

HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan provides a five-year roadmap for the City to align with regional partners and aim to achieve functional zero homelessness. This plan has been developed by the City of Santa Rosa with technical assistance and support from Focus Strategies. Key strategies and activities were developed and informed by local data, input from local stakeholders, and aligned with national best practices.

The Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan sets out an approach to achieve the ambitious goal of reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness to functional zero. The City acknowledges that this is an ambitious goal which will require continued coordination with regional partners and community stakeholders and additional investments at the local, state, and federal levels. The concept of achieving functional zero is the desired future state when homelessness is rare and brief and the availability of services and 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. Achieving functional zero will require:

Achieving functional zero will require:

- Investments in additional rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing resources for adults,
- Reducing the length of time participants are enrolled in rapid rehousing programs, and
- Using existing rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing resources for single adults when the inventory is not in use by families experiencing homelessness.



To achieve functional zero, the Plan identifies a set of overarching strategies:

1) Improve the Performance of the City’s Homeless Response in Alignment with the Regional Homelessness Response System.

The City and its stakeholders will participate in the design and implementation of a regional homelessness response system that is highly effective at providing housing pathways for people experiencing homelessness, establishes targets and measures progress towards program and system goals, and strategically expands the inventory of housing and services to meet community needs.

2) Expand Service and Solution-Oriented Responses to Unsheltered Homelessness.

City leadership and its contracted service providers will be responsive to feedback from people experiencing homelessness about their needs and goals, with a focus on increasing services to address the immediate health and safety needs of people who are unsheltered while also balancing the needs of the broader community.

3) Continue and Enhance Collaboration in Regional Homelessness Solutions with Key Stakeholders.

The City of Santa Rosa will align and partner with the County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Continuum of Care, and key stakeholders throughout the region. The City will embrace a vision for reducing homelessness that is informed by data and equity considerations, improves coordination across jurisdictions, and engages all stakeholders in contributing to solutions to homelessness.

The Action Plan for the first-year outlines essential steps the City of Santa Rosa will take to begin implementation. Critically, the Action Plan includes processes for developing annual evaluation activities and reporting strategies to track progress on goals.

The Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Plan calls for everyone in the community to be part of the solution to homelessness. Aligning and coordinating around a shared set of objectives and strategies will ensure the efforts of community members, organizations, and jurisdictions will result in housing as many people as possible with available resources. By setting measurable goals, using data to assess progress, and continually improving and refining efforts, Santa Rosa and its regional partners can achieve functional zero homelessness.



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide the response to homelessness in the City of Santa Rosa over the five-year period from January 2023 - December 2027. The plan builds upon existing investments and strategies within the City and the countywide region and aims to align with planning efforts of regional partners including the County of Sonoma and the Sonoma County Continuum of Care. The plan provides a detailed Action Plan for Year One, along with a process for reviewing and reporting on Year One results and developing Action Plans for Year Two and onward.

The City invests approximately \$5 million annually in services to support persons experiencing homelessness including emergency shelter, street outreach, and supportive services. In Fiscal Year 2021/2022, the City committed an additional \$2.3 million for the Safe Parking Pilot Program for a two-year period, which opened in March 2022. The Fiscal Year 2022/2023 budget is summarized below by program type. This does not include additional investments by the City in affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, or its innovative mental health response team, In RESPONSE.

ACTIVITY	INVESTMENT
Drop-In/Day Services	\$274,870.00
Emergency Shelter	\$2,384,742.00
Street Outreach	\$489,000.00
Housing Assistance	\$607,450.00
Administration	\$850,324.00
Shelter Improvements	\$340,000
Total	\$4,945,386.00

How the Plan Was Developed

In late 2021, the City of Santa Rosa initiated the first steps in development of a Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan. Key priorities in the development of the plan were to ensure the Plan is informed by local data, integrates input from key stakeholders, and is aligned with best practices. To help accomplish these goals, the City of Santa Rosa engaged Focus Strategies, a nationally recognized technical assistance and consulting firm, to guide the Plan development process. Beginning in March 2022, Focus Strategies worked collaboratively with City staff to develop and implement an assessment of the City's homelessness response efforts and strategic planning process that included:

- An assessment of the existing City response and partnership with the regional system, drawn from a review of documents and key stakeholder interviews;
- A quantitative analysis of program and system performance on key outcome measures, using data from the community's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS);
- A model to estimate the permanent housing inventory resources that would support the City's efforts to achieve functional zero;
- A series of stakeholder interviews, focus groups, community input sessions, and community surveys to gather information to inform the Plan; and
- Strategic plan development sessions with City staff.



Safe Parking Pilot Program

CONTEXT: WHERE WE ARE STARTING FROM

HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA ROSA

Homelessness is an urgent and growing issue across the State of California. Similar trends are seen in the City of Santa Rosa and the Sonoma County region, driven by escalating housing costs, a tightening housing market exacerbated by historic wildfires, and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent complete Point-in-Time Count (PIT) count of both unsheltered and sheltered people experiencing homelessness was conducted in 2022. The countywide data for the 2022 PIT shows an overall increase of 5% with a total of 2,893 individuals experiencing homelessness. This is a change from a downward countywide trend since 2011.

Data from the 2022 PIT found that the City of Santa Rosa also showed an increase in the number of



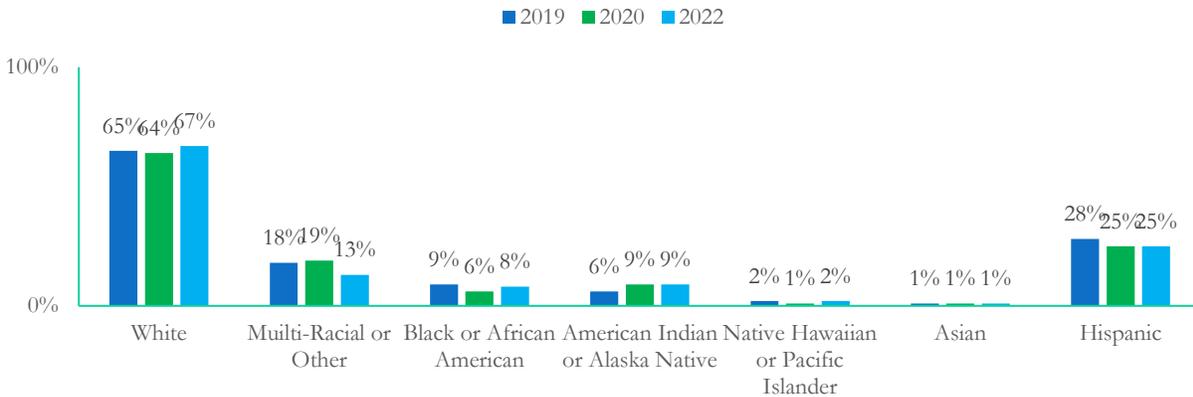
people experiencing homelessness, although the increase was significantly higher than for the County overall. Specifically, Santa Rosa's homeless population increased from 1,461 in 2020 to 1,658 in 2022, an increase of

