

# Agenda Report

May 16, 2022

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Department of Housing

**SUBJECT: 2022 HOMELESS COUNT RESULTS AND THE CITY'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**BACKGROUND:**

The 2022 Pasadena Homeless Count was conducted on the night of Tuesday, February 22, with the "night" beginning at sunset on February 22 and ending at sunrise on February 23. While the count typically takes place annually during the last ten days in January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) granted a one-month postponement to the City and surrounding Continuum of Care in Southern California due to the omicron variant driving a surge in COVID-19 cases. The Homeless Count measures the prevalence of homelessness in the City on a single night by collecting information on people who are living in unsheltered locations and temporary shelter. This "snapshot in time" quantifies the size of the City's homeless population at a given point during the year, which fluctuates throughout the year. While the count does not reflect the total number of people who experience homelessness over the course of the year, the results are particularly useful for tracking trends over time and demographics. The results presented herein are only one data source of many that helps the City understand the magnitude and characteristics of the population of people experiencing homelessness in Pasadena.

The "unsheltered" count consists of a robust canvassing of the entire geography of the City. Community volunteers and professional outreach teams survey people sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks and vehicles, and other areas not meant for human habitation. The "sheltered" count uses client-level data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database used by homeless service providers to collect information on people who are staying in temporary shelter locations, including congregate emergency shelters, transitional housing, and motels. People who are living doubled-up with family or friends or who are couch surfing are not included in the count, as HUD considers these individuals to be at-risk of homelessness and not literally homeless. Results from the Homeless Count are used by federal, state, and local funding agencies to allocate resources to the City.

## HOMELESS COUNT RESULTS:

- **Homelessness continues to level off.** 512 people were experiencing homelessness in Pasadena on the night of the count, revealing a continued leveling off of the average number of people who are unhoused on a given night over the past three years. The impact of the pandemic remains to be seen despite this leveling off, as critical tenant protections were still in effect at the time of the count due to the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency. However, homelessness remains a regional and statewide crisis with unacceptably high numbers even though the number of people experiencing homelessness in Pasadena has not grown.
- **Housing Affordability and Availability is the root cause of homelessness.** In order to affect increased and lasting change, serious efforts must be made to confront and mitigate the systemic underlying root causes of homelessness. Structural forces such as high housing costs, low vacancy rates, and wages that cannot keep up with rising rents drive high rates of homelessness, not individual failings. While our community has invested more heavily than ever in the homelessness response system, it continues to bear the challenges and failures of other existing systems. The best way to help bring our neighbors home is to provide long-term, affordable housing as a building block for stabilization, recovery, and healing.
- **Racial and ethnic disparities remain.** Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of longstanding systemic racism and persistent inequity in the housing sector. People of color continue to be disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness across the country. In Pasadena, 32% of our unhoused residents identify as Black or African American despite only representing 8% of Pasadena's general population. Similarly, people identifying as Hispanic or Latino in Pasadena experience homelessness at disproportionate rates. In 2022, the Hispanic/Latino subpopulation comprised 44% of people experiencing homelessness compared to 37% in 2020, while the overall population of Pasadena is only 33%.
- **Our unhoused residents are our long-time neighbors.** The number of people who lived in Pasadena prior to falling into homelessness is trending upward. Two in three (66%) people who were unsheltered on the night of the count reported living in Pasadena prior to their housing loss. Further, three in four (75%) people surveyed indicated they had not slept in any city other than Pasadena in the last week. On average, our unsheltered neighbors lived in Pasadena for 18 years prior to losing their home.
- **First-time homelessness has declined.** Fewer people reported experiencing homelessness for the first time in 2022 (9%) compared to 2020 (19%), pointing to the successes of COVID-related tenant protections and financial assistance programs which kept people in their homes during the pandemic. As the local eviction moratorium sunsets, the Housing Department will administer new and

expanded eviction prevention resources to further prevent increases in homelessness.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Pasadena's unhoused residents, participant responses were used to analyze demographics and key characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in order to identify trends and inform strategic planning efforts.

- **Size and household composition.** Overall, the size of the City's homeless population on the night of the count (n=512) was essentially level to pre-pandemic numbers and has been holding steady as evidenced by Pasadena's three-year rolling average. Altogether, 280 people (55%) were counted by volunteers in unsheltered locations or at our daytime social service locations, and 232 people (45%) were staying in temporary shelter locations, including people living in transitional housing or those with a Pasadena-funded motel voucher. The large majority of people experiencing homelessness continue to be single individuals without children. Individuals represented approximately 95% of the total households experiencing homelessness on the night of the count while families with children represented 5% of all households.
- **Gender and age.** The majority (67%) of people who experience homelessness in Pasadena identify as male, while 33% identify as female and less than 1% identify as transgender or a gender other than singularly male or female. Except for the subpopulation of families with children, men continue to be overrepresented compared to women. People between the ages of 40 to 61 are the most likely to experience homelessness (46%), followed by young adults between the ages of 25-39 (24%) and seniors aged 62+ (15%). However, 34% of people reported experiencing homelessness for the first time as a young adult, followed closely by seniors (27%) and youth aged 18-24 (21%).
- **Race and ethnicity.** In Pasadena, people who identify as Black or African American continue to be overrepresented, comprising 32% of the total homeless population compared to 8% of the city's general population. White people are represented at similar rates among the homeless population and the general population (49%), while the proportion of people who are Hispanic or Latino is increasing among the homeless population. People who identify as Hispanic or Latino comprise just under half (44%) of people experiencing homelessness compared to 33% of the general population, a disparity that has crept upward since 2019 prior to the pandemic. The proportion of American Indian and Alaskan Natives has also increased slightly since 2020 (4% vs. 2%) despite representing only 0.4% of the city's population.

