

# Agenda Report

April 25, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Housing and Career Services Department  
SUBJECT: **REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2016 PASADENA HOMELESS COUNT**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

## **BACKGROUND:**

On January 27<sup>th</sup> Urban Initiatives, a social service research arm of Fuller Seminary, in coordination with the City of Pasadena, conducted the 2016 Pasadena Homeless Count. Urban Initiatives has been partnering with the City to conduct the count for more than a decade. This count was a one-night count and survey of Pasadena's homeless population and consisted of two primary components: (1) unsheltered count; and (2) sheltered count. It is important to note that while this one-night count offers a snapshot of homelessness on one single night, the number of homeless fluctuates during the year.

The Pasadena Homeless Count is conducted in accordance with guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), which requires that communities receiving federal homeless funding conduct a count every two years during the last ten days of January. The City has conducted a homeless count since 1992, and has done so annually since 2008. Other surrounding communities also conduct homeless counts during the same time frame, either annually or bi-annually, to minimize duplication in counting a population that can be transient.

The unsheltered count is a targeted survey of homeless individuals and families most commonly considered homeless (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks or vehicles, etc.). The sheltered count included homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter, including those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or those using hotel/motel vouchers. The count did not include persons who were doubled up or at-risk of homelessness as HUD does not consider these persons to be homeless.

## **RESULTS OF THE COUNT:**

Although homelessness is increasingly visible in Pasadena, the 2016 Homeless Count revealed a continued decrease in number:

- On the day of the count, 530 people were homeless
- 16% fewer were homeless in 2016 than in 2015 (632). This decrease is largely attributed to the success of the Coordinated Entry System which placed 56 chronically homeless individuals in Pasadena in permanent housing in 2015.
- For those living on the streets, the decrease was even sharper; between 2015 and 2016 there was a 20% decrease in unsheltered homelessness (442 in 2015 and 352 in 2016). This decrease in the street count, however, is partially due to the fact that the Pasadena Bad Weather Shelter was open during the 2016 count and closed during the 2015 count (accounting for a decrease of 42 individuals in the street count).

While the number of people who are homeless has fallen, their significant needs make them more visible to the public. These physical and psychological problems make it especially difficult to permanently house these individuals. Of the 530 homeless in 2016:

- 42% are chronically homeless, up by 14% from 2015 (198 compared to 225).
- 29% reported chronic health conditions
- 28% reported mental illness
- 28% reported a history of domestic violence
- 26% reported physical disabilities

Almost half of the homeless population was living in Pasadena when they became homeless:

- 43% were living in Pasadena
- 37% were living somewhere else in Los Angeles County
- 20% were living outside of Los Angeles County

As in years past, the majority of the homeless population was unsheltered:

- 66% reported living outdoors or in their vehicles
- 34% were sheltered (including 15% in transitional housing and 19% in an emergency shelter or in a hotel or motel paid for by a charitable organization)
- Compared to 2015, there was an overall decrease of 6% in the sheltered population. This decrease is the result of the closure of one program (Haven House) and a realization that another program that had been included in Pasadena's inventory of homeless programs (Grandview Foundation) is in fact primarily serving a non-homeless population, rather than a reduction in shelter usage.

As it relates specifically to veterans, Pasadena has made significant strides in reducing the number of homeless. Since 2011, the number of homeless veterans in Pasadena has decreased by 51% (falling from 89 in 2011 to 44 in 2016). This decrease is largely the result of a concerted effort to increase outreach and prioritize housing for homeless veterans as well as new resources targeting this population.

### **PASADENA'S EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS**

Two factors have contributed to the decrease in the unsheltered homeless population: the development of a Coordinated Entry System (CES) and an increase in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), with a focus on a Housing First approach targeting the chronic homeless population. In the past, people experiencing homelessness had to navigate an uncoordinated set of programs that did not always offer permanent solutions to ending their homelessness. Since 2011, however, Pasadena has focused on developing a crisis response system that focuses on a coordinated Housing First approach that emphasizes rapid connections to permanent housing.

Housing First is a simple philosophy that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible to homeless individuals and families. Once in a program, case managers work to engage participants in voluntary supportive services and connect them to community-based supports with the goal of helping them to remain housed. Income, sobriety, participation in treatment and/or other services are not required as a condition for getting housing. In Pasadena, Housing First programs have shown promising results; over 88% of program participants do not return to homelessness.

Key to the success of this new service model has been developing a CES that focuses on street outreach for the hardest to reach, service-resistant population. Through the CES the most vulnerable homeless individuals and families are matched with available and appropriate housing resources. This year, outreach workers have worked to develop partnerships with the Pasadena Police Department HOPE team officers, veteran service providers, hospitals, and business districts to provide as much community coverage as possible.

Converting Centennial Place, a former YMCA building that had provided affordable housing, to PSH units (housing with supportive services provided for disabled homeless persons) has provided 142 single-room occupancy apartments that serve as an important housing resource for the CES. Homeless individuals that are matched to housing can select a unit at Centennial Place when they become available. Union Station Homeless Services provides on-site supportive services.

One challenge with permanent housing as a means to end homelessness is that once the units are filled, there is not an available unit for the next homeless person. In order to address this challenge, the Housing Department and Union Station Homeless Services have recently launched the Moving On Program at Centennial Place. The Moving On Program provides a Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) to Centennial

Place residents who have shown stability in housing and are lower utilizers of supportive services, allowing them to move to less structured housing, freeing a PSH unit for a needier homeless person.

### **EXISTING AND FUTURE CHALLENGES:**

The most effective way to end homelessness is with housing. Challenges exist, however, in implementing this approach. Primary among the challenges is the lack of permanent, affordable housing. Housing vouchers are an effective way to make the existing housing stock affordable, but in a tight rental market as exists currently, landlords may be less willing to accept them. Additionally, persons who are homeless and have been out of the rental market for an extended period of time may have barriers that result in them competing poorly for rental units. PSH units in buildings that provide on-site supportive services are often a better option for persons with more severe disabilities, but these require time, funding, and effort to site and develop.

Additionally, while the Pasadena homeless services providers have been doing a very good job of housing many very hard-to-house persons with significant disabilities, there remains a segment of the homeless population whose disabilities are so severe that independent living may not initially be a viable option. For these persons, the path to housing is much more difficult to navigate. Persons who refuse all or most services, including assistance with moving to permanent housing, will make up an increasing portion of the unsheltered homeless population as others, for whom outreach and engagement are more effective, become housed. The City and homeless service providers are working together with local hospitals and mental health services providers to develop solutions to this issue.

Finally, any efforts Pasadena makes towards ending homelessness are tempered by the large homeless population in Los Angeles County as a whole. While 2016 homeless count numbers have not been released for LA County, the 2015 count recorded 44,359 persons homeless at a point-in-time county-wide (these numbers are inclusive of Pasadena's 2015 homeless count number). While County-wide, significant steps are being taken to reduce this number, and funding has been set aside for specific interventions, until great progress is made in reducing the County's homeless population, it will continue to impact Pasadena.

### **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

This report is for information only and as such there is no policy consideration. Addressing this issue has a direct impact on quality of life and the local economy.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**


This report is for information only and as such is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), the "General Rule" provision of CEQA which applies to projects which may have

the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

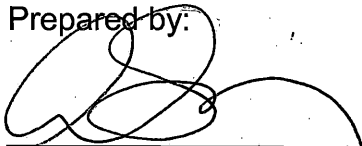
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This report is for information only and as such there is no fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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