

SONJA K. BERNDT
Pasadena, CA

RECEIVED
2025 MAY 19 PM 1:22
CITY CLERK
CITY OF PASADENA

May 19, 2025

Mayor Victor Gordo
Members of the Pasadena City Council
Pasadena, CA
(By Email to each member)
Also: correspondence@cityofpasadena.net

Re: City Council Meeting May 19, 2025 Agenda #16: Approval of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan (2025-2029), the Annual Action Plan (2025) and Related Funding Applications for the Community Development Block Grant, Home Investment Partnership Act, and Emergency Solutions Grant Programs

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council:

I am a long-time resident of Pasadena and a longtime advocate for the unsheltered residents of our city. This letter is to express my deep concern about the proposed Five-Year Consolidated Plan (2025-2029). In short, it is wholly inadequate to address the unsheltered homelessness crisis in our city and the plans to solve that crisis are deficient. Below I comment on several portions of that Plan.

The Five-Year Consolidated Plan (2025-2029)

Page 6. “The mission of the Housing Department is to: Provide affordable housing and community development and on-the-job training opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons to enhance and strengthen our community.”

- Comment: According to the Housing Department’s mission statement, its core values include “decent, safe, affordable housing as an equal right for all Pasadena residents.” The Consolidated Plan provides no meaningful housing for the hundreds of unsheltered residents living on Pasadena’s streets, despite the fact that Department staff has previously acknowledged that life on the streets is “very unsafe.” For these persons, the Consolidated Plan provides some services but no interim housing to protect them and provide them with

basic necessities like a toilet. The Consolidated Plan only offers them shelter in bad weather (only in the Winter) and motel vouchers for brief stays for some.

On page 125, the Department states the following anti-poverty strategy: “Rather than focusing solely on services for individuals in poverty, the City’s approach emphasizes removing systemic barriers, building income stability, and creating pathways to economic mobility.” But for the hundreds of unsheltered residents in Pasadena, the barrier to any kind of stability is HOUSING, both interim and permanent housing. The Consolidated Plan does not provide any meaningful housing for our unsheltered residents.

Page 24. Needs Assessment: Homelessness -- “Based on the 2024 Point-in-Time Count, 556 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in Pasadena. . . Approximately 321 persons (58%) were unsheltered on the night of the count, reflecting the high need of housing assistance among a particularly vulnerable population.” (*See also* discussion at p. 45.)

- Comment. The Point-in-Time Count for 2022 showed a total of 512, with 281 unsheltered. So, the 2024 numbers reveal a substantial increase. Further, the number of unsheltered persons is likely higher. On the night of the count, the City opens its Bad Weather Shelter even if the weather-related criteria are not present. Those who use that shelter on the night of the Count are counted as SHELTERED even if that is their ONLY night of shelter for the ENTIRE YEAR. On the night of the 2024 Point-in-Time Count, the criteria for opening the Bad Weather shelter were not met, but it was opened, nonetheless. Further, the 2024 annual count of homeless persons in Pasadena was 1,097.

Page 42. “The City of Pasadena Housing Department operates a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. Due to limited funding, the wait list for voucher applicants includes 22,821 households as of February 2025. Applicants can expect to be on the wait list for many years, due to limited number of available vouchers.”

- Comment. This statement demonstrates the critical need for developing interim housing and permanent housing for our unhoused residents. And since it takes years to build permanent housing, the City must invest in sufficient interim housing to protect these vulnerable residents.

Pages 66-67. Market Analysis. Homeless Facilities and Services.

- Comment. The discussion of homeless facilities is misleading. The Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) mentioned does not provide any housing for the over 500 UNHOUSED persons in Pasadena. The “year-round, site-based emergency shelter for adults and another for families with minor children” does not provide housing for the hundreds of UNSHELTERED residents in Pasadena. The only shelter provided for our UNSHELTERED residents is 1) motel vouchers, which are available only for a limited number of unsheltered persons and only for brief stays, and 2) the Bad Weather Shelter which is only open for a few months in Winter and only if certain weather-related criteria are met. The inclusion of Centennial Place as a permanent supportive housing project is also misleading because it has already been approved for rehabilitation and re-purposing for senior housing only. That site and its 142 units will no longer operate as a permanent supportive housing site for our unhoused residents in the future.

As for services for our homeless population, the description fails to discuss the urgent need for ON-SITE case management and medical/mental health services for our unsheltered residents. Without such onsite services it is very difficult, if not impossible, for an unsheltered person with serious medical or mental health issues to receive adequate treatment.