almost 13.5%. This large increase underscores the need for the City to invest in strategies to assist people experiencing homelessness to become stably housed.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Data from the 2022 PIT also found racial and ethnic disparities among people experiencing homelessness. The graph below indicates that the racial and ethnic composition of the Sonoma County homeless population has remained relatively stable since 2019.¹

Racial and Ethnic Composition of People Experiencing Homelessness, PIT Count

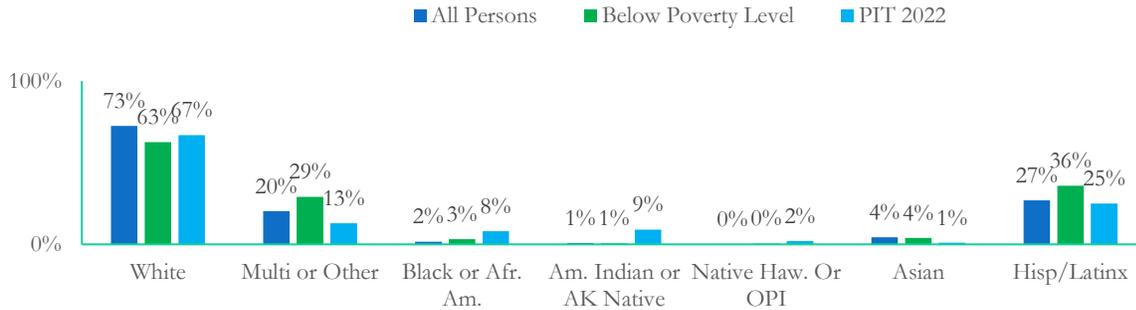


Note: Due to rounding and the inclusion of race/ethnicity within one visual, totals may not sum to 100%

When comparing the population of people experiencing homelessness throughout Sonoma County with those falling below the federal poverty level and those experiencing homelessness, several disproportionalities are evident. Specifically, Black, or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander populations are disproportionately represented among the population experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population or the population experiencing poverty.

¹ 2022 data reflecting race and ethnicity for the City of Santa Rosa is not yet available.

Racial and Ethnic Composition of All, Low-Income, and Homeless Populations



Note: Due to rounding and the inclusion of race/ethnicity within one visual, totals may not sum to 100%

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA ROSA



Caritas Village

SANTA ROSA SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

This plan builds on an in-depth assessment of the existing approach to homelessness in Santa Rosa, understanding the City sits within and plays a significant role in the regional homelessness response system. A guiding principle of the plan is reducing and ending homelessness, which

requires a homeless *response system*. Experience from jurisdictions around the country, federal policy direction, and best practices all point to the need for communities to create a system to effectively end homelessness. While individual programs and initiatives may yield results with a subpopulation or group, making progress on the overall size of the homeless population requires a systematic approach. The Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) is the lead entity overseeing the regional homelessness response. The CoC is Sonoma County’s collaborative effort representing the homeless

services system of care. Governed by a seventeen-member CoC Board, the countywide effort is responsible for oversight of funds designated to the CoC and planning/policy development for addressing homelessness throughout the region.

A homelessness response system treats a loss of housing as an emergency that must be responded to quickly and effectively with an available and accessible housing solution. The initial assessment report, the “Santa Rosa System Assessment” considered the extent to which leaders and stakeholders in Santa Rosa have participated in and implemented efforts in alignment with three key principles:

- ***Housing-focused:*** An effective homeless system is built upon the understanding that homelessness is a crisis – the loss of housing – and the solution is to quickly return people to housing. The goal is to identify an appropriate housing solution for each homeless household, and along the way, connect them to other services they might need. This does not mean that every program or service in the system must directly provide housing but should in some way help people along the pathway to housing.
- ***Strategic and data-informed:*** A robust homeless system has strong and coordinated leadership that makes strategic decisions informed by data. A priority is placed upon the collection and analysis of data to set ambitious and achievable goals, understand whether the system is meeting its objectives, and provide the basis for specific efforts to improve effectiveness. System leadership and funders work in a coordinated manner to ensure that all sources of funding for addressing homelessness are aligned to maximize impact and achieve identified system objectives.
- ***Person-centered and equitable:*** A fair and equitable homeless system is focused on meeting people’s needs for housing, not on meeting provider needs to fill their programs. It respects client choice and preferences about where and how they will be housed. The system is also easily understood and navigated by people experiencing homelessness, with minimal barriers to access. Disparities in access and outcomes are analyzed and addressed.



Safe Social Distancing Program

KEY FINDINGS FROM 2022 SANTA ROSA SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

The Santa Rosa System Assessment conducted in 2022 revealed strengths and opportunities for improvement. The assessment findings informed the development of goals and strategies incorporated into the Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan.

HOUSING FOCUSED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The City of Santa Rosa's response to homelessness has gradually become more housing focused. Key strategies include expanding the capacity of the shelter system, adopting Housing First as the approach to remove barriers to housing and services, and directly connecting more outreach services to people experiencing homelessness to interim and permanent housing. However, analysis of system performance shows that most interim emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in the city are underperforming in quickly transitioning participants from homelessness into permanent housing. Emergency shelter programs in the city have an average length of stay totaling 79 days with 16% of participants transitioning successfully to permanent housing. Achievement of measurable and sustained reductions in homelessness will require that all interventions within the City and countywide system, and particularly interim housing programs, are helping all households experiencing homelessness to secure a housing solution.

Other critical City and system-wide gaps identified through the system assessment and via community input include:

- Solutions-oriented mobile outreach that successfully connects people to shelter, housing and services.
- Consistent availability of shelter placement services to support transitions to housing.
- A sufficient supply of rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing.
- Efforts to prevent homelessness at scale.
- Enhanced supportive services with case load ratios that are focused on housing retention.



Caritas Center Main Lobby

COORDINATED, DATA-DRIVEN PLANNING & DECISION-MAKING

The City of Santa Rosa is part of the Sonoma County Continuum of Care and participates by ensuring all City-funded homelessness response programs utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the HomeFirst coordinated entry system. However, stakeholders conveyed throughout the assessment process that further coordination and cooperation is needed to improve the city and regional response to unsheltered homelessness. Specifically, stakeholders noted the need to facilitate more pathways to a variety of permanent housing options.

Stakeholders encouraged the City of Santa Rosa to align strategic planning and investment planning efforts throughout the region with a focus on improving the performance of the full homeless response system. Regional partners must work together to secure the essential elements of a strong homelessness response system including the core components, which are:



Safe Parking Pilot Program

- A unified governance structure that represents community stakeholders and key system funders under a recognized leadership body;
- Data-driven, system-level planning and decision-making;
- A shared set of strategies and approaches, including how funds are invested; and
- Infrastructure to support ongoing evaluation at project and system levels including a robust Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

There appears to be an opportunity to improve the coordination and decision-making between the City of Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Continuum of Care, and County of Sonoma. Stakeholders from all sectors emphasized that improved coordination and collaboration are needed to improve communication with the community and service providers. The CoC is in the process of developing a regional strategic plan. Stakeholders urged leaders to align plans and partner on efforts to reduce homelessness throughout the region.

PERSON CENTERED SYSTEM AND EQUITY LENS

Having person-centered and equitable approaches to reducing homelessness were identified in the assessment and input process as areas of opportunity for improvement. City-funded programs and services could benefit from a greater understanding of and alignment with Housing First principles, including low-barrier program access, harm-reduction services, and trauma-informed practices. Interviews and discussions with people with lived experience of homelessness revealed that they would like:

- A response to unsheltered homelessness that provides expanded access to hygiene services and resources, more supportive services, and less involvement of law enforcement;
- Supports and services that lead to housing;
- Investments in more non-congregate interim placements including safe parking; and
- Additional investments in supportive and deeply affordable housing.



MODELING RESOURCE GAPS

Modeling is an approach that uses data to ‘peek’ into the future to estimate how the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in the community might grow or shrink as changes are made to the homelessness response system. Models do not generate a single correct “answer.” Rather, they predict the likely implications of choices and support more intentional and deliberate strategic planning. Modeling informs the future; it does not tell the future.

A three-year model was adopted to estimate the resources needed to support the City to achieve functional zero. We modeled three years to provide a window into the potential impact of changing the availability and performance of permanent housing resources in the City. The model integrates Data from four sources: (1) 2022 Point In Time Count (PIT); (2) 2022 Housing Inventory Count (HIC); (3) 2021/2022 Annual Performance Report (APR) data for interim housing projects funded by and/or located in the City of Santa Rosa (emergency shelter and transitional housing), as well as data for permanent housing projects funded and/or located in the Sonoma County region (rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing); and (4) United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) System Performance Measures for 2021 for the Sonoma County CoC.

Using these sources, several baseline population and inventory description measures were calculated, including:

- Total number of people experiencing homelessness in the City (N=1,658)
 - Proportion of adults (96%) and families (4%) experiencing homelessness
 - Proportion of people experiencing chronic homelessness (25%)
- Total number of rapid rehousing (386 slots) and permanent supportive housing (979 units) resources available in the CoC
 - Proportion of rapid rehousing resources available to adults (58%) and families (42%)
 - Proportion of permanent supportive housing resources available to adults (78%) and families (22%)
- Performance indicators
 - Length of stay in rapid rehousing (365 days; from APRs)
 - Turnover rate in permanent supportive housing (20%; from APRs)
 - Rate of return to homelessness (3%; from HUD System Performance Measures)
 - The number of new people experiencing homelessness annually (509; from the PIT)



Samuel L. Jones Hall Shelter Annex

Further, the model used for estimating resource gaps assumes that approximately 20%² of the population experiencing non-chronic homelessness resolves their housing crisis without system intervention and that the current rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing resources are fully utilized over the course of the year. Together with the indicators listed above, these data and assumptions lead to the following estimates:

² A 20% self-resolution rate is a commonly used and conservative starting point in modeling activities. The rate of self-resolution is a difficult data point to quantify and communities often land on a value that falls between 15% and 50%.

Modeling Estimates	
Total number of people currently experiencing homelessness	1,658
<i>Non-chronic population; 75% of total population (1,244)</i>	
Self-resolvers; 20% of non-chronic population	(249)
Total number of people that might benefit from permanent housing	1,409

- It is estimated that a total of 1,409 people currently experiencing homelessness would likely benefit from permanent housing.
- The system currently has the rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing capacity to absorb 582 people over a 12-month time frame, resulting in a permanent housing gap of about 827 units (the difference between 1,409 and 582).

Inventory from HIC			Housing Potential over 12 months	
RRH		386	386	
<i>Adults</i>	<i>58%</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>224</i>	
<i>Families</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>162</i>	
PSH		979	196	
<i>Adults</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>153</i>	
<i>Families</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>43</i>	
TOTAL		1,365	582	

These baseline estimates were then used to look forward to how the permanent housing inventory gap might grow given the current homelessness system dynamics. Data were added to the model related to the number of additional people expected to newly experience homelessness each year as well as for those who may return to the system. As might be expected, without changed resources or system performance, the permanent housing gap escalates over time. By the end of three years, the gap of 827 units grows to 889 units, a 7.5% increase. The increase is primarily attributable to the

large number of people expected to experience homelessness for the first time each year which is estimated to be just over 500 people annually based on the 2022 Point-in-Time Count.

Using the same approach, we developed an alternative scenario that combines additional rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing inventory with modest reductions in length of time participants are enrolled in rapid rehousing programs. Specifically, the alternative model assumes that the first-year dynamics remain consistent. In the second year, 100 slots of rapid rehousing targeting the adult population are added, as are 40 permanent supportive housing units for adults experiencing chronic homelessness. The expected length of time participants are enrolled in rapid rehousing programs decreases from one year to nine months. These changes carry through to the third year and another 50 permanent supportive housing units for adults experiencing chronic homelessness are added.