The full 2022 Homeless Count Report is available for public viewing on the Pasadena Partnership to End Homelessness website at [www.pasadenapartnership.org/homeless-count-reports](http://www.pasadenapartnership.org/homeless-count-reports).

## **PASADENA'S APPROACH:**

### **Commitment to Permanent Housing**

The Department of Housing has continued to invest in and prioritize permanent housing to ensure that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Currently the City supports nine different permanent supportive housing programs, including four that are site-based at specific apartment buildings and five others which follow a scattered-site model, providing rental assistance and supportive services to participants who lease market-rate apartments throughout the community. Additionally, two new permanent supportive housing projects are in the pipeline, including Heritage Square South which will provide 69 units for seniors aged 55 and older and The Salvation Army's HOPE Center which will provide 65 units for people exiting chronic homelessness, including 16 units for veterans. The City also launched the Mainstream Opportunity Vouchers Enhanced (MOVE) program in 2021, which will move up to 75 Pasadena-based households into permanent housing through the provision of Mainstream Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) paired with supportive services and financial assistance for move-in costs. The City was also awarded 109 Emergency Housing Vouchers, which are being issued to households experiencing homelessness who are referred through the Coordinated Entry System.

### **Homelessness Prevention**

The economic consequences of COVID-19 have threatened the housing stability of a subset of Pasadenans. The full extent of the pandemic's impacts have also not been fully realized due to the existing federal, state, and local eviction moratoria that were put in place to prohibit residential landlords from pursuing eviction for nonpayment of rent due to COVID-19-related financial distress. After the lifting of the emergency order, tenants will be expected to pay back deferred rent within six months and a potential wave of evictions may follow. The City has contracted with the Housing Rights Center to provide legal education, information, advice, and limited scope legal services specifically for Pasadena residents in order to prevent or defend eviction cases. Further, the City continues to fund Friends In Deed to provide case management and financial assistance to prevent eviction and support rent sustainability long-term. The Department will also administer an eviction prevention program which will pair payment of arrears with up to two years of rental assistance for up to fifty low-income households.

### **Emergency Shelter**

Since 2018, the City has received an influx of new, one-time grant funds that have supported the expansion of motel-based shelter resources. With this infusion of new funding and subsequent expansion of emergency shelter, more of our unhoused residents have been able to sleep inside and take refuge from the streets while moving forward on their path to permanent housing. Throughout the pandemic, motel-based non-congregate shelter provided vulnerable people experiencing homelessness a safe and protective environment to socially distance in order to reduce the spread of the virus and ensured continued access to care, including COVID-19 testing and vaccines.

### **Services and Engagement**

The Department of Housing, with increased local and state funding, has expanded investments in critical services to address homelessness in our city. This funding has enabled the creation of street outreach teams to ensure people are getting connected to services and resources within the community and housing location programs to assist with locating apartments and building relationships with local landlords in order to house people faster.

### **LOOKING AHEAD:**

#### **Housing is the Solution**

In 2021, 277 people (214 households) experiencing homelessness in Pasadena were permanently housed through programs operated in Pasadena and other parts of the County. While homelessness is a complex humanitarian crisis with many contributing factors, there is one indisputable solution we know ends a person's homelessness: A home. Despite being in a pandemic for over two years, people are successfully getting connected to the services they need and continue to permanently exit homelessness. Understanding the critical role supportive and affordable housing play in solving the homelessness crisis, in addition to low-barrier supportive services, is the key to bringing our unhoused neighbors inside. Moreover, providing people with a safe, stable, permanent home in which to live is a proven solution to ending homelessness.

### **Importance of a Balanced System**

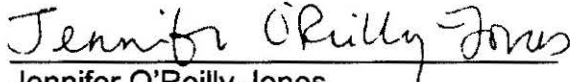
An optimal homeless services system requires the right balance between emergency shelter and permanent housing resources to facilitate the timely movement of people through a housing crisis and out of homelessness. Meeting the shelter needs of people experiencing homelessness hinges on the continued focus of the creation of permanent housing opportunities as much as it does on the expansion of shelter resources. Increasing permanent housing resources increases the utilization of existing shelter resources as people move through the system more rapidly. While increasing permanent housing remains a top priority, the City is committed to creating and funding a continuum of programs that meet the immediate and long-term needs of our unhoused residents.

Respectfully submitted,



*for* WILLIAM K. HUANG  
Director of Housing

Reviewed by:



Jennifer O'Reilly-Jones  
Program Coordinator III

Approved by:



CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager