



RESEARCH REPORT

# Final Report and Recommendations on Homelessness in Alameda County, California

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# Executive Summary

As affordable housing vanishes, many jurisdictions are facing increasing homelessness. Alameda County, California, saw a substantial increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness between 2015 and 2017, driven largely by an increase in the number of unsheltered people. Alameda County commissioned this report to provide insight into the state of homelessness in the county. It summarizes funding streams and programs, reviews best practices in counties with similar challenges, and provides recommendations on how Alameda could improve its response to homelessness.

Although Alameda County's homelessness rate is lower than other large urban West Coast counties, it has a large and growing unsheltered homelessness problem with limited shelter beds and a lack of affordable housing. Although Alameda County has implemented promising practices to better serve people experiencing homelessness, we find practices from other places that the County could explore and employ. Our two major recommendations are that the County have a more visible and active role in setting a vision and coordinating policies and resources to end homelessness and that the County dramatically increase the supply of supportive housing.

The County has recently taken steps to improve coordination on homelessness issues, but these efforts are not guided by a larger vision of the County's role in ending homelessness. In other communities that have made significant progress in addressing homelessness, there have been elected officials that have made the issue a priority, with staff who are empowered to make decisions about resources, policies, and priorities. In our recommendations section, we provide several options for how the County can create a similar structure in accordance with local needs. We also recommend that the County clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to city governments, EveryOne Home, and homeless service providers.

We recommend that the County pursue dedicated funding streams for rental subsidies and supportive services in supportive housing, either by allocating existing funding sources like general funds or by raising funds through a new tax. While pursuing this, the County should commit to using a greater portion of its A1 Bond funding to develop supportive and affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness.

# Glossary

**Continuum of Care, or CoC.** Regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**coordinated entry.** A process through which people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access resources in the homeless assistance system. It includes access points for all types of assistance, a standardized assessment process, and referrals to appropriate housing and community services. Coordinated entry is required by HUD of every CoC.

**deeply affordable housing.** Rental housing that is subsidized to be affordable to households earning 30 percent or less of the area median income.

**emergency shelter.** Crisis housing to provide temporary housing and safety with varying levels of services.

**Homeless Management Information System, or HMIS.** System used to collect and report data on housing and services provided to homeless, formerly housed, and at-risk individuals and families.

**Housing Resource Centers, or HRCs.** Hubs of the coordinated entry system. Their core functions include assessment, housing problem solving, housing navigation, mainstream system connections, and resource matching and referrals.

**outreach.** Services and engagement provided to people living on the streets, in encampments, in cars, or in other places not suitable for human habitation.

**permanent supportive housing.** Rental assistance and services with no time limits for formerly housed people with disabilities.

**rapid re-housing.** Time-limited rental assistance and case management to help people experiencing homelessness find private-market housing.

**transitional housing.** Housing that can provide housing services for up to two years; typically provides more services than emergency shelter.

# Final Report and Recommendations on Homelessness in Alameda County

This report summarizes the results from our five-month project providing consulting services to Alameda County on its response to homelessness. Alameda County, like many urban counties, has experienced a recent increase in homelessness (Applied Survey Research 2017b; EveryOne Home 2017). The county and its cities share many of the characteristics contributing to homelessness spikes in other places, such as rising rents and increasing shortfalls in affordable housing.<sup>1</sup> The county has also seen a sharp rise in unsheltered homeless people, many of them gathering in encampments.<sup>2</sup> The County and city governments have won federal and state grant dollars that fund homelessness programs and services, and the County recently passed the A1 Housing Bond, which will raise \$580 million for housing aid in the county, including \$425 million dedicated to “creating and preserving affordable housing for low-income and vulnerable populations” (Alameda County Community Development Agency 2016).

Alameda County contracted the Urban Institute to pursue a research project with the following goals:

- Analyze the funding streams that support homelessness programs across the county and develop a dashboard to help the County government track money spent and changes to homelessness outcomes
- Obtain feedback from city officials and local nonprofit partners to inform priorities and ongoing efforts to address homelessness
- Provide recommendations to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors on ways to better serve and house people experiencing homelessness, based on evidence-based practices and promising efforts under way in other jurisdictions

To accomplish these goals, our research team sought to answer the following questions:

- What do we know about homelessness in Alameda County?
  - » This section provides an overview of homelessness in Alameda County, including the recorded increase in homelessness that occurred between the 2015 and 2017 Point-in-Time (PIT) counts. The findings come from many sources, including data from city and

County agencies, publicly available federal data, data resources from the Urban Institute, and data shared from EveryOne Home, a nonprofit that helps organize homelessness efforts across the county, including acting as the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead entity.

- What do we know about homelessness services and assistance in Alameda County?
  - » The analyses in this section consider the specifics surrounding homelessness spending and service delivery. This section considers the supply and demand for assistance and tracks where the funds are spent by program type. The analyses also draw upon surveys and interviews from city agency staff and community-based organizations that work with people experiencing homelessness. The surveys provide local perspectives on trends in homelessness, programs and initiatives under way to address it, and recommendations for improving current efforts.
- What can be learned from how people experiencing homelessness are served in other jurisdictions that can inform and improve service delivery in Alameda County?
  - » What more could Alameda County do to address rising homelessness? To answer this question, we reviewed best practices in other communities. We focused on three counties within California and three counties from other western states. We restrict our direct comparisons to other counties in the West because of similarities in size, climate, supply and condition of housing stock, and state laws, regulations, and state-level funding mechanisms. Although Alameda County has a lower rate of homelessness than most of the comparison counties, these other localities offer important insights for better serving people experiencing homelessness. Our analysis provides context for why initiatives and promising practices from other localities may or may not work in Alameda County. We then provide our own recommendations for immediate and long-term actions Alameda County can take to address homelessness based on our review of best practices and our synthesis of findings from stakeholder interviews, document review, and survey responses.

## What Do We Know about Homelessness in Alameda County?

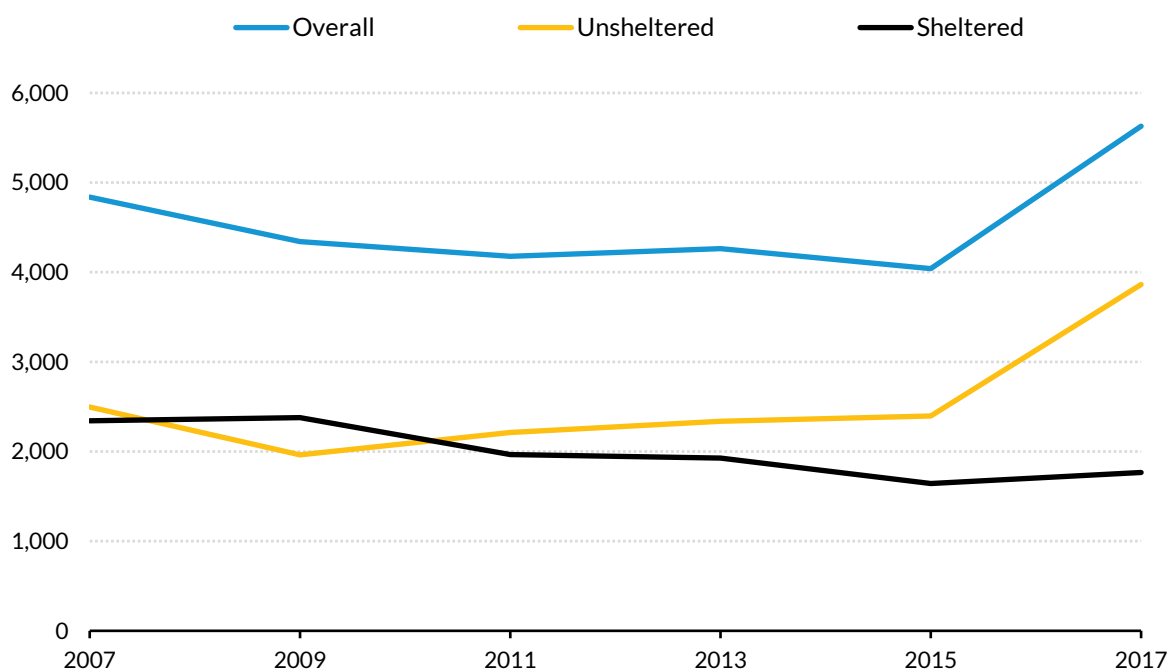
The primary data sources for measuring changes in homelessness trends throughout the country is the Point-in-Time count, a volunteer-driven enumeration of the number of people that meet the US



Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness on a single night in January. All communities are required to report to HUD an annual count of the number of sheltered homeless—those living in emergency shelter or transitional housing—and a biennial count of the number of unsheltered homeless. Between the 2015 and 2017 PIT counts, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County increased from 4,040 to 5,629, an increase of 39 percent (Applied Survey Research 2017a). The increase was almost entirely driven by larger numbers of unsheltered homeless. The number of people in shelters at the time of the count increased by 123 people, while the number of people outside of shelter increased by 1,466.

**FIGURE 1**

**Trends in Unsheltered and Sheltered Homelessness in Alameda County, 2007–17**



**Source:** Applied Survey Research, *Alameda County 2017 Homeless Census and Survey: Comprehensive Report* (Watsonville, CA: Applied Survey Research, 2017).

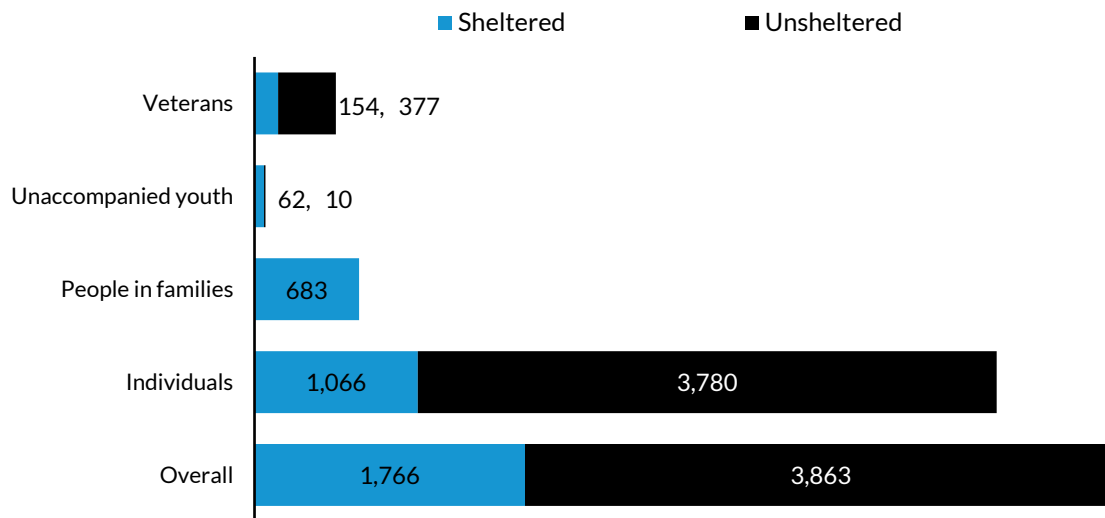
Figure 2 shows that individuals (i.e., single adults and people in households without children) constitute the largest share of people experiencing homelessness, representing 86 percent of the homeless population. Families (i.e., households with at least one adult and one child under age 18) represent 13 percent of those counted as homeless. More than three times as many individuals were unsheltered on the night of the PIT count than were in shelters. When unsheltered individuals were

asked why they did not use shelters, the five most common responses were that the shelters were full (42 percent), that they had too many germs or bugs (41 percent), that they were too crowded (29 percent), that they were unsafe (22 percent), and that they had too many rules (20 percent) (Applied Survey Research 2017a).

**FIGURE 2**

**Homelessness in Alameda County in 2017**

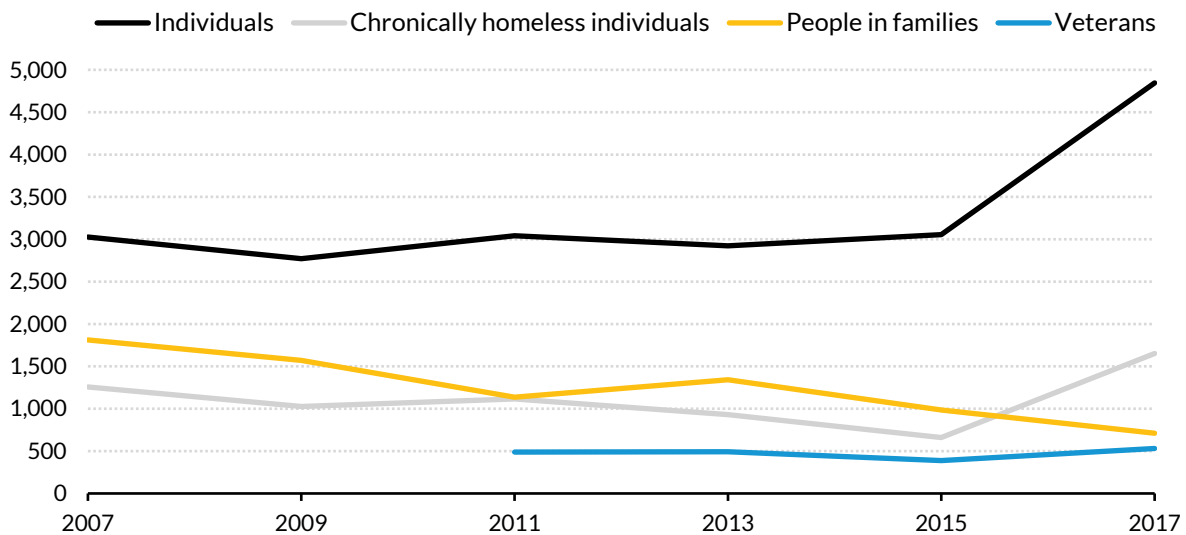
*Demographic breakdown of sheltered and unsheltered populations*



**Source:** Applied Survey Research, *Alameda County 2017 Homeless Census and Survey: Comprehensive Report* (Watsonville, CA: Applied Survey Research, 2017).

FIGURE 3

Trends in Homeless Subpopulations in Alameda County, 2007–17



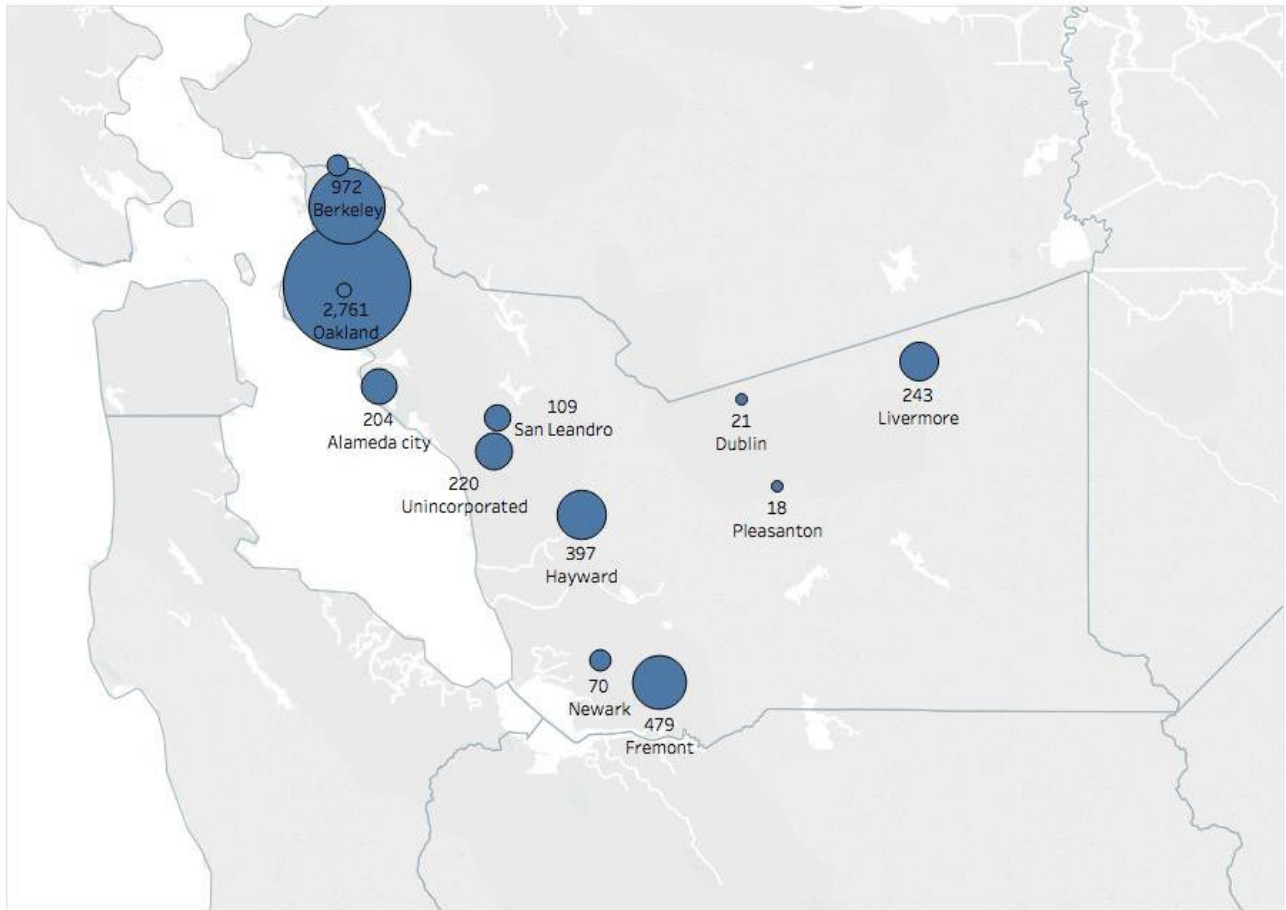
Source: Applied Survey Research, *Alameda County 2017 Homeless Census and Survey: Comprehensive Report* (Watsonville, CA: Applied Survey Research, 2017).

Figure 3 shows trends in homelessness in Alameda County between 2007 and 2017. The number of homeless people in families has steadily declined, while the number of homeless individuals has increased. The number of homeless individuals and the number of chronically homeless individuals (i.e., people with disabilities who have long histories of homelessness) increased sharply between 2015 and 2017.

The 2017 Homeless Census and Survey shows that 39 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the 2017 count were homeless for the first time, and nearly 60 percent had experienced homelessness for at least a year. Money issues were cited as the primary cause for homelessness (57 percent), while health issues were the second most cited reason (22 percent for mental and physical health concerns) (Applied Survey Research 2017b). Most experiencing homelessness had lived in the county before, with 66 percent having lived there for at least five years (Applied Survey Research 2017a). Figure 4 maps the locations of all people identified as homeless on the night of the 2017 PIT count across Alameda County. The map shows that although homelessness occurs across the county, is it highly concentrated in the major population centers of Oakland and Berkeley, which also have most of the shelter and transitional housing beds.

FIGURE 4

Homeless Prevalence by City in Alameda County



Source: Applied Survey Research, *Alameda County 2017 Homeless Census and Survey: Comprehensive Report* (Watsonville, CA: Applied Survey Research, 2017).

Notes: Map based on longitude (generated) and latitude (generated). Size shows sum of total population. The marks are labeled by sum of total population and city. Details are shown for zip code. The data are filtered on county, which keeps Alameda.

Table 1 compares the rates of homelessness per 10,000 people in the total population in Alameda County and other California counties and in the cities and unincorporated areas within Alameda County. The homelessness rate in Alameda County in 2017 was 34.2 (for every 10,000 residents). Alameda County's homelessness rate is higher than the state of California's (30.1), but its rate falls in the middle of the surrounding counties: San Francisco (86.1), Santa Clara (38.5), San Joaquin (21.1), San Mateo (16.4), and Contra Costa (14.2). Table 2 shows that, within the county, homelessness rates are highest in Berkeley (80.2) and Oakland (65.7). Several cities had low homelessness rates, with 5 or

fewer people experiencing homelessness per 10,000: Union City (5.3), Dublin (3.5), Pleasanton (2.2), and Piedmont (0). But homelessness may be less visible in these areas, with people more likely to be sleeping in cars or doubled-up with friends or family, rather than in shelters, on the streets, or in encampments, where they are more likely to be counted. Forty-nine percent of people experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT count were in Oakland, and another 17 percent were in Berkeley.

**TABLE 1**

**Alameda County Homelessness Rates Compared with Other California Counties**

<b>County</b>	<b>2017 homelessness rate (per 10,000 people)</b>
San Francisco	86.1
Los Angeles	57.0
Santa Clara	38.5
Alameda	34.2
San Diego	27.5

Sources: 2017 Point-in-Time counts, 2016 Census population estimates, and 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report.

**TABLE 2**

**Homelessness Rates and Proportion of Overall Homeless within Alameda County's Cities and Unincorporated Areas**

<b>City</b>	<b>2017 homelessness rate (per 10,000 people)</b>	<b>Share of Alameda County homeless population</b>
Berkeley	80.2	17.3%
Oakland	65.7	49.0%
Albany	33.5	1.2%
Livermore	27.3	4.3%
Alameda	25.9	3.6%
Hayward	25.0	7.1%
Emeryville	24.8	0.5%
Fremont	20.5	8.5%
Newark	15.3	1.2%
Unincorporated County	14.6	3.9%
San Leandro	12.0	1.9%
Union City	5.3	0.7%
Dublin	3.5	0.4%
Pleasanton	2.2	0.3%
Piedmont	0.0	0.0%

Sources: 2017 Point-in-Time counts, 2016 Census population estimates, and 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report.