These changes are summarized in the next table. Several factors should be noted:

- Compared to the first model, the number of people housed increases from 582 to 872; an increase of 50%.
- Compared to the first model, the inventory gap decreases from 827 units to 382 units; a decrease of 54%.
- Although no capacity to serve families was added to either rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing, there remains more than sufficient family inventory to meet the needs of families experiencing homelessness.
- This model indicates that a gap of 582 permanent housing units remain for adults experiencing homelessness. The total permanent housing gap, however, is just 382 units because of the surplus family inventory, suggesting the City of Santa Rosa may consider working with regional partners to encourage flexibility in the eligible target populations for existing inventory to serve people within the City and the region.
- Sufficient shelter inventory exists to shelter the remaining 382 people experiencing homelessness until permanent housing opportunities become available.

Adjusted Year 3 Inventory*			Housing Potential over 12 months in Year 3*	Inventory Gap*
RRH		486	657	(253)
<i>Adults</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>326</i>	<i>440</i>	<i>(457)</i>
<i>Families</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>204</i>
PSH		1,069	215	(129)
<i>Adults</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>855</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>(167)</i>
<i>Families</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>214</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>38</i>
TOTAL		1,557	872	(382)

**Assumptions and data in the charts above are detailed in the preceding paragraph on page 13*

The alternative model supports the City of Santa Rosa in achieving functional zero. In this model, functional zero is defined as having sufficient shelter capacity to offer shelter to all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness (thereby reducing the unsheltered population to zero) and having sufficient permanent housing capacity to move people into stable housing.

HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA

This plan lays out the key goals and strategies that will comprise Santa Rosa’s response to homelessness over the five-year period from January 2023 - December 2027. It builds upon the system assessment, predictive analytics, and community input process completed in 2022 to identify effective strategies to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in the City and set goals and measurable targets to achieve them.

A. Vision

The vision of the Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Plan is that all people in the City of Santa Rosa have a place to call home, where home includes a range of housing types such as shared housing, affordable housing, and permanent supportive housing. The City, along with its regional partners, aim to achieve “functional zero” homelessness where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. To achieve that goal, resources are available as needed to quickly resolve homelessness when it does occur.

B. Guiding Principles

The plan is informed by seven key principles:

- ***Dignity and respect.*** The City’s response to homelessness centers the needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability by delivering individualized, comprehensive, and culturally humble services. Strengths-based, person-centered, trauma-informed, and harm-reduction approaches are integrated into all aspects of service design and delivery.

- ***Informed by people with lived experience of homelessness.***

People experiencing homelessness are experts in their own needs; the City and its partners honor and elevate the input of people with lived experience on service design and delivery.



- ***Housing focused.*** The solution to homelessness is housing; all efforts of the City’s homelessness response work towards the goal of helping people gain and maintain stable, permanent housing.
- ***Data-informed.*** Focused on results. Strategies, priorities, and investments for reducing homelessness will be informed by data to best serve people experiencing homelessness, achieve desired outcomes, and guide strategic investments in programs and services.
- ***Coordinated.*** The City will coordinate, communicate, and partner with the larger regional system and other systems of care towards shared goals of improving service connections and reducing homelessness.
- ***Equitable.*** The City recognizes the barriers to housing and resource connection that disproportionately impact people by race, ethnicity, gender, and other identities. Specifically, Black or African American, American Indian or Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander populations are overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness in the region. The City adopts policies and programs to reduce these disparities and works with regional partners to advance equity in system experiences and outcomes.
- ***Community Well-Being.*** The City of Santa Rosa is committed to promoting a healthy and safe community for all residents and businesses. The City recognizes that parts of the City are impacted disproportionately by homelessness and aims to support these neighborhoods and engage them in efforts to reduce homelessness and impacts to the community.

C. Approach to Address Equity

People of Color, specifically Black and Native or Indigenous people are disproportionately more likely than white people to experience homelessness in Santa Rosa and Sonoma County.

Ensuring the homelessness response system is equitable and meets the needs of disproportionately impacted and historically disenfranchised populations means that system policies must specifically prioritize equity to ensure the system improves fairness and that each person and population gets the services and housing they need to end their homelessness. Racial equity includes addressing root causes of inequities, not just their outcomes. Centering equity means evaluating and removing policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race. Achieving racial equity requires the inclusion of people most impacted as part of the decision-making process with regards to funding, policies, and programs.

The City of Santa Rosa will approach future investments, policy, and program decisions using a Racial Equity Impact Assessment to center racial equity in their ongoing response to homelessness in alignment with Fair Housing practices. Components of the Racial Equity Impact Assessment include the following actions:

1. Include people that are most impacted by the decision, process, or policy,
2. Use available data to identify disparities in access to services and outcomes,
3. Develop strategies to address racial disparities,
4. Identify disparate and positive impacts of each funding decision, policy, program and practice and revise decision to reduce disparate impacts and advance positive impacts,
5. Evaluate and monitor outcomes for each population, and
6. Refine and revise where disparities emerge or persist.

D. Goals and Measures to Track Progress

At the core of this Plan is a set of measurable goals that will organize the City’s response to homelessness and provide a methodology to track progress.

THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA IS SETTING A GOAL TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS TO FUNCTIONAL ZERO OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

This reduction will be accomplished through three overarching strategies that build upon and strive to improve existing efforts:

1. Improve the performance of the city and regional homelessness response system.
2. Expand service-oriented responses to unsheltered homelessness.
3. Actively participate in and collaborate with regional partners.

E. Strategies to Accomplish Goals

This section outlines high-level strategies that the City of Santa Rosa, regional partners, service providers, and other key stakeholders will deploy over the next five years to achieve the goals set forth in the Homelessness Solutions Plan. These strategies apply to all populations of people experiencing homelessness in the City of Santa Rosa.

STRATEGY AREA 1: IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CITY’S HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

This strategy area reflects the City’s commitment to participating in and creating a regional system that is highly effective at providing housing pathways for people experiencing homelessness. These strategies include establishing and measuring progress towards program and system goals, refining program and system strategies toward best practices, and strategically expanding the housing and services inventory.

Key Strategies

1.1 Prevent Homelessness. Prevent homelessness through the adoption of problem solving (also known as diversion or rapid resolution) and targeted prevention in Santa Rosa to reduce the number of people expected to experience homelessness for the first time every year. Effective homelessness prevention and shelter diversion activities are rooted in strengths-based, trauma-informed approaches to creative problem solving. These practices assist people seeking services in exploring all potential resources available to resolve a housing crisis, with the objectives of supporting safe solutions outside of shelter and other homelessness response system programs. Financial assistance is available and provided when appropriate.

