



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 12, 2022

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Housing and Human Services Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Update On Efforts To Address Homelessness And Its Related Impacts In The City Of Santa Barbara

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive an update on the City's and partnering agencies' actions to address homelessness.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

With more than 580,000 estimated persons experiencing homelessness, America faces a national crisis—and Santa Barbara is no exception. Locally, preliminary data shows a slight decrease in the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Barbara; however, that number still exceeds the number of available shelters and housing options, leaving hundreds living on the streets.

The City has made significant investments to mitigate the community impacts of homelessness and secure housing for homeless residents. This report provides an update to Council on homelessness outreach and housing services provided by City staff as well as contracted partners Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation (SB ACT), the Santa Barbara City Homelessness Collaborative, and City Net.

DISCUSSION:

Homelessness is a rapidly expanding national crisis fueled by rising housing costs, mental illness, substance use disorders, disabilities, low income, and domestic violence. The 2020 Point-in-Time Count, a nationwide snapshot count of persons experiencing homelessness, found more than 580,000 people living without a home either on the streets or at shelters, a number that has increased each year since 2017. At 28 percent, California has the largest percentage of the nation's homeless population. More notably, California has more than half of the unsheltered population in the country, i.e., people

who are living in places not intended for human habitation and are more vulnerable to health problems, violence and trauma, and longer periods of homelessness.

In the city of Santa Barbara, the number of persons experiencing homelessness has averaged around 927. Preliminary results of the 2022 Point-in-Time Count identified 822¹ homeless individuals living in Santa Barbara. Although this represents a 10 percent decrease since the last count, this total still represents 41 percent of the homeless population countywide. According to the County of Santa Barbara 2020–2021 HUD performance data, 3,347 persons experiencing homelessness were served countywide during this period, while the countywide Point-in-Time count estimates 1,962 persons. The number of homeless individuals in the City far outpaces the number of existing shelter beds, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing units available.²

For many years, the City has dedicated substantial resources in the form of staff time and funding to nonprofit social service agencies to reduce homelessness. In the past, many of the city's cross-departmental efforts took place independently of one another. More recently, the City has dedicated staff and funding to new initiatives, which has enabled the various groups throughout the city organization and community partners to better collaborate and enhance one another's efforts. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on current collaborative efforts to address homelessness.

City Roles and Initiatives

Community Development Department – The Department provides funding and oversees various partner agencies that help persons experiencing homelessness, such as People Assisting The Homeless (PATH), which provides temporary shelter; New Beginnings, which facilitates safe parking for people living in their vehicles; City Net, which provides street outreach services; and SB ACT, which coordinates the community-wide response to homelessness. Most recently, the Department has reassigned the Senior Community Development Programs Specialist to coordinate the City's internal and external efforts related to homelessness and to help recommend, promote, and coordinate implementation of the City's homelessness-related goals.

Encampment Response Program – The Environmental Services Division of the Sustainability and Resilience Department coordinates the City's Encampment Response team, which includes the Parks and Recreation Department, Streets and Creeks Divisions, City Attorney's Office, and the Police and Fire Departments. In 2019, Environmental Services staff implemented a web-based centralized system that allows residents, staff, and visitors to report encampments or to report an individual in need of non-urgent outreach. Staff access each report and coordinates the response of various

¹ Point-in-Time provides only a snapshot of the state of homelessness within the community on a single given date. Homeless Management Information System data shows the numbers could be higher.

² According to the Santa Barbara County Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness, the south coast needs 369 additional shelter beds, 537 Rapid Rehousing Slots, 602 Permanent Supportive housing units, and 270 long term subsidies to meet the need.

resources, including City Net outreach teams, Fire Inspectors, Police Officers, cleanup contractors, and Park Rangers. The Encampment Response Team has built strong working relationships with CalTrans and Union Pacific to effectively coordinate cleanups and address encampment related issues within the city limits. The Encampment Response Team also coordinates with City Net to ensure outreach services and proper shelter are offered prior to an encampment cleanup. City staff ensures that 72-hour advance notice is posted at that campsite of the impending cleanup. City Staff prioritize protecting encampment occupants' rights to their property and providing the opportunity to access services and voluntarily relocate before a cleanup begins. Staff also ensures that the City's abandoned property policy is followed, meaning only property where there is reasonable evidence that the owner intended to dispose of the property is disgarded. Moreover, disabled persons are provided additional time to gather their belongings as needed.

In calendar year 2021, the city received 584 reports related to encampments and 36 individual-in-need reports. Since the project launch in 2019, Environmental Services staff have processed 2,916 reports to date, cleaned 685 encampments removing more than 81.4 tons of waste from public spaces, and directed 320 City Net outreach contacts.

Santa Barbara Police Department Activities – The Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD) has undertaken a number of efforts to address the impacts of homelessness. Following is a description of efforts over the past year:

- Co-Response Officer – In January 2021, the SBPD added a Co-Response Officer position, who is trained in responding to and helping people in crisis, and is partnered with a licensed mental health clinician. Together, the team has responded to approximately 600 calls involving people in crisis, many involving persons experiencing homelessness, who often suffer from mental health issues and/or drug or alcohol addiction. The Co-Response Officer also works to reunite persons living on the street with family, and connects them with assistance programs or work opportunities. Over the last year, the SBPD has successfully reunified 63 people.
- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) – SBPD is in the process of getting all sworn officers trained in Crisis Intervention Training, which is a nationally recognized model for police interactions with persons experiencing mental or emotional distress or other mental health challenges. In the last year, the SBPD has trained approximately 65 Officers in the 10-hour CIT class.
- Street Crimes Unit (SCU) – The Street Crimes Unit plays a critical role in addressing complaints and crimes involving homeless residents. This team consists of five Bike Patrol Officers, the Co-Response Officer, and one Sergeant, and is responsible for enforcing municipal code violations, street-level drug use, drug dealing, and all camping complaints that come to the police department. SCU also works closely with City Net, SB ACT, New Beginnings Safe Parking, Parks and Recreation, Creeks, Environmental Services, and community groups.

- **Homeless Liaison** – SBPD has recently identified the SCU Sergeant as the department’s homeless liaison. This liaison will be responsible for ensuring proper handling of property during coordinated encampment cleanups and will update the department about current homeless resources to use when assisting homeless residents.

Parks and Recreation Rangers – In the past year, the department has been able to fully staff the Park Ranger program with four rangers operating seven days a week, throughout the day. The Park Rangers spend a large portion of their time addressing homelessness-related issues in parks. As a result of daily patrols, rangers are able to build one-on-one relationships and become aware of the services individuals are receiving. Rangers are trained to connect with City Net and County service providers when individuals need help and can coordinate with police if needed.

Library Activities – Similarly, the Library Department has undertaken a number of efforts to address the impacts of homelessness. Workforce development services are provided at the Central and Eastside libraries to teach job search techniques, résumé review and development, interview strategies, technology skills, and other job skills learning. As many as 50 percent of clients of this program are homeless or at risk of losing housing. Additionally, through a Community Connections grant, Library staff and volunteers receive training in community resources, enabling them to refer people in need of social services to the appropriate resources. Council approved a contract with Family Service Agency to hire a full-time social worker to engage homeless residents who frequent the Library, though the position has not been successfully filled.

Downtown Ambassadors – A continuous presence and valuable resource since 2017, the Downtown Ambassadors operate 9 a.m.–6 p.m. daily along State Street, from Cabrillo Boulevard to Sola Street. They have established relationships with service providers, area businesses, and members of the public, including people experiencing homelessness in the area, and have gained an intimate understanding of the situation on the ground. The Ambassadors participate in SB ACT work groups and Coordinated Outreach Team meetings (discussed later in this report), and are a vital conduit of information to service providers.

Partner Agencies

SB ACT – Since Fiscal Year 2020, the City has contracted with the Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation (SB ACT) to assist the City in developing a unified, strategic response to homelessness. At the core of SB ACT’s work has been the development of a Common Agenda/Strategic Plan to address homelessness to be achieved by the end of 2023. Guided by a steering committee of community stakeholders (which includes Council members, the Library director, the Interim Assistant City Administrator, and Community Development staff), the plan identifies four main goals: increase the number of affordable housing units by 20 percent; increase the rate of housing retention by five percent; reduce the percentage of people entering

homelessness from a housed situation by ten percent; and strengthen the coordination and availability of outreach and case management services by 25 percent. SB ACT will be discussing the first year's progress and sharing performance data from partner agencies in their presentation to Council. A written report is also included as Attachment 1. Other SB ACT initiatives are discussed in the next section of this report.

