

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: KELLI KUYKENDALL, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
MANAGER
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN
AGENDA ACTION: REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Housing and Community Services Department that the Council, by resolution: 1) approve the Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan for the five-year period, 2023 through 2027, which provides key strategies and actions to improve the City's response to homelessness in alignment with the Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) to achieve "Functional Zero" homelessness; and 2) authorize the City Manager to make minor or non-substantive modifications to amend the Strategic Plan to ensure alignment with the CoC regional plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, on March 1, 2022, Council approved Focus Strategies to develop a Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). Since then, staff has worked with Focus Strategies to draft the Strategic Plan, which involved a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the current response to homelessness in Santa Rosa with extensive stakeholder engagement. Staff is seeking Council approval of the Strategic Plan for the five-year period, 2023 through 2027, which provides key strategies and actions to improve the City's response to homelessness in alignment with the Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) to achieve "Functional Zero" homelessness. A system of care achieves "Functional Zero" when a person's experience with homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring and the availability of resources match or exceed the demand within the community. The goal under "Functional Zero" is to develop enough short-term, mid-term and long-term options to accommodate people entering the system of care, or falling into homelessness ("inflow"), versus people exiting the system of care, or resolving their homelessness ("outflow"), ultimately creating a 1:1 ratio. Additionally, staff is seeking the ability to make minor or non-substantive modifications to amend the Strategic Plan to ensure alignment with the CoC regional plan.

BACKGROUND

1. Homelessness is a major concern for Santa Rosa and has been identified as one of Council's top priorities. The County of Sonoma 2022 Point-In-Time Count Results, conducted in February 2022 and commonly known as the homeless count, identified 1,658 persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Rosa. This represents 57% of the total homeless population in Sonoma County (2,893). The majority of persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Rosa are unsheltered (66% /1,089 individuals) compared with 72% countywide (2,088 individuals). While the overall homeless population in Sonoma County increased by 5% between the 2020 and 2022 homeless counts, Santa Rosa's population increased by 13%.
2. The City's approach to homelessness has evolved over the past several years, including increased investment in short and long-term solutions, improved coordination across City departments and with stakeholders, and participation in regional efforts with the CoC. In 2016, the City anchored its approach in Housing First principles to align with national best-practices and to remain consistent with Federal, State, and regional policies and regulations. The City's Housing First efforts include reducing barriers to entry at the City-owned Samuel L. Jones Hall Homeless Shelter, investing in street outreach teams to engage vulnerable community members residing in encampments while increasing supportive services focused on moving people from homelessness to housing.
3. The City invests approximately \$5 million annually in services to support persons experiencing homelessness, including daytime support, street outreach, a winter warming center, emergency shelter and housing assistance. In Fiscal Year 2021/2022, the City committed an additional \$2.3 million for the Safe Parking Pilot Program, which opened in March 2022. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City invested approximately \$10 million to protect vulnerable members experiencing homelessness through non-congregate shelter and a safe, managed campsite. The City has made additional investments through the launch of an innovative mental health response team, InRESPONSE, and has received \$24.6 million in State Homekey funds for two projects that will provide 90 units of interim and permanent supportive housing for persons experiencing homelessness.
4. In Fiscal Year 2021/2022 the City issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Provision of Consulting Services – Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan with the interest of furthering its strategic response to homelessness. The RFP sought professional consulting services to prepare a five-year Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan and a step-by-step action plan to address homelessness in the community to achieve "Functional Zero" homelessness in alignment with the CoC. A system of care achieves "Functional Zero" when a person's experience with

homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring and the availability of resources match or exceed the demand within the community. The goal under “Functional Zero” is to develop enough short-term, mid-term and long-term options to accommodate people entering the system of care, or falling into homelessness (“inflow”), versus people exiting the system of care, or resolving their homelessness (“outflow”), ultimately creating a 1:1 ratio.