1.2 Enrich and Expand Mobile Outreach Services. Provide solutions-oriented mobile outreach to all areas of the City. Equip and train outreach teams to engage and build relationships with people who are unsheltered and provide practical support to access shelter, housing, and service connections.

1.3 Provide Low Barrier Shelter. Maintain and improve the City’s inventory of accessible, low barrier, and service-rich emergency shelter and interim placements including safe parking.



Safe Parking Pilot Program

Enhance existing programs by building capacity within service provider organizations to implement low barrier emergency shelter with a focus on improving exits from shelter to housing. Support facility enhancements to meet the privacy and

service needs of people in need of temporary shelter. Strategically expand temporary placement inventory to fill gaps, if needed.

1.4 Expand Housing Solutions. Increase the capacity of the homelessness response system to provide “exits” from homelessness by using the following approaches:

- Expand services and supports to help people secure existing units (e.g. housing focused case management, navigation services, landlord incentives and engagement).
- Expand availability of rental assistance (flexible housing funds, rapid rehousing, tenant-based supportive housing, and housing choice vouchers).
- Build more permanent supportive housing and extremely low-income (ELI) affordable housing.
- Facilitate connections to residential facilities for persons who need higher levels of care for physical or behavioral health needs.
- Facilitate family/friend connections, shared housing, or other methods to help people obtain permanent housing.

1.5 Embrace Housing First. Strengthen understanding of and alignment to Housing First principles throughout all programs and services in Santa Rosa. Adopt policies and standards that incorporate housing first principles. Provide training and capacity building to providers and partners to support implementation.

1.6 Support People to Retain Housing. Provide robust housing retention services to ensure people entering housing do not return to homelessness, with a particular focus on people who need ongoing case management supports including behavioral health, substance use services, and health-related service needs.

1.7 Implement Performance Measurements and Continuous Quality Improvement. Adopt, implement, and align with regional performance measures for city-funded programs and services. System Performance Measures include:

- The total number of persons experiencing homelessness (sheltered and unsheltered).
- The number of persons who become homeless for the first time.
- The length of time persons remain homeless, including length of stay in emergency and transitional housing programs.
- The number of successful placements from street outreach programs.
- The number of people placed into permanent housing and rates of retention in permanent housing programs.
- The number of people who return to homelessness after placement in permanent housing.
- The number of people who increase their income.

Continuously evaluate and report on results for city programs, including assessment of equity in access and outcomes.

1.8 Invest Strategically. Develop a data-informed and strategic investment strategy and align funding to achieve goals set out in this Five-Year Plan. Develop an annual investment report summarizing how the City’s homelessness response resources were invested and what they achieved.

STRATEGY AREA 2: EXPAND SERVICE-ORIENTED RESPONSES TO UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

This strategy area reflects the community’s investment in responding to feedback from people experiencing homelessness about their needs and goals, with a focus on increasing the services available to address the immediate health and safety needs of people who are unsheltered. This strategy area also responds to input from community members who share concerns about the health and safety of persons living unsheltered as well as impacts to the broader well-being of the community.

Key Strategies



2.1 Provide Services and Support to Encampments and People Living Unsheltered.

Prioritize the delivery of services as an essential component of responding to unsheltered homelessness including access to basic services focused on health and safety, as well as housing-focused case management, health and behavioral health services including substance use services, shelter connections, housing navigation, and other supports.

2.2 Build Collaborative Relationships with People in Encampments.

Include people living unsheltered in planning and decision-making about how to meet needs.

2.3 Provide Safe, Temporary Locations for People to Stay. If needed, strategically expand availability of temporary places where unsheltered people can be safe and healthy while promoting and improving overall community well-being (e.g. approved safe parking sites).

2.4 Connect Unsheltered People to Housing. In addition to meeting basic needs, ensure that crisis/emergency and temporary services and programs that serve unsheltered people provide connections to services and/or pathways to permanent housing.

2.5 Provide Enhanced Community Supports to Neighborhoods. Support neighborhoods impacted by unsheltered homelessness and serving as hosts to interim and permanent supportive housing programs.

STRATEGY AREA 3: CONTINUE AND ENHANCE COLLABORATION IN REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

This area reflects the City’s desire to align with and participate in regional efforts to reduce homelessness that are informed by data and equity considerations. Improving coordination across jurisdictions will create more robust housing and services priorities and investment strategies. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration will also facilitate the engagement of each impacted jurisdiction and stakeholder group to participate in and support efforts to reduce homelessness.

Key Strategies:

- 3.1 Adopt Five-Year Plan.** Use the City of Santa Rosa Five-Year Plan to clearly establish the City’s commitment to addressing homelessness within the city and alignment with regional efforts to enhance the regional homelessness response system. The Plan will establish a vision and action plan that includes practical ways that stakeholders and community members can contribute to solutions to homelessness.
- 3.2 Continue Partnerships for Regional Housing Solutions.** Maximize regional political and public support for affordable housing as a solution to homelessness; create a focus on housing for low-income workers, extremely low-income (ELI) units, and permanent supportive housing opportunities.
- 3.3 Develop Formal Partnerships With Regional Partners.** Adopt memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the County of Sonoma and other key partners for providing essential health, behavioral health, and substance use services to people experiencing homelessness in Santa Rosa.
- 3.4 Include People With Lived Experience of Homelessness.** Participate in regional structures and processes to more meaningfully involve people who are or have experienced homelessness in decision-making about the design, implementation, and evaluation of the homelessness response system and its programs
- 3.5 Center Equity.** Apply an equity lens to all decision-making regarding homelessness within the city and region. Identify and address racial, ethnic, and other disparities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

This plan outlines a set of strategies, five-year goals, and performance targets that the community will implement to achieve reductions in homelessness. To operationalize these strategies, the City of Santa Rosa will be responsible for developing annual actions plans each year and aligning available funding to support the activities identified in each year's plan. The Action Plan for Year One (January 2023 - December 2024) is included in the following section.

