from a whole-of-government and community approach.

The three-year Encampment Resolution Strategy and Response Protocol effort committed American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (ARPA) funding toward the sanitation services to ensure removal of waste after persons relocate from encampments. This has been a critical part of the success of the overall project and utilization of the California Encampment Resolution Fund (CERF). Sanitation services are not an eligible use of other homeless assistance funding sources. The current ARPA funding for sanitation services will end in June of 2024. Staff is recommending the continued use of ARPA Homeless Encampment Strategy funds for sanitation services through 2026 at an estimated cost of \$500,000.

Background:

Since the Community Action Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2021, staff returns annually to report on the progress of specific initiatives launched within the plan as well as an overview of progress on efforts to address homelessness across Santa Barbara County. This report, along with the

accompanying attachments and presentation, reflects the annual report out on the results of efforts to address homelessness across Santa Barbara County while also providing an overview of future efforts.

Homelessness Funding Overview

Nearly all federal and State funding available for jurisdictions to exclusively address homelessness continues to be administered either as one-time allocations or through annual competitive processes. This lack of committed ongoing funding imparts high-risk into any long-term planning effort (i.e., beyond two years) for programs or operations addressing homelessness and creates an understandable reluctance for decision makers to invest in them. This federal and State approach to homelessness funding frustrates accurate budget projections past two fiscal years, and creates what can appear to be “funding cliffs,” a term used to describe when one-time funding ends without a guaranteed replacement for that source. This makes planning from the traditional five-year budget forecast perspective challenging. Additionally, most funding that is awarded comes heavily prescribed with eligibility criteria dedicated to certain uses.

Despite these unique funding challenges, the County has been successful in increasing the amount of competitive funds awarded both for housing development and services. This has been achieved by identifying new funding sources and braiding them into the expiring funding streams for ongoing programs to keep them viable. Another successful approach is recognizing the opportunities to use existing funding sources traditionally used in one arena of service provision and applying them to programs that exclusively serve unhoused populations. For example, the Community Corrections Partnership has embraced funding interim and permanent housing projects administered through Housing and Community Development.

One example of a program kept viable by braiding forthcoming funding sources into existing funding streams is street outreach. In FY 2020-21, this program was funded by the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and the California-Homeless Mentally Ill Outreach and Treatment funding sources, neither of which are funding sources that exist today. Despite those funding sources ending, staff worked not only to allow the street outreach program to remain viable, but increased its scope and effectiveness using new sources such as the Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus (ESG-CV), the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention program (HHAP), the California Encampment Resolution Fund (CERF) and ARPA funds in FY 2021-22, FY 2022-23, and FY 2023-24. Projected for FY 2024-25, funding for street outreach is from Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) funds, CERF, and funding from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

Major efforts to reform Medi-Cal and mental health services are shifting the funding sources to serve persons experiencing homelessness to healthcare streams. Another example of creativity and success from having both awareness and understanding of rapidly developing and complex funding programs is the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal program (CalAIM). The roll out of CalAIM has greatly increased the resources available for services to those experiencing homelessness. Over 900 persons active in HMIS are now receiving Medi-Cal billable supportive services under CalAIM. Just over a year ago, the number of persons in this category was zero. Yet another recent example is a commitment of \$3 million from CenCal Health for Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program (HHIP) Local Investment Plan towards operations at the Hope Village and La Posada interim supportive housing projects to be accepted by the Board later this year.

HCD has collected data regarding annual expenditures and funding awards for programs and projects dedicated exclusively to homelessness from federal, State, and local government sources, as well as private/philanthropic funders, since FY 2018-19. This data is combined to produce an estimate that is referred to as the Regional Annual Investment (RAI). This investment chart has been part of the executive summary of the county approved budget since FY 2021-22. The funding tracked is exclusively dedicated to programs serving persons experiencing homelessness and is based on actual expenditures in the year being tracked rather than awards or budgets. Although a program may serve a high number of persons experiencing homelessness, it is not included in the RAI chart unless it is exclusively dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness.

For FY 2023-24, the RAI dedicated to addressing homelessness is estimated at \$112.2 million 46% (\$52.5M) of which is funding that passes through or is administered by the County. The remaining funding (\$60M) goes directly from the source (federal, state, local, or private/philanthropic) to homeless service providers such as shelters, outreach teams, and permanent housing projects. The estimated \$112.2 million investment is an increase from \$83 million in FY 2022-23. This is largely due to one-time capital funding for housing development projects and ARPA investments.