5. Based on the review of the six proposals and follow-up interviews, Focus Strategies was determined to be the best qualified consultant. Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Focus Strategies on March 1, 2022 and the strategic planning process began shortly after.
6. Efforts are underway throughout Sonoma County to develop strategic plans in response to homelessness. Northern Sonoma County (Healdsburg, Windsor, Cloverdale, and the unincorporated area of northern Sonoma County) and the cities of Petaluma and Sonoma have recently adopted strategic plans. The CoC is also in the process of developing a strategic plan with its consultant (Homebase), which is anticipated to be complete by December 2022.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On March 1, 2022, Council approved Focus Strategies to provide consulting services for the development of a Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan and execution of a Professional Services Agreement in the amount of \$100,000 for an initial six-month period (March 1, 2022 to August 31, 2022) with an option to extend for an additional six-month period (September 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023). Staff exercised the option to extend for an additional six months to ensure sufficient time to complete the strategic planning process.

ANALYSIS

Strategic Plan and Five-Year Action Plan Development

1. Since March 2022, staff has worked with Focus Strategies on a three phased approach to develop the Strategic Plan: 1) Assessment of existing system and stakeholders; 2) Drafting Strategic Plan and engagement; and 3) Deliver a final Strategic Plan for Council approval.
2. The first phase of the process was comprised of a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the current response to homelessness in Santa Rosa, including program and system performance of City-funded programs, types of programs located in Santa Rosa, and regional housing resources available to Santa Rosa residents. A list of documents reviewed as part of the quantitative assessment

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are provided in the Appendix section of the Strategic Plan (Exhibit A to this agenda item).

3. Extensive stakeholder engagement was conducted as part of the assessment phase, including interviews, focus groups, and a community input session and survey. This included one-on-one interviews with 20 individuals with lived experience and a focus group with the CoC Lived Experience Advisory and Planning board (LEAP). Qualitative data gathered via stakeholder feedback coupled with the program and system-level quantitative assessment informed the development of the draft Strategic Plan (phase 2).
4. Additional stakeholder engagement was conducted to solicit feedback on the draft Strategic Plan. A list of stakeholder participants and a summary of input are provided in the Strategic Plan Appendix and will be discussed in greater detail during the presentation.
5. The Strategic Plan summarizes the findings from the assessment phase, including strengths and opportunities for improvement, strategies to accomplish goals, and measures for tracking progress. The Strategic Plan outlines three overarching strategies: Performance, Unsheltered Response, and Collaboration. These are summarized below and detailed in the Strategic Plan (Exhibit A to this agenda item).
6. The third and final phase of Focus Strategies' scope of work is delivering a final Strategic Plan for Council adoption. Focus Strategies is prepared to make minor revisions based on feedback from Council.

Strategic Plan and Year-One Action Plan Summary

7. As noted above, the Strategic Plan has three overarching strategies. The table below notes these strategies and recommended key actions.

Strategy One: Performance	Key Actions
Improve the performance of the City's homeless response in alignment with the regional homelessness response system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevent homelessness• Enrich and expand mobile outreach services• Provide low-barrier shelter• Expand housing solutions• Embrace Housing First• Support people to retain housing• Implement regional performance measures and continuous quality improvement• Invest strategically

Strategy Two: Unsheltered Response	Key Actions
Expand service-oriented responses to unsheltered homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services and support to encampments • Build collaborative relationships with people living in encampments • Provide safe, temporary locations for people to stay • Connect unsheltered people to housing • Provide enhanced community supports to neighborhoods
Strategy Three: Collaboration	Key Actions
Continue and enhance collaboration in regional homelessness solutions with key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt five-year plan • Continue partnerships for regional housing solutions • Develop formal partnerships with regional partners • Include people with lived experience • Center equity and address disparities

8. To operationalize these strategies, the Strategic Plan includes a year-one action plan for 2023, which builds upon the key actions (noted above) and provides suggestions for each action or activity, including lead and supporting entities, start and end dates, and potential funding sources. Subject to Council approval of the Strategic Plan, staff plans to further develop an implementation plan.

Regional Collaboration

9. The Sonoma County Community Development Commission, lead agency for the CoC, their strategic plan consultant Homebase and the CoC's Strategic Planning Committee are evaluating the various strategic plans within Sonoma County to identify opportunities for alignment and coordination.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the Strategic Plan does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund. There may be costs associated with implementing recommendations in the Strategic Plan, which staff will identify in annual operating budgets for Homeless Services.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, in that

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approving and adopting the Plan does not meet CEQA's definition of a "project," because this an organizational action by the City that does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and moreover, any future actions that result from the Plan will require its own CEQA analysis.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution / Exhibit A – Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan

CONTACT

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