TRACKING AND REPORTING ON RESULTS

Each year, the City of Santa Rosa will track and report on progress in meeting the goals and targets outlined in this Plan including:

1. Change in size of population experiencing homelessness (as measured by annual Point-in-Time counts)
2. Change in number of people served in the homelessness response system annually (from HMIS)
3. Change in number of people served among subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness including families with children, youth and young adults, Veterans, single adults, and people who are chronically homeless with disabilities.
4. Updated modeling to evaluate the availability of permanent housing resources in relation to the change in size of population of people experiencing homelessness.
5. System and program performance in relation to established targets:
 - a. Entries into homelessness system
 - b. Length of stay in programs
 - c. Exits to permanent housing
 - d. Housing stability
 - e. Participant increases in income.
6. Increase in system "exits" in relation to established targets
7. Development of new housing units/resources in relation to established targets
8. Other measures established in the Annual Action Plan

In addition, progress in completing activities detailed in the Annual Action Plan will be tracked and reported.

YEAR ONE ACTION PLAN: January 2023-December 2023

STRATEGY AREA 1: Improve the Performance of the City's Homeless Response in Alignment with the Regional Homelessness Response System

Action/Activity		Lead Entity	Supporting Entities	Begin	End	Funding Source	Strategy
a	Partner with Sonoma County Continuum of Care and regional partners to develop and scale homelessness prevention efforts including problem-solving, diversion, and prevention resources	CoSR, CoC, County	Providers				1.1, 1.7
b	Continue participation in regional Built for Zero initiative to develop by-name-list and outreach standards. Participate in regional training and initiatives to support city-funded street outreach activities.	CoSR, County, CoC	CoC, County, Providers				1.2, 1.7
c	Participate in the Coordinated Entry redesign and implementation process.	CoSR, County, CoC	Providers				1.1, 1.4, 1.7
d	Evaluate staff capacity relative to regional staff to client caseload ratios and potential programmatic or facility enhancements to improve effectiveness of Sam Jones Hall. Apply for Housing and Homeless Incentive Program (HHIP) funding for facility improvements.	CoSR	Providers				1.3, 1.7
e	Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of Safe Parking Pilot Program.	CoSR	Providers				1.3, 1.7
f	Continue participation in efforts related to regional investments and partnerships in expansion of services and supports (housing-focused case management, navigation services, landlord engagement) to help people secure permanent housing.	CoSR, CoC, County	Providers				1.4, 1.7
g	Explore funding partnerships and opportunities to enhance supportive services focused on housing retention and stability.	CoSR, CoC, County					1.5
h	In partnership with CoC, County, and other funding partners, review and update operational standards for emergency shelters with a focus on capacity building and training to implement Housing First/low barrier emergency shelter.	CoSR, County, CoC	Providers				1.6

STRATEGY AREA 2: Expand Service-Oriented Responses to Unsheltered Homelessness

Action/Activity		Lead Entity	Supporting Entities	Begin	End	Funding Source	Strategy
a	Work with regional jurisdictions to establish a framework for shared response to unsheltered homelessness aligned with best practices.	CoSR, County, CoC	Providers, Advocates				2.1
b	In partnership with the CoC and County and efforts to develop regional outreach standards, provide training, information, and resources to outreach teams to ensure they are equipped to provide people in encampments with connections to available services and supports as well as linkages to shelter and housing.	CoSR, CoC, County	Providers				2.1; 2.4
c	Develop a regular schedule and locations for the Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) mobile showers/bathrooms to be accessible to people living unsheltered.	CoSR					2.1
d	Explore partnerships with healthcare providers to provide mobile health services to people in encampments.	CoSR	County				2.1
e	Continue to build trusting relationships with people living in encampments and include their input in developing new or expanded services or interim placements.	CoSR	Advocates, People experiencing homelessness				2.2
f	Explore additional options for increasing access to essential services for people living in encampments focused on health and safety.	CoSR, County	Providers				2.1
g	Provide outreach, engagement, and increased services for neighborhoods impacted by unsheltered homelessness.	CoSR	Providers, Community members				2.5
h	Apply for California Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) to support successful placements from unsheltered homelessness.	CoSR	Providers				2.1

STRATEGY AREA 3: Continue and Enhance Collaboration in Regional Homelessness Solutions with Key Stakeholders

Action/Activity		Lead Entity	Supporting Entities	Begin	End	Funding Source	Strategy
a	Adopt the City of Santa Rosa's 5-Year Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan.	CoSR	Community				3.1
b	Develop a data-informed and strategic investment strategy.	CoSR					3.2
c	Develop an annual investment report summarizing how city resources were invested in the response system and housing solutions.	CoSR					3.2
d	Continue local investment in deeply affordable and supportive housing inventory.	CoSR	Housing Developers				3.3
e	Develop and adopt a MOU with County of Sonoma and key providers for providing essential health, behavioral health, and substance use services.	CoSR, County	CoC, Providers				3.4
f	Develop mechanisms for stakeholders to provide input on city investments, program, and policy changes.	CoSR					3.5
g	Incorporate requirements into RFPs, service contracts for meaningful participation of people with lived experiences of homelessness	CoSR					3.5
h	Annually evaluate program level data including outcomes for city-funded services for racial and ethnic disparities	CoSR					3.6

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Stakeholder input was critical to inform the development of strategies in the Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Plan. A broad array of stakeholders contributed valuable input through interviews, focus groups, community-wide survey, and public community input session. Persons with current and past experiences of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness provided input on their experiences and opportunities to improve the City's response to homelessness.

Consistent themes identified through stakeholder engagement align with the key strategies included in the Plan. Consistent themes identified through stakeholder engagement include:

