

# Agenda Report

May 20, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Housing Department  
SUBJECT: **RESULTS OF THE 2019 PASADENA HOMELESS COUNT**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The following report is for information only; no City Council action is required.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On the evening of January 22<sup>nd</sup> and the morning of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the City of Pasadena, in coordination with Urban Initiatives, conducted the 2019 Pasadena Homeless Count. The count measures the prevalence of homelessness in the City by collecting information on people who are living in unsheltered locations and temporary shelter. The Homeless Count provides a “snapshot” that quantifies the size of the population experiencing homelessness at a given point in time, which may fluctuate on a daily basis over the course of the calendar year.

The unsheltered count surveys individuals and families experiencing homelessness who are most visible to the public, including those sleeping outdoors, on the street, or in parks or vehicles, etc. The sheltered count includes individuals and families experiencing homelessness who are living in temporary shelter, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and hotels/motels. People who are living doubled-up with family or friends are not included in the count, as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers these individuals to be at-risk of homelessness and not literally homeless.

As the lead agency for the Pasadena Continuum of Care (CoC), the City of Pasadena is responsible for reporting the findings of the Homeless Count to HUD. Data from the Homeless Count is also included in the CoC’s annual funding application, which is used by federal, state, and local funding agencies to allocate resources to the City.

## **RESULTS OF THE COUNT:**

- **Fewer people are experiencing homelessness in Pasadena.** On the night of the 2019 Pasadena Homeless Count, there were 542 people experiencing homelessness in Pasadena. This snapshot in time represents a 20% decrease from 2018 (n=677).

- **Progress is being made among key subpopulations**, including veterans, families with children, and youth. Each of these subpopulations decreased in number over the course of the year. Most strikingly, there were no unsheltered families with children on the night of the count, compared to eight families in 2018.
- **More people are experiencing chronic homelessness**. While notable progress has been made to reduce homelessness in key subpopulations, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness increased and accounts for approximately 50% of the total homeless population. People experiencing chronic homelessness have a disabling condition and have experienced homelessness for more than one year. Their higher needs tend to make them more visible in day-to-day public spaces.
- **Our neighbors are experiencing homelessness**. More than half (58%) of the people living on the streets were Pasadena residents before they became homeless. Only 5% of the total population reported first becoming homeless outside of Los Angeles County or out of state, largely refuting the misconception that people experiencing homelessness travel from other areas and across the nation.
- **People experiencing homelessness are aging on the streets**. The data reveal that three in ten people experiencing homelessness in Pasadena are aged 55 years and older. This demographic shift comes as the Baby Boomer generation gets older and faces significant impediments to aging in place, such as no longer being able to work or afford a home to live in on a fixed income.

## PROGRESS WITH TARGET SUBPOPULATIONS:

*The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* identifies four homeless sub-populations who have been prioritized due to their distinct barriers and vulnerability. Programmatic and policy recommendations for each subpopulation include:

- **Homeless Veterans**. Veterans comprise approximately 6% of the total homeless population (n=32). This low number is likely attributable to the substantial commitment at the federal, state, and local level to increase opportunities for veterans to access permanent housing. Meaningful change will depend on strengthening partnerships with Veterans Affairs programs and local agencies to provide access to benefits, services, and permanent housing regardless of barriers such as military discharge status.
- **Chronically Homeless**. Approximately half of the City's homeless population is experiencing chronic homelessness (n=269). Single adults are more likely to be chronically homeless compared to families with children (57% v. 9%). Creating opportunities to increase the supply of supportive housing, as well as prioritizing people with the highest needs for existing supportive housing units, is the most effective means of reducing chronic homelessness.
- **Homeless Families with Children**. There were 23 families with children experiencing homelessness in Pasadena, representing 14% of the total homeless population and a trending decline since 2017. Of noteworthy success, no families were experiencing unsheltered homelessness at the time of the count, compared to eight families in 2018. Promising strategies to end family homelessness continue to focus on rapid re-housing and employment support to regain stability and promote long-term self-sufficiency.

- **Homeless Unaccompanied and Parenting Youth.** Unaccompanied youth ages 18-24 comprise approximately 6% of the homeless population (n=31). This number does not include youth in doubled-up or “couch surfing” living situations, as they do not meet HUD’s definition of homelessness. Critical interventions should focus on individuals existing systems that interface with youth, including foster care and juvenile justice. Improved connections to housing, education and employment opportunities are critical for youth success.



## **PASADENA’S EFFORTS TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS:**

In 2018, 149 people (122 households) who were formerly homeless in Pasadena were permanently housed through rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing programs in Pasadena and throughout the County. It is critical that the City sustains and builds upon models that are working by prioritizing the movement of people experiencing homelessness on the streets and in shelter settings to permanent housing. In order to do so, investment in more supportive housing and increasing permanent housing capacity is needed.

Pasadena’s homelessness prevention programs help support people who are at-risk of homelessness by providing temporary financial assistance and short-term case management to resolve housing crises and instability. By targeting assistance to those who are most at-risk of homelessness, programs are able to maximize the limited available resources for homelessness prevention. The City’s homelessness prevention efforts are primarily led by Friends In Deed, Union Station Homeless Services, and local faith-based organizations.

Research continues to promote permanent supportive housing as the most successful housing intervention at ending homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness all endorse permanent supportive housing as a proven, evidence-based best practice and cost-effective solution. Providing access to permanent housing without preconditions, along with optional supportive services (Housing First), yields overwhelmingly positive results, including long-term housing stability, improved physical and behavioral health outcomes, and reduced use of crisis services such as emergency departments and jails.

Existing permanent supportive housing projects in Pasadena that largely serve people who were formerly chronically homeless demonstrate a 96% housing retention success rate, even among residents who have significant mental illnesses or substance use disorders. People experiencing homelessness, including those with the highest service needs, are more likely to recover and stabilize when they are provided with housing rather than remaining on the streets. Permanent supportive housing projects focus on ensuring tenant success by providing on-site supportive services so that residents can

start to rebuild their lives in a safe and stable home free from the vulnerabilities of the street.

Despite the City's success in decreasing homelessness by 20%, the demand for housing far outpaces the current supply. A root cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Available rental assistance vouchers have become increasingly difficult to use in Pasadena's tight rental market, which impedes the ability of people to exit homelessness. Financial incentives continue to be offered to landlords who are interested in being a part of the solution by renting to people experiencing homelessness. Ending the homeless crisis will require examining and minimizing barriers to long-term housing affordability to break the cycle that is driving the inflow of people into homelessness.

**REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND COLLABORATION:**

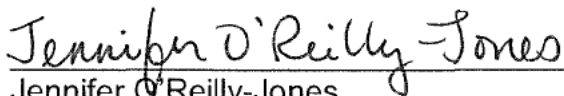
Homelessness knows no boundaries, so effectively combating it will require a regional response. The City continues to work collaboratively with Los Angeles County and neighboring cities, Continuums of Care, and Public Housing Authorities to support the capacity building and development of resources across the region, as well as encouraging all communities to do their part to help end homelessness for their residents. Service providers are also actively working with regional partners to connect people who reside outside of Pasadena to services, family and resources in their home community. As more nearby cities implement L.A. County-funded homelessness plans, there is greater capacity to make meaningful progress towards reducing homelessness.

Respectfully submitted,



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