Page 72. Limited Access to Funding or Incentives. “Like many California jurisdictions, Pasadena depends on state and federal programs to finance affordable housing. The elimination of redevelopment funding and reductions in block grant allocations have reduced the City's ability to support affordable housing projects.” (*See also* discussions at p. 98 and p. 110 “[t]he City will be as creative as possible to find other sources of funding.”)

- Comment. Here the Department acknowledges that the likely reduction in federal funding going forward will impact the City’s ability to support affordable housing projects. Yet the proposed FY2026 Housing Department budget notes 76% of its appropriations as coming from the federal government. Only 2.4 % of its budget is proposed to be appropriations from the City’s General Fund. As discussed in Finance Director Matt Hawkesworth’s PowerPoint presentation on May 5, 2025, the City has over \$10 million in

additional revenues from FY2025. But the list of recommended expenditures of this revenue does not include any new housing for our unhoused. Likewise, such housing could be funded with the City's \$16.184 million Operating Reserve or its \$48.552 million Emergency Reserve.

Page 102. Table 51 - Five-Year Priority Needs.

- Comment. Homelessness is listed as the #2 priority. But the goals listed as associated with this priority relate to services only – no housing. This literally leaves hundreds of our residents out in the cold.

Pages 106-108. Strategic Plan – Anticipated Resources. “For Program Year 2025 (PY25), the City expects level funding consistent with PY24 allocations. However, beginning in Program Year 2026 (PY26), the City anticipates reductions in federal funding, similar in scale to the cuts experienced during the Great Recession. . . .To prepare for this possibility, the City has developed conservative five-year projections that reflect a phased decrease in funding beginning in PY26. In response, the City will prioritize leveraging other local, state, and private resources, aligning federal funds with high impact strategies, and ensuring that programs remain cost-effective and responsive to community needs.”

- Comment. As is evident from Table 54, the only funds specifically anticipated for housing the unhoused residents in this City are ESG funds in the amount of \$189,807 as the annual allotment, plus \$716,828 in “prior year resources.” First, unless those “prior year resources” were very recently received, an obvious question is why those funds were not expended in the prior year. Second, the small federal allocation proposed for our unsheltered is wholly inadequate to address their housing needs.

Also, the “prior year resources” in the HOME category need to be explained. How long have these resources been unused and what is the specific plan for promptly using those funds?

Page 113. Strategic Plan, gaps in the service delivery system for unhoused persons. “The City of Pasadena’s service delivery system for special needs populations and persons experiencing homelessness boasts a robust and

coordinated network of service providers for varied populations. Between 2022 and 2023 the City saw a 9% decline in annual homelessness. In 2024, 410 people experiencing homelessness in Pasadena were permanently housed, a 32% increase over 2023 (310 people). However, there are still notable gaps in the service delivery system including insufficient interim and permanent housing, particularly affordable housing. Mental health services are difficult to access, and although homeless services are well coordinated, the general public often does not know what services are available or how to access them.”

- Comment. Services for our hundreds of unsheltered residents are woefully inadequate. These residents are scattered throughout the city and sometimes it is even hard to find them because they may relocate often. Expecting someone with serious medical or mental health conditions to receive adequate care on the street is ludicrous. Further, a case worker can have numerous unhoused clients for whom they are responsible. Unsheltered persons sometimes complain they have difficulty contacting their caseworkers. Providing on-site services in interim housing facilities is sorely needed in our City.

Page 113. “In 2024, the Pasadena Continuum of Care finalized its updated Homelessness Plan, which is organized into five action areas each with specific quantitative goals. Strategies to achieve each goal are outlined within. City staff, on behalf of the Continuum of Care, track and report on progress toward these goals annually. The City aims to achieve a 50% reduction in annual homeless by the end of 2028, increase the availability of shelter beds so that 80% of the homeless population can access a bed on any given night, and reduce inflows into homelessness by 15%.”

- Comment. The goal needs to be functional zero, not a 50% reduction. Our unsheltered residents are among our most vulnerable residents and they are languishing on the streets of our City. Now, after the Supreme Court’s *Grants Pass* decision, police officers in our City can cite or arrest individuals simply for sleeping on public property, even though, as is the case in this City, there are few if any shelter beds available for them. Further, with the scant funds the City is using to provide shelter for our unsheltered, the stated goals are not likely to be achieved.

Pages 114-115. Table 57 – Five-Year Goal Summary: Homeless Person Overnight Shelter: 195 Persons Assisted.

- Comment. This is far too few over a five-year period and the shelter to be provided is vague. In that small number there could be many persons who only get a minimal stay with a motel voucher. There is no mention of meaningful interim housing for our unsheltered residents, which is desperately needed in our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this letter.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sonja K. Berndt, Esq. (retired)