## Drivers of the Increase in Homelessness

One explanation for the increase in homelessness is the change in methodology employed in the PIT count between 2015 and 2017 (EveryOne Home 2017). Before 2017, Alameda County surveyed people who were using nonshelter homelessness services and extrapolated from that sample to estimate the unsheltered population across the county. Beginning in 2017, the county employed a “street blitz” methodology, where people went out onto the streets to identify and survey people experiencing homelessness apart from shelter. The change in methodology more directly identified people who were unsheltered and is likely a contributing factor for the dramatic reported increase in homelessness between 2015 and 2017. The change in methodology counted people who might not have been counted in earlier iterations. Although we cannot determine how much of the increase was because of the methodological change, conversations with county officials and surveys from city officials and community-based organizations (CBOs) suggest that homelessness likely did increase between 2015 and 2017.

Another factor that contributed to the increase in homelessness was changes in the availability of affordable housing. The Urban Institute’s Affordability Gap Map tool shows that between 2000 and 2014, the amount of affordable housing did not keep pace with the demand.<sup>3</sup> In 2000, Alameda County had 46 units for affordable housing (both HUD-assisted units and private-market units without HUD assistance) for every 100 extremely low-income renters looking for housing. Though the number of available affordable units increased from 24,763 to 28,213 by 2014, the number of renters looking for those units increased even more. By 2014, only 40 units of affordable housing were available for every 100 extremely low-income households looking for a place to stay.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition Out of Reach tool finds that workers in Alameda County earning the minimum wage would have to work 159 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent prices without assistance.<sup>4</sup> A week contains 168 hours. With these increases in rent, many families would struggle and likely have struggled to stay in their apartments, especially without assistance. Even with assistance, finding a place willing to take a voucher in a hot housing market is difficult, as many landlords can find tenants willing to pay the market rate or more than the market rate.

# What Do We Know about Homelessness Services and Assistance in Alameda County?

In this section, we provide an overview of the major funding sources and program types available for addressing homelessness and a trend analysis of the performance of major programs.

## Summary of Homelessness Programs and Funding Sources

Table 3 shows the availability of beds from different program types available to people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County from 2007 to 2017. The data show a shift in Alameda's homelessness system away from temporary housing (emergency shelter and transitional housing), which decreased from 2,474 beds to 1,618 beds, toward permanent housing, which increased from 2,011 beds to 3,200 beds. Permanent supportive housing programs, which provide long-term rental assistance with supportive services, account for most beds in the system. Rapid re-housing, a program where individuals and families receive short-term assistance to find their own apartment or home, is the fastest-growing component of the homelessness system but still makes up a small proportion of overall beds. Alameda County has 754 transitional housing beds, less than half the 1,534 beds it had in 2007. The number of emergency shelter beds has decreased modestly since 2007, from 940 to 864. Alameda County has nearly 10 unsheltered individuals (3,780) for every 1 emergency shelter bed available for homeless individuals (450).

TABLE 3

## Inventory of Beds by Program Type in Alameda County, 2007–17

	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>Temporary housing</b>	<b>2,474</b>	<b>2,368</b>	<b>2,214</b>	<b>2,064</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>1,618</b>
<i>Emergency shelter</i>	940	867	890	856	844	864
Family beds	413	394	447	437	408	414
Individual beds	527	473	443	419	436	450
<i>Transitional housing</i>	<b>1,534</b>	<b>1,501</b>	<b>1,324</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>754</b>
Family beds	899	909	852	836	469	327
Individual beds	635	592	472	372	462	427
<b>Permanent housing</b>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>2,281</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,549</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>3,200</b>
<i>Rapid re-housing</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	182	303	389
Family beds	N/A	N/A	N/A	175	242	257
Individual beds	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	61	132
<i>Permanent supportive housing</i>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>2,281</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,367</b>	<b>2,594</b>	<b>2,811</b>
Family beds	852	1,054	1,120	871	988	972
Individual beds	1,159	1,227	1,069	1,496	1,606	1,839

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development housing inventory data.

In fiscal year 2016, Alameda County received \$34 million from HUD in Continuum of Care funding (table 4). Almost 70 percent of the funds went to permanent supportive housing. Another \$8.2 million went to transitional housing and rapid re-housing. Compared with the rest of the country, Alameda County invests slightly more in transitional housing and less in permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. In 2016, 73 percent of CoC funding nationwide went to permanent supportive housing, 13 percent went to rapid re-housing, and 6 percent went to transitional housing (HUD 2016).



TABLE 4

**US Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care Funding, Fiscal Year 2016**

<b>Funding type</b>	<b>Dollars</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Permanent supportive housing	\$23,486,919	69%
Transitional housing	\$4,268,153	12%
Rapid re-housing	\$3,968,479	11%
Supportive services only	\$1,038,171	3%
Planning	\$845,238	2%
Homeless Management Information System	\$391,907	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33,998,867</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care data.

In fiscal year 2016–17, Alameda County directed \$63.7 million to funding for homelessness assistance, including the nearly \$34 million from the HUD Continuum of Care funding (table 5). The largest portion of the funding went to permanent supportive housing. The County spent \$8.9 million on Housing Resource Centers (HRCs) and \$7.7 million on transitional housing and emergency shelter. “Other” spending includes funding for Healthcare for the Homeless and other supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

TABLE 5

**Alameda County Budgeted Homelessness Assistance, Fiscal Year 2016–17**

<b>Funding type</b>	<b>Dollars</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Permanent supportive housing	\$28,425,715	44%
Housing Resource Centers	\$8,900,000	14%
Emergency shelter and transitional housing	\$7,704,093	12%
Rapid re-housing	\$5,827,019	9%
Outreach	\$1,274,460	2%
Other	\$11,597,631	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$63,728,918</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Alameda County presentation to the Board of Supervisors (July 18, 2017).

**Performance of Homelessness Programs**

Table 6 provides administrative data from the county’s Homelessness Management Information System on trends in homelessness programs from fiscal years 2014 to 2016. The number of people served and the number served who were newly homeless both fell. We believe this is the result of bottlenecks limiting the availability of services rather than a decrease in demand. The average length of time people spent in homeless programs nearly doubled from 230 days to 437 days. The HUD standard is that

communities should exit people from homelessness within 30 days. The number of exits to permanent housing also fell, suggesting people are staying longer in homelessness programs because there are fewer permanent housing options available. Challenges and delays with exits “clog the pipeline” and make the system work less well for everyone.

**TABLE 6**

**System Performance Measures, Federal Fiscal Years 2014–16**

<b>Performance metric</b>	<b>FFY 2014</b>	<b>FFY 2015</b>	<b>FFY 2016</b>
Number served annually	12,383	11,567	11,661
Number of first-time homelessness	3,417	3,174	2,695
Average length of homelessness	230 days	398 days	437 days
Exits to permanent housing	2,196	2,138	2,069
Share of exits to permanent housing	33%	43%	42%
Number exited to permanent housing and returned to homelessness within 2 years	306	368	434
Share who return to homelessness within 2 years	16.80%	18.70%	17.90%