City Net – Since 2019, the City has contracted with City Net to provide street outreach and case-management services to persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Barbara. Prior to establishing a partnership with City Net, street outreach was sporadic and done by volunteers. Having dedicated outreach workers operating on a citywide basis in collaboration with the City's network of service providers has been instrumental in increasing the number of street exits. City Net works closely with Cottage Hospital, Santa Barbara Police Department, SB ACT, and various service providers to coordinate outreach services, and is often the first line of response to our unhoused population. City Net will make a presentation on its work as part of this report.

City Net operates countywide and currently employs four outreach workers in the City. City Net's work is funded by money from the State of California's Permanent Local Housing Allocation Program, which the City receives annually, and the Homeless Emergency Aid Program, a one-time grant that expired in June 2021.

In early 2021, the city provided \$480,000 in Socio-Economic Mitigation Funds (SEMP) to City Net for a bridge housing program at local motels. This program allowed individuals who were better suited for non-congregate shelter, as opposed to congregate shelter with shared sleeping quarters, to be provided with ongoing shelter and case management support. The program initially expected to house 25 individuals until funds were depleted, however a total of 30 persons were provided with bridge housing.

Collaborative Efforts

Expanded Partnership with Santa Barbara County – The City has worked in conjunction with the County of Santa Barbara to address homelessness regionally. The city participates on the County-sponsored Elected Leaders Forum on Homelessness, whereby local elected representatives learn about concerns and demographic trends, discuss best practices in housing solutions, and prepare for future grant and funding opportunities on a regional level.

Recently, the City partnered with the County and other county cities to secure \$2.5 million in Encampment Resolution Program funds through the state. Staff from Environmental Services and Community Development are working with the County to establish a memorandum of understanding for implementation of the collaborative program.

Additionally, Community Development staff and Downtown Ambassadors have started attending South County Coordinated Outreach Team meetings led by County staff to

more accurately assess the day-to-day situation on the streets and more effectively coordinate resources.

Another collaborative effort is the partnership with Dignity Moves, a nonprofit organization that provides interim housing solutions. Dignity Moves and the County are working to create a transitional housing project at the Juror Parking Lot located on the 1000 block of Garden Street. This project will place 33 temporary, small, portable housing units and related facilities to provide the unhoused population with shelter and supportive services. The project is expected to be operational in the coming months. The County has committed to targeting unhoused residents with an established history in downtown Santa Barbara as priority recipients of housing. Outreach and inclusion in the Coordinated Entry System is already underway. The initial term of the project is for three years, with a goal of serving at least 66 individuals.³

SB ACT Regional Action Plans and Neighborhood Navigation Centers – SB ACT has been leading weekly working groups of housing agencies, service providers, and individuals with lived experience to increase coordination and collaboration. Staff from the Rental Housing Mediation Program, Library, and Environmental Services among other City operations participate in these work groups.

In addition, SB ACT has convened regular neighborhood-centered group meetings known as Regional Action Plans (RAPs) that bring together area stakeholders to discuss issues of concern, inform the public about efforts to address homelessness, and develop strategies to reduce the impacts of homelessness. There currently are four RAPs for the State Street (downtown) area, Eastside neighborhood, Upper State Street area, and at the Waterfront. Meetings are attended by residents, business leaders, and service providers. City staff from the Encampment Response Team, Police and Fire, Library, and Community Development actively participate in the meetings and address issues of concern among the community.

In 2021, SB ACT formalized and expanded the Neighborhood Navigation Center (NNC) model in which service providers come together in a “one-stop-shop” location. Services include case management, food distribution, medical and veterinary care, sanitation services, and more provided by many nonprofit organizations. The Library is one of the service providers at the Neighborhood Navigation Centers. Utilizing the Library on the Go outreach van, homeless individuals are provided with computer and internet access; phone charging and printing stations; workforce development and/or literacy program intakes; assistance obtaining vital documents or applying for government benefits (i.e., MediCal, CalFresh, lifeline phones, low-cost internet, etc.); and Welcome Cards, a library

³ As a result of the Dignity Moves project, a portion of the County-owned parking lot will not be usable for County and Superior Court employees. To partner with the County on this needed project, the City offered to provide up to 46 parking permits, valued at \$294,400, for use in the City’s Parking Lot 6 (Granada Garage) for the duration of the project.

card for persons without a verifiable permanent address.⁴ SB ACT staff continues to engage new partnerships to become part of the collaborative including faith groups and meal providers at parks.