There are one-time-funding-based programs that have expired over the past year which have resulted in clear impacts. The multiple Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) efforts funded at the federal and State level beginning in 2021 concluded in 2023. In Santa Barbara County, these programs provided over \$46 million in rental assistance to nearly 4,000 households and over 50 local businesses. The end of other COVID-era programs, such as the \$10 million in Emergency Solutions Grant-Coronavirus funding directed toward a variety of rental assistance, shelter and service programs is now spent, and the Emergency Housing Vouchers are fully leased. While HHAP funding can replace some of this funding at far lower levels, it is insignificant by comparison. Combining the expiration of these funding sources and programs with the end of the eviction moratorium and continually soaring rents, the large inflow of first-time homeless cases over the past year is not surprising and portends even greater increases for years to come if not directly addressed with a whole-of-government approach.

Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness

The Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness (CAP) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on February 23, 2021. Housing and shelter needs identified in the Community Action Plan were based on a gaps analysis including system modeling using data from the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the Coordinated Entry System (CES), Point in Time (PIT) Count, and other data sources. These critical components assisted both the Continuum of Care and County to identify resource gaps and key strategies and goals.

The Community Action Plan includes a detailed Implementation Work Plan that outlines specific strategies and actions, suggested community partners, timelines, and potential resources to be used. Following Board approval, staff presented the Community Action Plan to City Councils within the county and other key jurisdictional leadership bodies, which encouraged community awareness and community leader commitment to addressing homelessness in the region.

Homelessness Assistance Program staff coordinate communications via forums, meetings, and presentations to many stakeholder groups to move the CAP forward. Groups engaged in implementation include but are not limited to: Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County Continuum of Care, jurisdictional working groups, Homeless Inter-Agency Policy Council (HIAPC) made up of County department directors, and periodic regional meetings between the County and city managers.

The Community Action Plan outlined five key strategies to address homelessness. The 3 Year Progress Report (Attachment A) is a comprehensive look at progress since the CAP was adopted including next steps.

A summary of key progress highlights in the three years, are as follows:

- **More Housing** - *Increased access to safe, affordable housing:*
 - Permanent housing inventory has increased by 496 units through development of new units and securing new long-term rental subsidies paired with services
 - Interim housing was expanded by 322 new beds being created (includes La Posada opening soon)
 - Pool of funding available has increased by \$104 million in new programs, sources and competitive awards
 - Developed partnerships with 531 new landlords to secure housing in private rental market units
- **Meet Individual Needs** - *Used best practices to deliver tailored supportive services to meet individual needs*
 - Implemented Medi-Cal billable support services for 931 persons (in HMIS) now enrolled in either Enhances Care Management or Community Supports focused navigation and sustaining of housing
 - Over 350 persons housed through the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program supported by an inter-disciplinary team with (90% retention)
 - Over \$7 million Mental Health Services Act Innovations awards for Behavioral Wellness to implement a Housing Assistance and Retention Team (HART)
 - 306 persons with disabilities have received housing and disability advocacy services through new program
- **Obtain and maintain housing** – *Strengthen support systems available to help residents obtain and maintain housing*
 - Expanded reach to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness through \$8.5 million in Encampment Resolution Funding awards, new interim housing units, establishing County cross-departmental Multi- Disciplinary Team
 - Reduction in veteran homelessness of 57% because of robust housing and services resources.
 - Increased prevention programs through Emergency Rental Assistance programs, multi-lingual housing access line, and shelter diversion programming to quickly intervene when a housing crisis occurs
- **Build provider capacity**
 - CenCal Health incentive funding programs invested in service providers (\$8 million) to assist in infrastructure and capacity to become Enhanced Care Management and Community Support providers, billing services under Medi-Cal.

- Private philanthropic investment in providers through foundations and to support capital projects.
- Consistent training and monitoring on best practices and funded technical assistance
- Increased coordination through regular case conferencing and individualized lists based on needs.
- Expansion of Community Services Department Homeless Assistance Program Team through state and federal funding to improve service coordination and support providers.
- **Collective Action - *Built a collective action plan and improved data sharing***
 - 45 organizations are part of coordinating care through the Homeless Management Information System, up from 35 since 2021.
 - Increase in number of Homeless Management Information System End Users from 185 to 311
 - 96% of active participants have a signed Release of Information for HMIS
 - Community accessible [Interactive Homelessness Data Dashboard](#)

2024 Point in Time Count/Housing Inventory Chart Report

The Point-in-Time (PIT) survey of persons experiencing homelessness is conducted concurrently with the Housing Inventory Count (HIC). The HIC is data collected on the number of beds dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness. The PIT is carried out by the Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County Continuum of Care with assistance from Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation (SBACT). The 2024 PIT Report (Attachment B) has been completed and the data collected will be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development this month. The PIT is a limited view of homelessness providing only a snapshot of a single night, heavily reliant on volunteer canvassing and the ability to locate persons living unsheltered.

