

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MEGAN BASINGER, DIRECTOR
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN (2023-2027) –
YEAR ONE REPORT (2023)

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Housing and Community Services Department that the Council receive a Year One Report (2023) on the implementation of the Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 15, 2022, Council approved the Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) for the five-year period beginning January 2023 through December 2027. The Strategic Plan provides key strategies and actions that focus on bolstering the City's response to the homelessness crises, aligning efforts with the Sonoma County Homeless Coalition (formerly Sonoma County Continuum of Care) to achieve the regional goal of "Functional Zero" homelessness by 2027. A system of care achieves "Functional Zero" when a person's experience with homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. This report highlights the City's progress toward implementing year one of the five-year Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

1. To operationalize the visionary Strategic Plan, staff developed a Year One Implementation Plan (2023), attached, which prioritizes key actions into two tiers and also identifies regional initiatives. Tier one includes twelve action items focused on implementing each of the Strategic Plan's three overarching strategies (summarized below); tier two items are intended to supplement tier one priorities. Staff updated the Year One Implementation Plan (2023) regularly throughout the year and made this information available on the City's website.
2. The Strategic Plan's three overarching strategies and Year One (2023) accomplishments are summarized below:

Strategy One: Improve the Performance of the City’s Homeless Response with the Regional Homeless Response System
2023 Key Accomplishments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awarded \$2.3 million from the HOME-ARP (American Rescue Plan) program, which funds two non-profit organizations that provide supportive services, including homelessness prevention;• Began development of a homelessness prevention pilot program with regional partners that include the County of Sonoma and the City of Petaluma;• City staff appointed to Sonoma County Homeless Coalition (SCHC) Coordinated Entry Committee;• Established and coordinates a Santa Rosa-specific by-names-list (BNL);• Completed an evaluation of the Safe Parking Program following the first year of operations and presented findings to the City Council; and• Awarded \$232,000 in SCHC funding for interior facility improvements at Samuel L. Jones Hall Homeless Shelter.
Strategy Two: Expand Service-Oriented Responses to Unsheltered Homelessness
2023 Key Accomplishments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awarded \$3.8 million from State of California’s Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) program to provide comprehensive services for individuals residing in encampments in the Southwest and Southeast areas of the City;• Established a City Encampment Team to proactively address the health, safety, and environmental concerns associated with encampments; and• Adopted new camping ordinance on August 22, 2023, effective September 22, 2023.
Strategy Three: Continue and Enhance Collaboration in Regional Homelessness Solutions with Key Stakeholders
2023 Accomplishments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed Year One Implementation Plan (2023); developed Year Two Implementation Plan (2024);• Partnering with County Department of Health Services to increase awareness of and promote access to essential health, behavioral health, and substance use services available to Santa Rosa residents;• Incorporated provision in homeless services contracts requiring contractors to report out on client engagement and feedback processes;• Presented findings to the City Council on investments in homeless services, affordable and supportive housing (Year One Report 2023); and• Participated in SCHC Conversational Workshops – Cultural Competency and Tribal Engagement.

ANALYSIS

1. Santa Rosa has made progress reducing its homeless population (30 percent overall reduction) as reflected in the 2023 homeless count. This is due in part to strategic investments in interim and permanent housing with supportive services and increased collaboration with regional partners through the SCHC. For Santa Rosa,

this includes investing \$5 million annually for homeless services, coupled with \$61 million from a variety of sources administered by the City and the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Rosa, increasing housing opportunities through the production of 336 affordable housing units completed in the past 24 months, 522 units that are under construction, and 131 Emergency Housing Vouchers administered by the Housing Authority (84 percent of which have been leased-up). Regionally, this includes 400 new beds of interim housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing, largely due to increased resources from the State of California's Homekey program.

2. Additionally, staff has developed a Year Two Implementation Plan (2024). Key areas include utilizing one-time funds (ERF and HOME-ARP) to provide enhanced supportive services to persons experiencing or at-risk of homelessness; developing a stakeholder engagement plan with the City's Communication and Intergovernmental Relations Office (CIRO); implementing a regional homelessness prevention pilot program in collaboration with SCHC; and continuing enhanced support to disproportionately impacted neighborhoods via the City Encampment Team.
3. The stakeholder engagement plan will be informed by a community survey seeking input on the City's housing and homelessness needs and priorities. This survey was made available to the public January 4 to February 16, 2024. Preliminary results are summarized below:
 - Homelessness as a community priority – 90 percent identified as extremely/very important;
 - Level of homelessness – 49 percent report an increase, followed by no change (35 percent) and decrease (16 percent); and
 - How the City is addressing homelessness – 74 percent are interested in learning more through a variety of engagement opportunities and topics. Examples include in-person meetings, City Connections newsletter, quarterly updates and general topics include reporting issues, resources, City and regional efforts.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On November 15, 2022, Council approved the Strategic Plan for the five-year period beginning January 2023 through December 2027, and authorized the City Manager to make minor or non-substantive modifications to amend the Strategic Plan to ensure alignment with the Sonoma County Homeless Coalition's regional plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact on the General Fund associated with this report. There may be costs associated with implementing recommendations in the Strategic Plan, which staff will identify in annual operating budgets for the Department of Housing and Community 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 receiving a report on the Strategic 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 Strategic Plan will require their own CEQA analysis.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Year One Implementation Plan (2023)

PRESENTER

Kelli Kuykendall, Housing and Community Services Manager