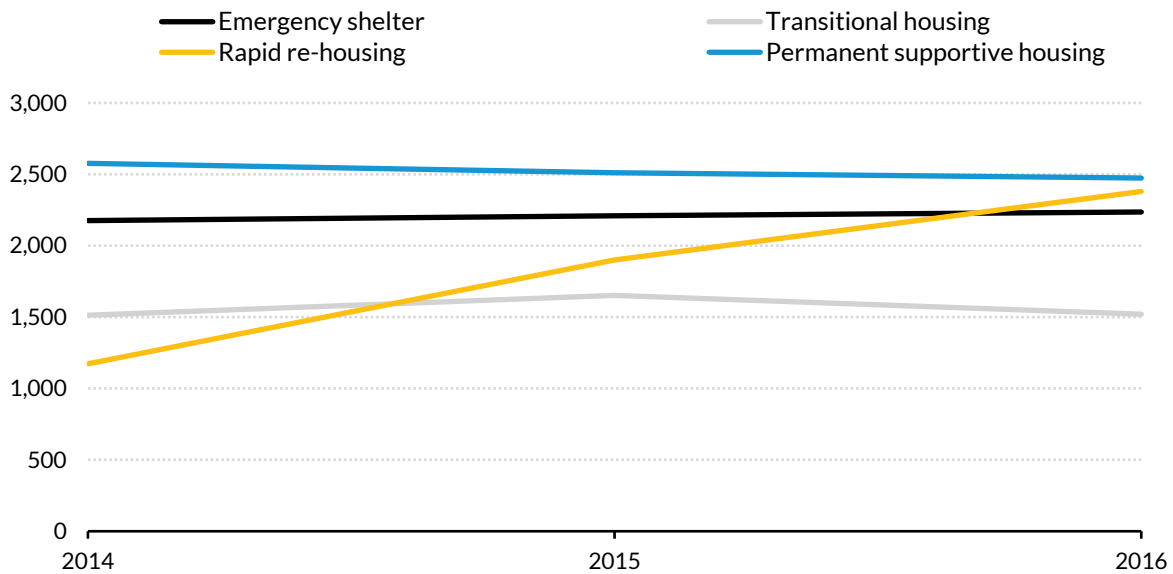
**Source:** Alameda County Homeless Management Information System administrative data.

**Note:** FFY = federal fiscal year.

Figure 5 shows the number of people served by program type in Alameda County from 2014 to 2016. Despite considerable annual investments, the number of people served in supportive housing has declined. The number served in emergency shelter has stayed flat. The number served in transitional housing has decreased as the county has shifted resources toward rapid re-housing, which was the only program that saw a sharp increase in people served. With the recent increase in homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness, part of the difficulty in serving more people may be a lack of space in shelters and a lack of housing options that would allow people to exit shelter. Although the number of people moving into rapid re-housing has increased, it is not enough to offset the recent increase in homelessness, especially when people cannot initially access shelter as a stop gap.

FIGURE 5

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness Served by Program Type



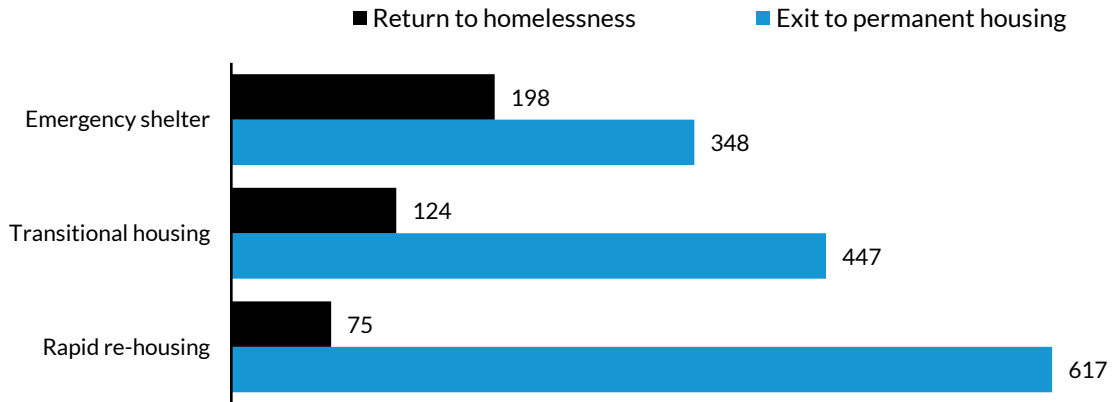
Source: Alameda County Homeless Management Information System administrative data.

Note: Years are fiscal years.

Figure 6 shows placements into permanent housing and returns to homelessness within 24 months of exit by program type in federal fiscal year 2016. In emergency shelters, 348 people exited to permanent housing, but within two years, 198 of them (57 percent) returned to homelessness. Transitional housing both better placed people to permanent housing (447 people) and had fewer returns to homelessness (124 people, or 28 percent). The final program type is rapid re-housing, which has the best placement rate (617 people) and the lowest rate of return to homelessness via shelter (75 people, or 12 percent) within 24 months.

FIGURE 6

**Placements into Permanent Housing and Returns to Homelessness by Program Type, Federal Fiscal Year 2016**



**Source:** Alameda County Homeless Management Information System administrative data.

**Note:** Time frame is 24 months.

## Feedback from the Surveys

### CITIES

We surveyed cities within Alameda County about city-level funding efforts to address homelessness, the trends cities see in the size or characteristics of the homeless population, and the steps that need to be taken to better serve people experiencing homelessness. The surveys were sent to city government housing and homelessness contacts. The full survey questionnaires are in the appendix.

As of this writing, 11 of the 14 cities have completed the survey:

- Alameda (city)
- Albany
- Berkeley
- Dublin
- Emeryville
- Fremont
- Livermore
- Oakland
- Pleasanton
- San Leandro
- Union City

Hayward, Newark, and Piedmont did not complete the survey. The 11 cities that completed the survey account for 87 percent of the 5,629 people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County on the night of the 2017 PIT count.

Below, we summarize the results of the city-level survey into three questions:

1. What trends are the cities seeing regarding homelessness? Is homelessness increasing, and why?
2. How are the cities serving people experiencing homelessness?
3. What could or should be done to better serve people experiencing homelessness?

***What trends are the cities seeing regarding homelessness? Is homelessness increasing, and why?***

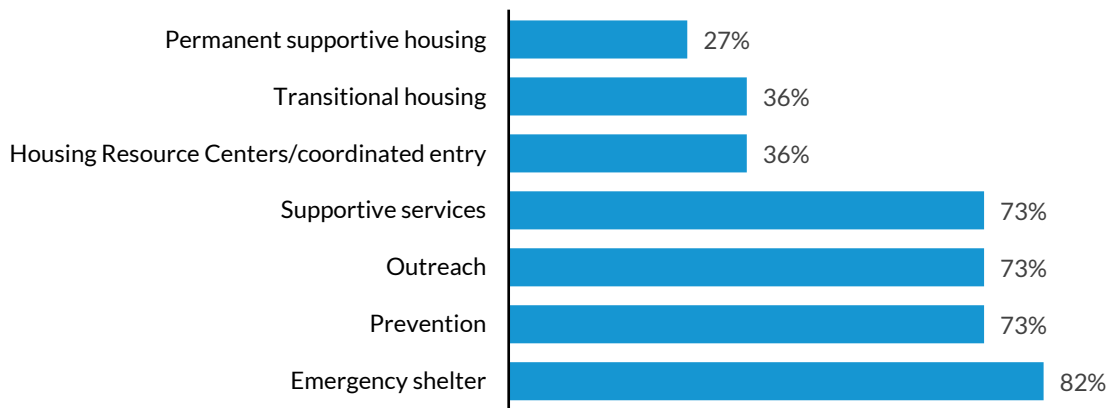
Seventy-three percent of the cities (8 of the 11) believe that homelessness is increasing in their cities and in the county. The most prominent reason cited is rising housing costs, but some cities also mentioned decreased job availability and a fraying safety net. Sixty-four percent of the cities (7 of the 11) also noticed subpopulation changes in homelessness. Most mentioned increases in family and youth homelessness after seeing more families doubled-up or sleeping in cars. The cities were also concerned with increases in chronic homelessness, which some cities fear will only become harder to address given increased demand and limited resources. Three cities expressed concern over increased drug use among people experiencing homelessness. While most cities believed that homelessness is more visible, a handful were unclear whether the visibility was because of a true increase or because of other factors. One respondent said it is “hard to tell how much it is increasing. We have so much infill development going on, it feels like people are moving from bush to bush, with fewer bushes to hide behind.”