The 2024 Point-in-Time Count was conducted for the night of January 23. A total of 2,119 persons experiencing homelessness were counted. This represents a 12% increase over the 2023 count of 1,887. The total number is made up of 1,332 (63%) persons living unsheltered and 787 (37%) persons living in shelters or transitional housing projects dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness (Table 1). It is encouraging for more persons to be sheltered and sustained progress in the reduction in Veteran homelessness since 2020 (210 in 2020 to 90 in 2024). Persons experiencing homelessness are living throughout the county: 1,374 (65%) persons counted in south county, 583 (27%) persons counted in north county, and 162 (8%) in mid-county.

Table 1. Point in Time Count Totals 2019-2024

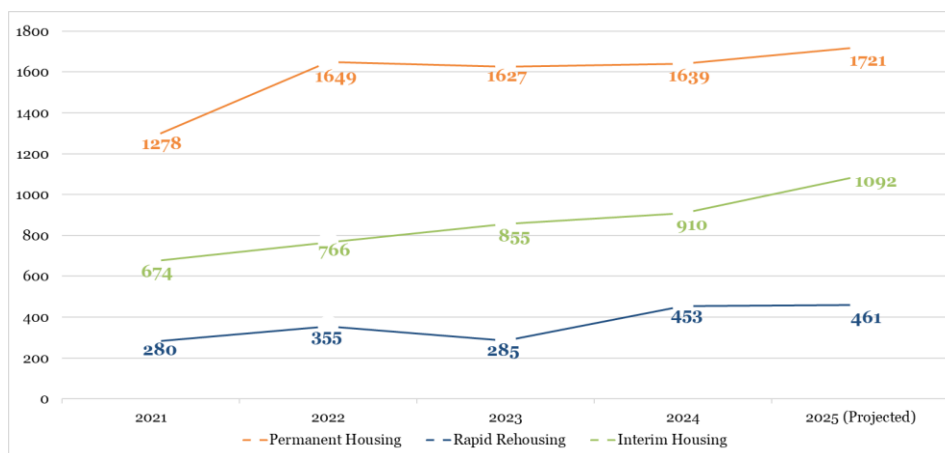
Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total Persons Counted Experiencing Homelessness
2019	670	1,133	1,803
2020	674	1,223	1,897
2022	595	1,367	1,962
2023	685	1,202	1,887
2024	787	1,332	2,119

An increase in the number of persons experiencing homelessness for the first time, persons in vehicles, and families with minor children are largely responsible for the 12% increase seen in the number of persons counted.

- Number of persons reporting that they were experiencing homeless for the first time increased from 849 in 2023 to 1,114 in 2024.
- Number of persons counted living in vehicles increased from 611 in 2023 to 710 in 2024.¹
- Number of families with children experiencing homelessness increased from 93 households (272 persons) in 2023 to 125 households (364 persons) in 2024.

The Housing Inventory Chart tracks how many beds are available on the same night of the Point in Time Count. The number of beds dedicated to homelessness including interim, rapid rehousing, and permanent housing increased from 2,232 in 2021 to 3,002 in 2024. This represents a 35% increase in housing inventory a primary strategy of the Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness. Table 2 shows an additional 261 beds, including 59 permanent housing units at Buena Tierra in Goleta and two large new interim housing projects, La Posada and Hope Village, that are opened or are opening this spring.

Table 2: Trend Analysis for Number of Beds Dedicated to Persons Experiencing Homelessness



¹ Santa Barbara County has partnered with the City of Santa Barbara and other local cities to apply for CERF Round 3 specifically for resources to reduce the number of persons living in vehicles.

Encampment Resolution Strategy Year 2 Progress Report

The Encampment Resolution Strategy and Encampment Response Protocol approved by the Board of Supervisors is a three-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 Year 2 Progress Report (Attachment C) includes details of the specific encampment activities and breakdown of funding uses.

The focus of day-to-day encampment response is actionable, person-centered efforts that resolve unsheltered homelessness for people residing in encampments. The priority is to transition individuals into interim shelter with clear pathways to permanent housing, or directly into permanent housing. The commitment of the Board to an encampment resolution framework and \$1.9 million in funding has resulted in \$8.52 million in State funding for encampment resolution.