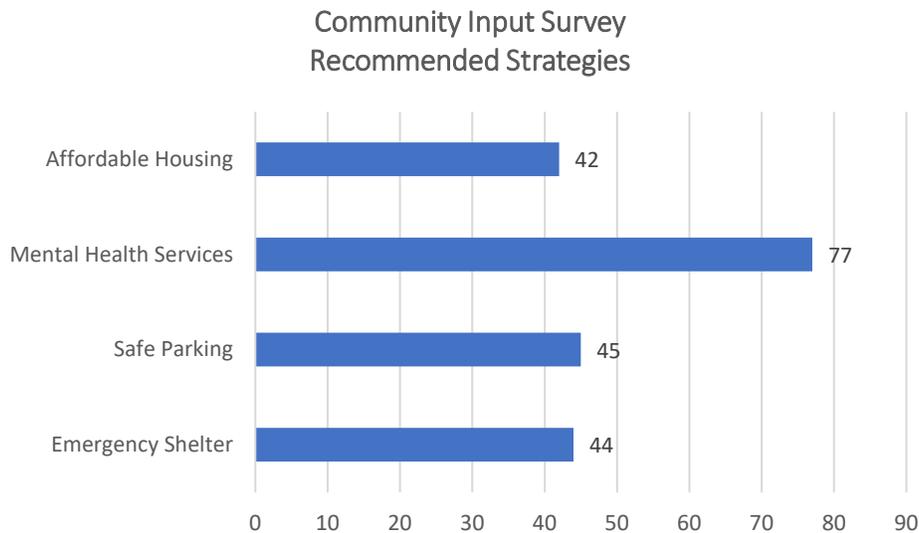
- An opportunity to improve the City's response to unsheltered homelessness including mobile outreach, storage, and safe interim placements.
- A focus on building capacity within the current response system while strategically creating new resources.
- Building and cultivating regional partnerships to further regional goals to provide the supportive services, safe interim placements and permanent housing solutions furthering the regional goal of achieving functional zero homelessness.
- A need for more accessible support services ranging from basic needs (hygiene, nutrition) to ongoing supports with a focus on health and behavioral health services including substance use services.
- A need for more housing solutions ranging from rental assistance to inventory of affordable and supportive housing units.

A summary of the stakeholders who contributed to this plan follows this summary of stakeholder input.

Community Survey

107 community members completed an online community survey to provide input on their concerns and recommendations to address homelessness in Santa Rosa. 96% of respondents live or work within the city. 85% reported that homelessness is an extreme challenge.

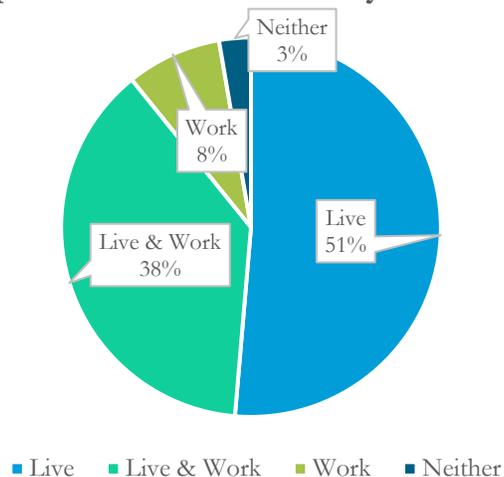
The chart below shows respondents recommended strategies to include in the Homelessness Solutions Plan.



Community Input Session

74 attendees joined the public community input session and provided their personal feedback and suggestions on strategies to be included in the Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Plan. The chart below depicts the affiliation attendees have with the City of Santa Rosa.

Participant Affiliation with City of Santa Rosa



STAKEHOLDERS

Interview Engagements

Name	Title	Organization	Interview Date
Shirley Cheal		First United Methodist Church	04/13/2022
Chris Keys	Director of Shelter & Recovery	Redwood Gospel Mission	04/18/2022
Adrienne Lauby	Board President	Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS)	04/28/2022
Heather Jackson	Board President	Sonoma County Acts of Kindness	04/05/2022
Peter Rumble	CEO	Santa Rosa Metro Chamber	04/25/2022
Ben Leroi	CEO	Santa Rosa Community Health	04/25/2022
Dave Kiff	Interim Executive Director	Sonoma County Community Development Corporation	04/27/2022
Don Schwartz	Assistant City Manager	City of Rohnert Park	04/19/2022
Marakeshia Smith	City Manager	City of Santa Rosa	04/26/2022
Megan Basinger	Director of Housing and Community Services	City of Santa Rosa	04/18/2022
Tom Schwedhelm	Council Member	City of Santa Rosa	04/14/2022
Victoria Fleming	Council Member	City of Santa Rosa	05/04/2022
Jeffery Hoffman	Directing Attorney	California Rural Legal Assistance	05/03/2022
Ronit Rubinoff	Executive Director	Sonoma County Legal Aid	04/26/2022

Jennielynn Holmes	Chief Program Officer	Catholic Charities	04/25/022
Katie Swan	Program Manager	Bucklew Programs	05/02/2022
Robin Hammond	Assistant City Attorney	City of Santa Rosa	04/18/2022
John Cregan	Chief of Police	City of Santa Rosa	05/17/2022
Kris Wilson	Director	Railroad Square	07/01/2022
Alma Magollon	President	Hispanic Chamber Sonoma County	07/08/2022

Provider Focus Group

Name	Title	Organization	Interview Date
City Pasko	Executive Director	Living Room	05/02/2022
Susan Cooper	Executive Director	CAP Sonoma County	05/02/2022
Madeleine Keegan O’Connell	CEO	YWCA Sonoma County	05/02/2022
Lisa Fatu	Director of Youth Crisis and Career Services	Social Advocates for Youth	05/02/2022
Tom Bieri	Executive Director	Community Support Network	05/02/2022
Beth Henigan	Executive Director	Interfaith Shelter Network	05/02/2022
Amber Twitchell	Associate Director	On the Move/VOICES Youth Services	05/02/2022

Housing Focus Group

Name	Title	Organization	Interview Date
Mark Krug	Special Projects Manager	Burbank Housing	05/04/2022
Robin Zimpler	Founder	Freebird Development Company	05/04/2022
John White	Chief Real Estate Officer	Allied Housing/Abode Services	05/04/2022
Macy Leung	Senior Project Manager	Allied Housing/Abode Services	05/04/2022
Hailey Del Grande	Development Project Manager	DANCO	05/04/2022

Other Focus Groups and Engagements

Group	Category	Interview Date
Community Members	Community Input Session	05/23/2022
HEAP – Homeless Encampment Assistance Program	City Interdepartmental Groups	04/28/2022
HAT – Homelessness Action Team	City Interdepartmental Groups	05/02/2022
People who are Unsheltered	Lived Experience Focus Groups/Interviews	07/18/2022
People who are Sheltered	Lived Experience Focus Groups/Interviews	07/19/2022
Sonoma County LEAP – Lived Experience Advisory Panel	Lived Experience Focus Groups/Interviews	06/17/2022

Feedback on Draft Plan

Group/Stakeholder	Category	Interview Date
Dave Kliff, County/CoC	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
Denise Hill, Community Member	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
JennieLynn Holmes, Catholic Charities	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
Matthew Verscheure, Catholic Charities	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
Rebekah Sammet, LEAP Board	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
Heather Jackson, Sonoma County Acts of Kindness	Input on Draft Plan	10/14/22
CoC Strategic Plan Committee	Input on Draft Plan	10/21/22
Santa Rosa Ad Hoc Committee on Housing & Homelessness	Input on Draft Plan	10/25/22

LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

To understand the work accomplished, currently in place, and planned in the City of Santa Rosa to reduce homelessness, Focus Strategies requested and received the following documents from the City. The documents help establish a baseline understanding of homelessness reduction efforts in the City of Santa Rosa prior to the launch of the strategic action plan process.

