

Agenda Report

April 24, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Housing and Career Services Department
SUBJECT: **REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2017 PASADENA HOMELESS COUNT**

RECOMMENDATION:

The following report is for information only and is intended to provide useful information to the City Council on the Pasadena homeless population in order to gain better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measure the impact of current policies, and plan for the future.

BACKGROUND:

On the evening of January 24th and the morning of January 25th, Urban Initiatives, in coordination with the City of Pasadena, conducted the 2017 Pasadena Homeless Count. 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 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 shelter, 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:

While homelessness in Pasadena has seen a long-term downward trend, there was a slight uptick in 2017:

- On the day of the count, 575 people were homeless, representing an 8% increase over 2016 (n=530).

- Much of this increase was accounted for by the increase in the sheltered population which increased by 28% over 2016 (50 people), likely impacted by the particularly rainy and cold winter in Pasadena.
- Within the homeless population, while the number of veterans went down by 32% (14 people) and the number of chronically homeless¹ went down by 14% (27 people), the health needs of those populations became more significant.
- The decrease in the veterans who are homeless was largely attributed to the opening of several bricks-and-mortar permanent supportive housing (PSH) projects in 2016. With no new PSH projects for veterans on the horizon, these decreases are not expected to continue into 2018.
- There was a 42% increase in the number of families who were homeless on the night of the count. This uptick, however, seems to be more of an anomaly in 2016 rather than an upward trend; families who had been living in the Family Center (an emergency shelter for families) happened to have moved out on the day of the 2016 count and the beds had not yet been filled. These beds, which are filled with families who are homeless throughout the region, are almost always at capacity. As such, the City expects the number of sheltered homeless families to remain at similar levels to 2017 in the future.

While Pasadena has made strides in reducing the number of chronically homeless individuals in 2016, this population continues to be the largest subpopulation within those homeless in Pasadena (34%) and the most challenging to house. Those remaining have more disabling health conditions than in 2016, and much higher levels than the general homeless population:

- 76% have physical disabilities (compared to 24% of the total homeless population)
- 67% have chronic health conditions (compared to 25% of the total homeless population)
- 52% struggle with mental illness (compared to 19% of the total homeless population)
- 31% have developmental disabilities (compared to 11% of the total homeless population)
- 30% have substance use disorders (compared to 11% of the total homeless population)

The decreases in the chronically homeless population are largely attributed to the success of the Coordinated Entry System which placed 63 chronically homeless individuals from Pasadena in permanent housing in 2016.

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

- 60% reported living outdoors or in their vehicles
- 40% were sheltered (including 10% in transitional housing and 30% in an emergency shelter or in a hotel or motel paid for by a charitable organization)
- Compared to 2016, there was an overall increase of 73% in those staying in emergency shelters. This increase is likely the result of the particularly rainy and

¹ Chronic homeless is defined as homeless for a year or longer or 4 or more times in 3 years, with a disabling condition

cold winter in Pasadena as well as the lack of alternative regional shelters that were available in 2016

- The number of unsheltered homeless remained relatively flat, with 347 people identified as unsheltered in 2017, a 1% decrease over 2016

The full report is available on the Pasadena Partnership to End Homelessness website, at www.pasadenapartnership.org/homeless-count-reports.

PASADENA'S EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS

Two factors have contributed to the decrease in the chronically 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.

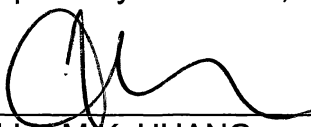
EXISTING AND FUTURE CHALLENGES:

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 such projects require time, funding, and appropriate locations to 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 be a viable option, at least initially. 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. In addition, a Homeless Health Taskforce is being formed to develop strategies to address these needs.

Finally, any efforts Pasadena makes towards ending homelessness are tempered by the large homeless population in Los Angeles County as a whole. While 2017 homeless count numbers have not been released for LA County, the 2016 count recorded 46,874 persons homeless at a point-in-time county-wide (these numbers are inclusive of Pasadena's 2016 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. Some unprecedented and promising steps have been taken with the passage of Measure H, which will provide funding for homeless services county-wide, Prop HHH, which will provide capital to build new PSH in the City of LA, and the State's No Place Like Home program, which will also provide capital for new PSH projects county-wide.

Respectfully submitted,


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