The collective efforts to resolve encampments among County, cities, Caltrans, and railroad partners from July 1, 2021 – August 31, 2023 resulted in clearing of approximately 700 active encampments, including 226 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 area of the Santa Ynez River near the City of Lompoc
- North county: 37 sites on county-controlled property in the area of the Santa Maria River

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) with the assistance of outreach workers funded with ARPA and CERF. There has been a 13% decrease in calls for service (as reported by County Fire).

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
- 73 propane tanks

The three-year effort committed ARPA funding toward the sanitation services to ensure the removal of waste after persons relocate from encampments. This has been a critical part of the success of the overall project and utilization of CERF, as sanitation services are not an eligible use of homeless assistance funds, including CERF. Rapid clean-up of resolved encampment areas assists in preventing re-habitation, protects our watersheds and oceans, and offers a significant visible improvement to the community. The funding for sanitation services will end in June of 2024. Staff is recommending the reallocation of ARPA funds in the amount of \$500,000 for sanitation services through 2026.

New funding dedicated to resolving encampments awarded through competitive State processes have led to new partnerships with cities, Caltrans, and Union Pacific railroad; these efforts have expanded beyond County-owned and County-controlled sites, although activities are led and coordinated by County staff.

Successes, detailed in the Progress Report (Attachment C), include: expanded robust outreach; increased rate of movement into shelter and housing; dedicated funding to resolve encampments; new permanent housing developments in the pipeline; and partnership with County Fire. Ongoing challenges such as the lack of shelter beds and permanent supportive housing, a low shelter retention rate, and limited board and care facilities, hinder daily efforts of street outreach teams.

The goals and performance measures set forth in the Encampment Resolution Strategy are intended to: 1) ensure streets and open spaces are safe and clean; 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 third year of Encampment Resolution Strategy implementation presents many opportunities, including:

- deployment of a new outreach team focused on behavioral and physical health (funded by CERF);
- permanent housing in Goleta, Buena Tierra, which will end homelessness for a number of people who were previously in encampments;
- interim housing in Santa Maria, Hope Village, which will transition dozens of people from nearby encampments indoors and on a pathway to permanent housing; and
- interim housing in the unincorporated area of south Santa Barbara County, La Posada, which will resolve a large, dangerous encampment near the railroad and creeks, by moving people into a safe, secure, healthy community.

As people move from interim housing into permanent housing, more people will move from unsheltered homelessness/encampments into interim housing beds/cabins – the community witnessed this type of shift in August 2023, when a large group of people moved from Dignity Moves Santa Barbara Street Village (interim housing) into Vera Cruz Village (permanent housing) in Santa Barbara. The outreach, shelter, and housing retention teams dedicated to encampment resolution efforts are critical to the success of clients.

Performance Measure:

The detailed Encampment Resolution Strategy and Response Protocol performance measures are found in the Report (Attachment C). The performance measures proposed for sanitation services for the two-year period for the \$500,000 in funding requested are below in Table 3. The metrics initially approved anticipated counting encampments in large clusters. Mapping software and independent locations have changed the metrics to counting each encampment site. These performance measures are reflective of the current metrics used.

Table 3: Performance Measures proposed for sanitation services

Year	Number of sites	Tons of waste removed
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025	75	75
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026	75	75

Fiscal Analysis:

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund			
State			
Federal			\$ 500,000.00
Fees			
Other:			
Total		\$ -	\$ 500,000.00

Narrative: The proposed funding action would approve up to \$500,000 in restricted ARPA funding to continue Encampment Resolution efforts for removal of debris and biohazards from encampments through June 30, 2026, and return to the Board with a Budget Revision Request to appropriate funding at a future Board Hearing.

Key Contract Risks:

The County assumes responsibility for the administration of funding in accordance with all state and federal requirements governing their use. No sub-recipient agreements or contracts are included in this Board Letter.

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:

N/A

FTEs:

N/A

The Encampment Response Coordinator has been funded by American Rescue Plan Act funding approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 31, 2021. A separate Board Letter with a budget revision for ARPA funds previously went to the Board for a funding allocation through 2026. The Encampment Response Coordinator is a critical component that has greatly improved the coordination of countywide efforts. The Coordinator also wrote the two successful CERF applications totaling \$8.52 million.

Special Instructions:

- 1) Please email an electronic copy of the Minute Order to Kimberlee Albers at kalbers@countyofsb.org

Attachments:

- A. Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness Year 3 Progress Report
- B. 2024 Point in Time Count/Housing Inventory Chart (PIT/HIC) Report

C. Encampment Resolution Strategy Year 2 Progress Report

Authored by:

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