A. SYSTEM POLICY AND DESIGN:

- County of Sonoma Request for Proposals (RFP) for Consultation Services for Strategic Planning
- Sonoma County Continuum of Care Board, Committee, and Workgroup Minutes and Materials

B. HOMELESSNESS GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP DOCUMENTS

- Sonoma County CoC Governance Charter December 29, 2021
- Sonoma County CoC Program Standards

C. FUNDING AND INVESTMENT DOCUMENTS

- Santa Rosa Homeless Services Request for Proposals
- Santa Rosa Safe Parking Request for Proposals
- Catholic Charities Family Support Center grant agreement
- Catholic Charities Homeless Service Center grant agreement
- The Living Room Center grant agreement
- Santa Rosa Safe Parking Pilot grant agreement
- Sam Jones Hall and Sam Jones Hall Annex grant agreement
- Sam Jones Hall Housing-Focused Program grant agreement
- Community Action Partnership HCA Family Fund grant agreement
- Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) grant agreement
- Safe Parking Operating grant agreement

- YWCA grant agreement

D. SYSTEM AND PROGRAM ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS (APR)

- 2020 Point in Time Count report
- 2022 Point in Time Count report
- 2020 Housing Inventory Count report
- 2022 Housing Inventory Count report
- FY21 CoC System Performance report
- Buckelew Programs, Boulevard Apartments APR
- Buckelew Programs, Henry House APR
- Buckelew Programs, Samaritan FACT APR
- Buckelew Programs, Sonoma SHP APR
- Catholic Charities, DeMeo House APR
- Catholic Charities, Alternatives for Unsheltered APR
- Catholic Charities, Family Support Center APR
- Catholic Charities, HUD CC State ESG APR
- Catholic Charities, Nightingale House APR
- Catholic Charities, PSH Kenton Court APR
- Catholic Charities, PSH Mill Court APR
- Catholic Charities, PSH #3 APR
- Catholic Charities, RRH Nightingale Expansion APR
- Catholic Charities, RRH Palms Inn County HCV APR
- Catholic Charities, RRH Palms Inn City APR
- Catholic Charities, RRH Rohnert Park APR

- Catholic Charities, Sam Jones Hall (City HOST) APR
- Catholic Charities, Sam Jones Hall Emergency Shelter APR
- Catholic Charities, Sam Jones Hall Emergency Shelter Annex APR
- Catholic Charities, Sandman COVID Response (NCS) APR
- Catholic Charities, Tammy Way APR
- Catholic Charities, Transitional Resident Program APR
- Catholic Charities, Yukon APR
- Community Action Partnership, Aston Avenue Apartments APR
- Community Action Partnership, Earle Street APR
- Community Action Partnership, Harold's Home APR
- Community Action Partnership, Sloan House APR
- Community Support Network, Bridges APR
- Community Support Network, Grand Avenue APR
- Community Support Network, Opportunity House APR
- Community Support Network, Sanctuary Villas APR
- Community Support Network, Stony Point Commons APR
- COTS, Benton Veterans Village APR
- Drug Abuse Alternative Center (DAAC), Transitional Living Program APR
- DEMA, Astro Hotel APR
- DEMA, Fairgrounds Trailers APR
- DEMA, Mickey Zane Place APR
- Interfaith Shelter Network, Carina APR
- Interfaith Shelter Network, Elsa APR

APPENDIX B: HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM RESOURCES

Crisis Response Services

- ***Outreach and Engagement:*** These services, provided by both public and non-profit operators, focus on connecting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with housing and services. At present there are countywide outreach services that span the entire CoC as well as dedicated outreach teams for youth, veterans, and those with mental health challenges.
- ***Drop-In Services:*** These programs provide a variety of supports and services, which can include meals, hygiene services (e.g., showers), laundry, storage, and direct or linked access to supports such as case management or behavioral health and substance use services.
- ***Safe Parking Programs:*** These programs are typically night-time programs that serve households experience vehicular homelessness by providing a safe space to park a vehicle overnight while offering access to facilities.

Temporary Solutions

- ***Emergency Shelters:*** Shelters offer short-term, interim housing resources, with a focus on linkages to services or supports that can resolve a household's housing crisis. Some shelters operate year-round while others operate seasonally in the winter months.
- ***Transitional Housing:*** Transitional housing programs, also a temporary housing resource, tend to offer longer lengths of stay (up to 24 months) and more intensive case management services to help households resolve housing crises.

Permanent Housing Solutions

- ***Rapid Rehousing:*** This program type provides households with case management and short-term rental subsidies to secure housing in the private rental market: in rapid rehousing, households gradually increase contributions to rent payments until they are sustaining their unit on their own. Rapid rehousing program resources are available for adults, families with children, and veterans.

- ***Permanent Supportive Housing:*** This permanent housing type provides non-time-limited deeply affordable housing and intensive ongoing support services, with the intention of targeting the resource towards households with the most significant or acute service needs.

The next table provides a summary of the beds available for temporary and permanent housing solutions in Sonoma County by population type.

Composition of housing inventory by type and target population

Population	ES		TH		PSH		RRH		OPH		Total	
Children	4	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	0%
TAY	33	4%	4	1%	36	4%	21	5%	36	19%	130	5%
Veteran	44	6%	29	9%	438	45%	10	3%	1	1%	522	20%
Chronic	0	0%	0	0%	199	20%	0	0%	0	0%	199	8%
Other adults	475	64%	292	86%	95	10%	192	50%	60	32%	1,114	42%
Families	182	25%	16	5%	211	22%	163	42%	92	49%	664	25%
Total	738	28%	341	13%	979	37%	386	15%	189	7%	2,633	100%