

# Agenda Report

June 12, 2023

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Department of Housing  
**SUBJECT: 2023 HOMELESS COUNT RESULTS AND THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN PASADENA**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**BACKGROUND:**

The 2023 Pasadena Homeless Count was conducted on the night of Tuesday, January 24, 2023, with the “night” beginning at sunset on January 24 and ending on January 25. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires Continuums of Care to conduct the Point-in-Time Homeless Count during the last ten days in January. The City of Pasadena, as the administrative entity for the Pasadena Continuum of Care, is one of three cities designated as a CoC in California that conducts its own count and reports the results to HUD. The Homeless Count and the results presented herein are one of the many data sources used to measure the prevalence of homelessness in the City. While the City’s homeless population fluctuates throughout the year, the count acts as a “snapshot in time” to collect information from people who are living in unsheltered locations (the “unsheltered count”) and temporary shelter (the “sheltered count”) to quantify the size of the City’s homeless population on any given night and collect detailed information about this population’s characteristics and experiences. While the count does not reflect the total number of people who experience homelessness throughout the year, the results are particularly useful for tracking trends over time, learning about the demographics of our homeless population, and as a tool to identify disparities.

The unsheltered count consists of a robust canvassing of the entire geography of the City. Community volunteers and professional outreach teams count and survey people sleeping on the street, in parks and vehicles, and other areas not meant for human habitation. This year, in collaboration with the Public Health Department, the PORT team and Huntington Hospital, two vaccine strike teams were deployed during the unsheltered count and provided COVID and flu vaccines as well as anti-overdose naloxone kits to those who wanted them.

The sheltered count is derived from client-level data entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database by homeless service providers 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 for the purposes of the count. Results from the Homeless Count contribute to regional, state and national data on homelessness and are used by public funders to allocate resources to the City.

#### **HOMELESS COUNT RESULTS:**

- **Homelessness increased by 9%.** On the night of the count, 556 people were experiencing homelessness in Pasadena, marking a 9% increase over 2022. The City's three-year rolling average is 532 people, a less than 1% increase over last year's rolling average (527 people).
- **More people are sheltered despite shelter inventory loss incurred during the pandemic.** There was a 9% increase in the number of people staying in emergency shelter compared to 2022 (211 vs. 192). The fact that more people are staying in shelter despite reductions in congregate shelter availability throughout the pandemic is particularly encouraging given the City's significant investments in motel vouchers as an emergency shelter resource.
- **Unsheltered homelessness is increasingly visible.** There was an 8% increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Additionally, one in four (26%) of all unhoused people were sleeping on the street or sidewalk, representing an 18% increase from 2022 (142 vs. 120).
- **Subpopulations with the greatest growth.** Compared to 2022, the share of the total unhoused population increased for the following five subpopulations: people experiencing first-time homelessness (14% vs. 9%), seniors age 62+ (18% vs. 14%), veterans (11% vs. 7%), people identifying as LGBTQ+ (10% vs. 7%), and transitional age youth (TAY) ages 18-24 (7% vs. 5%).

#### **ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS:**

- **People experiencing homelessness are long-time Pasadenans.** Over half (56%) of unsheltered people surveyed were last housed in Pasadena and were residents for an average of 21 years before losing their housing. Further, 70% of people indicated they had not slept in any city other than Pasadena in the last week, and nine in ten people (89%) were residents of LA County for an average of 18 years before losing housing.
- **People experiencing chronic homelessness continue to make up over half of the population.** Fifty-four percent (54%) of people experiencing homelessness are chronically homeless, meaning they have been homeless for at least one year and have a disabling condition. Compared to the total

unhoused population, people who are chronically homeless are more likely to be individuals (96% vs. 88%), be seniors (18% vs. 15%), have a history of foster care involvement (21% vs. 15%), and/or identify as LGBTQ+ (15% vs. 10%).

- **Racial and ethnic disparities remain.** Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of longstanding systemic racism and persistent inequity in the housing sector. Thirty percent (30%) of our unhoused residents identify as Black or African American; however, only 8% of Pasadena's general population is Black. While this disparity holds among almost every subpopulation, Black seniors and veterans have some of the greatest disparities, with Black people comprising 41% of both groups. In addition, disparities are more pronounced among the TAY population, with Black youth comprising 39% of TAY experiencing homelessness.

While the share of unhoused people who are Hispanic or Latino returned to pre-pandemic rates, they are still slightly overrepresented in the homeless population compared to the City's overall population (38% vs. 36%). These disparities are more pronounced among families (70%) and people who are experiencing homelessness for the first time (44%).