Major Coordinated Effort – Rose Garden Inn

The City's investment in forging these partnerships facilitated a strategic and coordinated response following the May 2021 Loma Fire. In early June, Council voted to declare a State of Emergency due to human encampments in fire-prone areas. As part of this declaration, Council contracted with City Net to master-lease the Rose Garden Inn to temporarily house persons living in illegal encampments that were deemed at highest risk of fire by the Encampment Response Team. Some of the identified sites were located on CalTrans property, and due to existing collaboration agreements, the Encampment Resolution Team was able to respond quickly. As a result of previous coordination with City Net, the City was able to offer temporary housing at the Rose Garden Inn to persons displaced from the high risk encampments prior to cleanup. In turn, SB ACT created a Regional Action Plan for the area surrounding the temporary housing motel to address neighborhood concerns. The Police Department created an overtime detail consisting of two officers that proactively patrolled the surrounding neighborhood. City Net also conducted additional street outreach in the area to connect with individuals who were not part of the project and in need of assistance.

The Rose Garden Inn project operated from July 5, 2021, to January 31, 2022. In the nearly seven months of the project, the following was achieved:

- 63 persons were served – 43 men, 20 women
- 12 persons were placed into permanent housing or other safe locations
- 33 clients became document ready⁵
- 13 people were connected to mental health and substance abuse treatment

During their exit interviews, individuals housed during this period reported improvement in various factors, such as physical disabilities, mental health disorders, and chronic health conditions. Over the duration of the project, 20 clients were asked to leave for not following program rules.

At project's end, 27 persons returned to the streets. This was partially due to COVID outbreaks, which caused closures at local shelters leaving these individuals with no other options. A few elected not to go to any other shelter situation. City Net continues to case manage the former motel residents. Although the project was budgeted at \$3.23 million, actual expenditures through January 30 totaled \$2,310,552. Of this amount, \$122,552

⁴ NNCs operate Thursdays at Alameda Park and Tuesdays at the Carrillo Commuter Lot. A third NNC recently started operating on Wednesdays at the Rescue Mission to serve the Eastside.

⁵ Document-ready clients have obtained necessary documentation to secure housing, such as identification, social security card, etc., and have been added to housing waiting lists through the Housing Authority, or have access to other rapid-rehousing funds in the event a unit becomes available.

was paid with State Permanent Local Housing Allocation funds. Additionally, the City was able to secure \$542,517 in Emergency Services Grant funds from the County of Santa Barbara to reimburse a portion of the City's expenditures for hotel housing.

The Rose Garden Inn project should be noted for the successes made during such a brief period. As previously reported, persons living in encampments tend to be more resistant to going to a congregate shelter. Additionally, the process of making unsheltered persons document ready is typically a lengthy process due to the vulnerability of persons living on the street, where, as previously noted, they are more susceptible to health problems, violence and trauma, and longer periods of homelessness.

City Financial Support to Address Homelessness

Funds for services – The City of Santa Barbara has a long history of providing grants to nonprofit social service agencies serving City residents. In Fiscal Year 2021, the City granted approximately \$1.8 million to nonprofit homeless service providers for prevention, coordination, shelter, supportive services, and rental subsidies. Eighteen percent (\$345,766) came directly from the General Fund, and the remaining 82 percent (\$1,526,757) came from State and Federal funding, such as Homeless Emergency Aid Funding (HEAP), and Community Development Block Grant funding. Attachment 2 provides a Fiscal Year 2022 mid-year update of these providers and the type of assistance that they provide.

Costs to Respond to Homelessness in the City – In addition to supporting housing and services for people experiencing homelessness, in Fiscal Year 2021 the City expended \$5.6 million mitigating the effects on homelessness. A Fiscal Year 2022 mid-year update is included as Attachment 3.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a pervasive societal issue that cannot be solved solely by the City of Santa Barbara; however, the City is demonstrating leadership and initiative in ensuring collaboration among the various groups working to address this crisis. Staff will continue building on its current efforts to expand interdepartmental coordination and enhance communication with the community on its efforts to address homelessness. Other initiatives include working with shelter providers to expand utilization of shelters, and partnering with agencies to identify more options for housing across the spectrum—from interim to permanent housing, and prevention of homelessness. And as the State of California continues to make significant investments and propose new legislation to address homelessness, staff will track new legislation and pursue new funding opportunities made available by the State and Federal governments. As previously reported to Council, some of those funds include Project Homekey, HOME American Rescue Plan, and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention funds.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no budgetary impact associated with the recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SB ACT Report Update
2. City Grants to Social Service Agencies – Mid Year
3. Cost of City Services Related to Homelessness – Mid Year

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