- **Rise in first-time homelessness.** In 2023 there was an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time compared to 2022 (83 vs. 49). However, despite this rise, the share of individuals experiencing first-time homelessness has not yet returned to the pre-pandemic rate of 19%, with 14% being recorded in 2023 (compared to 9% in 2022). Certain subpopulations are more likely to experience homelessness for the first time compared to the general homeless population including people who are Hispanic or Latino (44% vs. 38%), people fleeing domestic violence (36% vs. 13%), and veterans (11% vs. 6%).
- **Seniors are the fastest growing group.** The number of unhoused seniors ages 62+ grew by 31% compared to 2022 (98 vs. 75). Unhoused seniors are more likely to report one or more disabilities compared to the general homeless population (85% vs. 76%) and are more likely to have chronic health conditions (56% vs. 33%) and/or a physical disability (46% vs. 20%). Further, compared to the total unhoused population, seniors are also more likely to be chronically homeless (64% vs. 56%) and/or veterans (11% vs. 6%).

The 2023 Homeless Count results are available for public viewing on the Pasadena Homeless Count website at [www.pasadenahomelesscount.org](http://www.pasadenahomelesscount.org).

## STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN PASADENA:

While our system is housing more people than ever, increasing inflows mean that new opportunities to grow our emergency shelter and permanent housing inventory are needed to see meaningful reductions in homelessness.

### **Providing Permanent Homes to our Most Vulnerable Neighbors**

In 2022, 310 people who experienced homelessness in Pasadena were permanently housed through programs operated in Pasadena (n=249) and other parts of Los Angeles County (n=61). This represents a 48% growth in people permanently housed by Pasadena programs since 2019, largely attributable to new long-term, federally funded housing vouchers.

### **Root Causes of the Homelessness Crisis**

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 root causes of homelessness stem from structural and systemic factors, many of which disproportionately impact communities of color. The shortage of affordable housing, housing costs rising faster than wages, and the lasting impact of decades-old discriminatory housing policies all act as drivers of homelessness. Historic federal and state budget cuts to social safety net programming and affordable housing funding, coupled with inadequate and hard-to-access systems of care, have significantly exacerbated the crisis.

Although mental health disorders, substance misuse, domestic violence, and trauma are commonly cited as reasons for an individual's homelessness, these attributes and experiences are not causes of homelessness on their own. While they are threats to housing stability, it is the surrounding environment of structural and systemic failures which ultimately leads to housing loss on an individual and large scale. In a society free of these root causes of the homelessness crisis, one would be much more likely to sustain threats to housing stability without ultimately losing their home. Underlying vulnerabilities matter, and when housing is scarce these barriers to housing stability are magnified.

### **Impacts of Structural Racism Reflected in the Private Housing Market**

In addition to historical factors, discrimination in the private housing market exacerbates the disproportionate rate of homelessness among Black people. Of the 310 people in Pasadena who found permanent housing in 2022, 38% were Black (v. 30% of their overall share). However, despite this positive trend in equitable exits from homelessness, a closer look reveals evidence of the housing discrimination that Black people continue to face. Among rapid-rehousing program participants, Black participants leased up in the private housing market at significantly lower rates compared to other program participants (25% vs. 54%), highlighting the ongoing challenges members of Pasadena's Black community face when looking for housing.

### **Emergency Shelter Inventory**

Over the last five years, the City has received an influx of one-time grant funds that have supported the expansion of motel-based shelter resources. With this infusion of new funding and increase in emergency shelter capacity in the midst of a global pandemic, more of the City's unhoused residents have been able to sleep inside and take refuge from the streets. However, many of these one-time funds are coming to an end, meaning that a significant reduction in shelter bed availability is expected unless additional funding is identified.

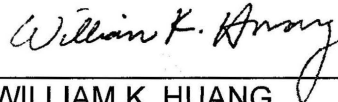
**What it Means to End Homelessness**

An end to homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again. Ending homelessness will be achieved when every community has a systematic response in place that ensures that homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

Making homelessness rare involves implementing policies, programs, and system coordination aimed at preventing housing loss and diverting people from the homelessness services system whenever possible. Ensuring that homelessness is brief requires collaborating with various stakeholders and system partners to quickly place people in permanent housing using a Housing First approach (no preconditions or barriers to entry) with immediate access to low-barrier shelter while housing is secured. Finally, ensuring that homelessness is a non-recurring experience entails providing ongoing rental assistance to households who need it and tailoring supportive services to ensure housing stability.

Further reductions in homelessness will require ongoing, long-term investments in permanent housing. While The Salvation Army HOPE Center and Heritage Square South will provide critical permanent housing to over 130 people exiting homelessness over the next year, it is crucial that the City continue to pursue additional permanent housing solutions while simultaneously taking measures to reduce inflows.

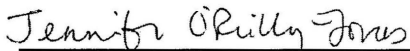
Respectfully submitted,



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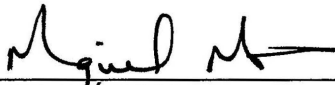
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