***How are the cities serving people experiencing homelessness?*** Cities were most likely to report using their own funds to pay for emergency shelter, though homelessness prevention, outreach, and supportive services are other interventions funded by most cities surveyed. Cities were less likely to invest their own funds for transitional and permanent supportive housing (figure 7).<sup>5</sup> Regarding the focus and target populations of those services, 10 of the 11 cities administer programs that focus on single adults and people who are chronically homeless (figure 8).

Though cities administer different programs for different people, 7 of the 11 noted that their funding streams are not earmarked for programs focused on certain subpopulations. Cities use their resources to fund housing interventions and street outreach for the general homeless population. Certain cities are providing more affordable housing at 50 percent or less of the area median income, while others are funding homelessness prevention. Oakland is investing more into rapid re-housing with supportive services, based on the model of its Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center. Other cities are investing in outreach to unsheltered people, such as Union City’s CAREavan program, which gives families sleeping in cars a safe place to park at night.

FIGURE 7

Homeless Services Funded by Cities in Alameda County



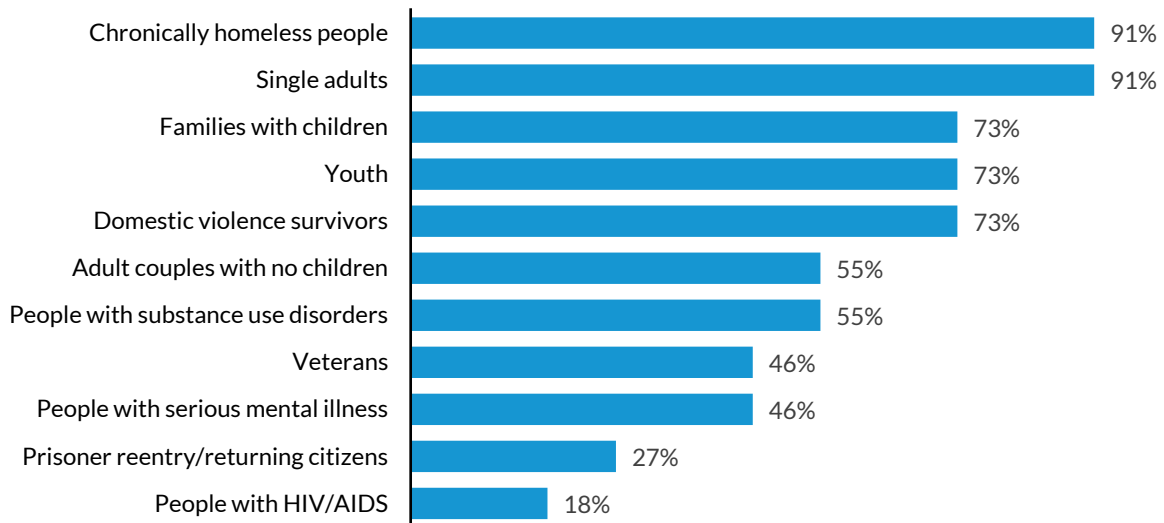
Source: Survey of city agency employees in Alameda County conducted in September and October 2017.

Note: Sample is 11 cities.

The survey also asked cities about coordination of services and internal and countywide efforts. Within cities, there is no consistent structure for guiding homelessness work. Nearly every city holds meetings across the relevant departments but with varying regularity. One respondent wrote that a “single staff member coordinates all efforts” and occasionally runs issues by other departments and nonprofits, but several cities (e.g., Fremont, Oakland, and Union City) hold regular meetings with various stakeholders. All cities that answered the survey have a relationship with EveryOne Home. Some cities provide data and are members of EveryOne Home, and some department heads sit on committees or on the leadership board.

FIGURE 8

**Target Populations of Programs Administered or Supported by Cities in Alameda County**



Source: Survey of city agency employees in Alameda County conducted in September and October 2017.

Note: Sample is 11 cities.

***What could or should be done to better serve people experiencing homelessness?*** We asked cities whether officials have observed best practices in other areas that could be replicated, and 10 of the 11 noted that they have seen best practices, but several doubted that they could be replicated in Alameda County because of practical challenges (e.g., lack of available land to develop, infrastructure challenges with “tiny homes”) or lack of funding. Examples of best practices include developing a homelessness action plan, increasing shelter quality standards, and using homelessness outreach teams. We also asked how the County government could help, and the cities mentioned more funds for shelters, particularly in the Tri-Cities area of the county; more funds for street outreach; and quickly standing up and opening the HRCs. Nearly all city agency respondents requested additional funds from the County to fill service gaps and to construct more affordable housing.

Three themes emerged about what would make the biggest difference in serving people experiencing homelessness. The first was to increase data sharing and data facilitation among relevant parties. The second was to increase the supply of affordable and permanent supportive housing. The third was leadership. One city asked for “clear and concise expectations/requirements/recommendations for how cities/regions should implement the EveryOne Home program,” and another city respondent described the leadership gap:



There has to be coordinated leadership, and it needs to be serious about addressing the problem. Frankly, nobody is serious enough to get us to the solution. Everyone is too concerned about stepping on everyone else's toes politically. We need to create a local government leadership council, and we need to take action. Cities need to realize that we all have a responsibility to participate in the solution, and we need to hold one another accountable for doing our part. Leadership is what would make the biggest difference.

### **CBOS, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

We also surveyed representatives from community-based organizations serving the homeless in Alameda County. The survey included questions about the programs they run, the services they provide, trends and changes in the size or characteristics of the homeless population, and recommendations for better serving people experiencing homelessness. The organizations were selected by Alameda County with Urban's input. The goal was to select organizations from different parts of the county with different approaches (e.g., focusing on families compared with focusing on veterans, or services providers with county contracts compared with churches). The CBOs we surveyed are not necessarily a representative sample of organizations addressing homelessness.

The organizations listed below work all over the Bay Area and in every region of Alameda County, including the unincorporated areas. As of this writing, 11 CBOs and community partners had responded to the survey.

- Abode Services
- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- Bay Area Community Services
- Berkeley Food and Housing Project
- Building Futures with Women and Children
- Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency
- East Oakland Community Project
- First Presbyterian Church of Castro Valley
- Operation Dignity

- Resources for Community Development
- Satellite Affordable Housing Associates

We summarize the results of the CBO survey into three questions similar to the ones from the city survey:

1. What trends are the organizations seeing regarding homelessness? Is homelessness increasing, and why?
2. How are the organizations serving people experiencing homelessness?
3. What could or should be done to better serve people experiencing homelessness?

***What trends are the organizations seeing regarding homelessness? Is homelessness increasing, and why?***

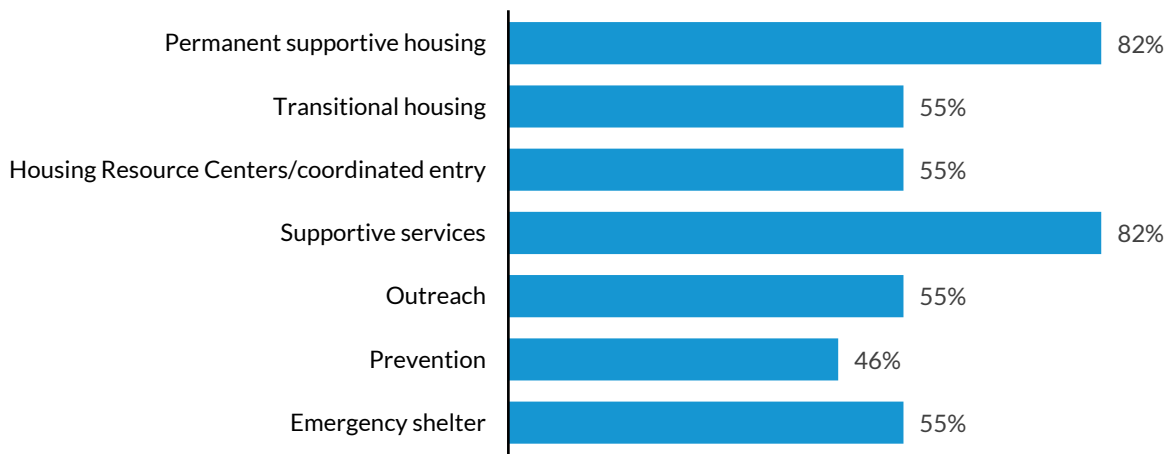
All but one of the CBOs think that homelessness is increasing in Alameda County, and these organizations are united in their opinion of the cause: the lack of affordable housing. The organizations also mentioned the rapidly increasing cost of living, a dearth of jobs that pay well enough to keep up with the cost of living, the fraying safety net, a high poverty rate, and many formerly incarcerated people who have difficulty finding jobs and housing.

When asked about rising rates of homelessness across subpopulations, the CBOs agreed with the cities, noting that they are witnessing increases in chronic homelessness and family homelessness, with families living doubled-up or out of their cars. The CBOs also pointed to increased drug use and an increasing proportion of older adults experiencing homelessness.

***How are the organizations serving people experiencing homelessness?*** Community-based organizations differ from the cities in the programs and services they deliver. While the cities primarily funded shelter, prevention, and outreach, CBOs most commonly administered supportive services and permanent supportive housing (figure 9). Despite the difference, CBOs largely target the same populations as the cities (i.e., single adults and people who are chronically homeless), but they also serve families with children, people dealing with substance abuse, and veterans. Figure 9 shows the services administered by the surveyed CBOs and shows that supportive services and permanent supportive housing are the programs most administered, with 82 percent of surveyed CBOs (9 of the 11) offering supportive services or permanent supportive housing as part of their programming. Most CBOs provide programs for families, single adults, the chronically homeless, and people with substance use disorders. Most respondents did not provide programs for domestic violence survivors and youth (figure 10).

FIGURE 9

**Homelessness Assistance Services Administered by Surveyed Community-Based Organizations**



**Source:** Survey of staff from community-based organizations in Alameda County conducted in September and October 2017.

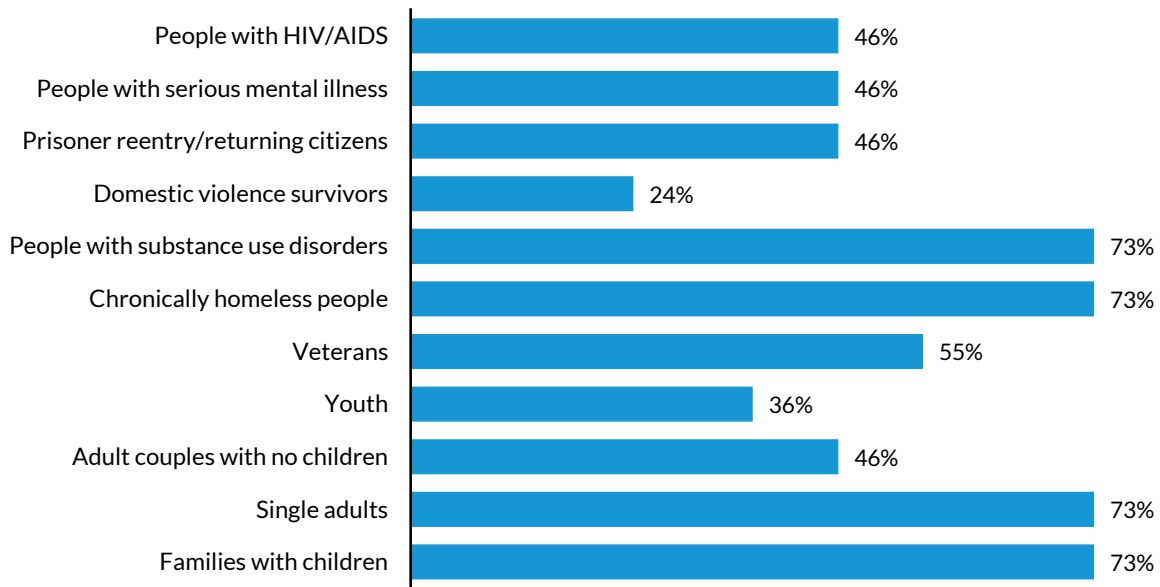
**Note:** Sample is 11 community-based organizations.

Given CBOs' dependence on external funding and the need to meet and track performance measures, the rise in homelessness has left CBOs more constrained. To meet the needs of the people they serve, a few organizations mentioned the need to build partnerships with other organizations that can help them reach common goals, but no partners or planned partnerships were mentioned.

The organizations felt that the upcoming coordinated entry implementation will build those bridges and partnerships. Collaborations and coordination are primarily organized through referrals, subcontracts, and connections made through EveryOne Home, but some CBOs regularly meet with city officials. Though all organizations have a relationship with EveryOne Home, the CBOs appear to use EveryOne Home mostly for trainings and information sharing. The organizations expressed mostly excitement, with some apprehension about coordinated entry. Given the limitations of any one organization being able to meet the various needs of people experiencing homelessness, coordinated entry will connect organizations across the county and clarify where and which services are needed most.

FIGURE 10

Target Populations of Surveyed Community-Based Organizations



Source: Survey of staff from community-based organizations in Alameda County conducted in September and October 2017.

Note: Sample is 11 community-based organizations.

**What could or should be done to better serve people experiencing homelessness?** The CBOs provided varied recommendations to improve and broaden service delivery. Taking cues from effective initiatives in other jurisdictions, the CBOs think Alameda County should adopt a Housing First approach to homelessness. Others suggest that implementing a common assessment tool and a by-name list (knowing the names and needs of all the people you serve) would work in Alameda County, and one organization suggested that the relevant departments and organizations already have good ideas but just need to implement them.

The organizations believe they could better serve people experiencing homelessness but are constrained by a lack of resources. Most organizations noted that Alameda County needs more affordable housing and additional financial resources to fund supportive services. Several CBOs mentioned that building housing or raising funds is not enough and that governments should dedicate funding for rental subsidies and supportive services for people to exit homelessness. One organization suggested that the county raise and dedicate financial resources to fund all the necessary shelter beds not covered by other federal and state sources. The organizations are dedicated to helping people who need housing and services, but the increase in demand has stretched them thin, and they need additional resources from the local governments to maintain their work.

## What Do We Know about Other Models?

Alameda County was interested in learning about effective or promising practices in other parts of the country that could be replicated. In this section, we discuss the most promising initiatives in comparable communities that Alameda County could learn from and prominent initiatives that may not be worth replicating.

Although it is commendable to seek out best practices in other communities, Alameda County has several of its own initiatives under way that could transform its homelessness system. In November 2016, Alameda County voters approved the A1 Bond measure, which raises \$580 million to fund housing efforts, with \$425 million dedicated to a Rental Housing Development Fund to create and preserve affordable housing for low-income and extremely low-income residents. One goal of the bond is to house people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless. The County requires that a minimum of 20 percent of the rental units developed through the bond will be restricted to renters earning 20 percent or less of the area median income. The County projects that most of the A1 Bond-financed rental units will be affordable to renters with incomes at or below 60 percent of the area median income. But with increased operating subsidies, it could target more units to low-income renters.

A second initiative under way is Whole Person Care,<sup>6</sup> a pilot program through California's 1115 Medicaid Waiver. California counties compete to receive grants to better and more effectively serve high-use patients. In November 2016, Alameda County's Health Care Services Agency was awarded a \$140 million grant to provide more streamlined services to homeless residents. Key components of the agency's AC Care Connect (AC3) plan are to streamline coordination across hospitals, shelters, and government agencies and increase "housing for health" services that provide more supportive services for people in supportive housing and increase community-based housing options for people with disabilities. The program is also helping fund Alameda's coordinated entry system. Through matching county funds, AC3 will also seed a Revolving Housing Development Fund to support predevelopment, acquisition, and construction activities to increase the supply of permanent supportive housing for homeless, high-cost patients (Alameda County Health Care Services Agency 2016).

The final major effort the county is undertaking is implementing coordinated entry to standardize assessments and referrals for homeless services. Coordinated entry is now a HUD mandate for all jurisdictions receiving Continuum of Care funding.<sup>7</sup> Once implemented, coordinated entry will allow agencies, shelters, and other service providers to create and keep up-to-date records on the people

accessing services and use their information and system information to better direct residents to the services and housing that will either most immediately or best fit their needs.

Implementing these initiatives could improve the County's response to homelessness. But the County should also consider adopting other promising practices related to research and evaluation, innovative funding models, supportive services, and connections to permanent housing that have been adopted in comparable communities.

## Identifying Comparable Communities

Our review of promising practices in other communities focused on six Continuums of Care:

- San Francisco County, CA
- Santa Clara County, CA
- Los Angeles County, CA
- King County, WA
- Maricopa County, AZ
- Salt Lake County, UT

These counties were selected based on input from Alameda County as well as geography and reputation for innovation. Table 7 summarizes how Alameda County compares with these other communities in size, organization, and homelessness rates and trends. Although Alameda has seen one of the largest increases in homelessness of any of these communities between 2015 and 2017, its homelessness rate relative to its population is lower than all but Maricopa and Salt Lake Counties.

TABLE 7

Summary of Peer County Indicators

Homelessness data for peer counties

	County						
	Alameda	San Francisco	Santa Clara	Los Angeles	King	Maricopa	Salt Lake
Population	1,647,704	870,887	1,919,402	10,137,915	2,149,970	4,242,997	1,121,354
Largest city	Oakland	San Francisco	San Jose	Los Angeles	Seattle	Phoenix	Salt Lake City
Continuum of Care or lead homelessness agency	EveryOne Home	Local homeless coordinating board	Santa Clara Continuum of Care	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority	All Home King County	Maricopa County Continuum of Care Board	Homeless Services Dept., Salt Lake County
Homeless population (2017)	5,629	7,499	7,394	57,794	11,643	5,605	2,047
Homeless population (2015)	4,040	7,539			10,047		
Change in homeless population (2015-17)	+39%	-0.5%	+13%	+30%	+16%	-0.5%	-6%
Share unsheltered (2017)	69%	58%	74%	74%	47%	37%	8%
Change in unsheltered population (2015-17)	63%	-1%	18%	38%	43%	60%	88%
Homeless rate (per 10,000)	34	86	38	57	54	13	18

Sources: 2017 Point-in-Time counts and 2016 Census population estimates.

# How Are Other Places Addressing Homelessness?

## Actionable Research and Planning

As the lead agency for the CoC, EveryOne Home collects and analyzes data and shares reports on homelessness across the county, including a detailed report on the results of the 2017 PIT count. The county also has a plan to end homelessness, developed in 2006, that expires in 2020, which EveryOne Home is updating. But the plan does not appear to guide current policy at either the county or city level. Examples from other communities have shown how research can be a call to action that informs policy and generates public support.

In May 2015, the Economic Roundtable, a policy research nonprofit in California, published the *Home Not Found* study on the costs of homelessness in Santa Clara. The study found that more than 2,800 people are chronically homeless in Santa Clara County, and they cost an average of \$83,000 a year in public spending (Flaming, Toros, and Burns 2015).

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of the need for different housing resources for people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles and compared it with current resources. It then developed estimates of the number of additional housing units, by program type, that would be needed to meet the need and the projected cost of creating that additional housing. The authors estimated that the county needed more than 26,000 additional units of housing at a projected cost of more than \$1.3 billion, with an additional \$428 million in ongoing annual operating costs (Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative 2016).

Both studies prompted action to increase the supply of housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. The high public costs of chronic homelessness prompted Santa Clara County to develop permanent supportive housing for up to 200 chronically homeless people. The program is funded through a pay for success model wherein private investors pay for much of the initial program costs and get repaid with interest if the program achieves agreed-upon cost savings and other outcomes.

Having a credible estimate of costs and a detailed plan for how the funds would be spent helped build public support for the H and HHH bond measures in Los Angeles to generate additional funding. Voters recently approved Measure H, a 0.25 percent county sales tax for 10 years to fund homelessness



services and prevention. This initiative is estimated to generate \$355 million annually. In June, the Board of Supervisors approved a spending package of more than \$1 billion for how to spend the Measure H funds to implement strategies from the 2016 action plan.<sup>8</sup> Measure HHH, a \$1.2 billion general obligation bond issue, was approved in November 2016. It will fund construction of 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing, affordable housing for the general population, and additional shelters and homeless service centers. At least 80 percent of the funds raised must be used for housing, programs, and services directly aiding homeless residents, and no more than 20 percent can be used to help individuals and families at risk of homelessness.<sup>9</sup>

## Improving Service Provision

One of the most pressing concerns Alameda County faces is the public health challenges associated with unsheltered homelessness. The County wanted to learn how other counties with similar problems have addressed them. This is a difficult issue to study, and there is not a lot of literature on evidence-based practices for addressing homeless encampments and organizing homeless outreach services. But there are innovative approaches under way in other communities that may be relevant to Alameda County.

In San Francisco, homeless outreach teams engage and stabilize the most vulnerable homeless people by placing them into shelters and permanent housing.<sup>10</sup> The initiative started as a collaboration between the Department of Public Health, the Human Services Agency, the San Francisco Public Library, and the nonprofit Public Health Foundation Enterprises. It is now a part of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. Members work in small teams to provide outreach, case management, and referrals to shelter and housing for homeless people living on the streets (San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing). Services, such as case management and street medicine, are provided by teams with expertise in the complex issues that are barriers to stability for this population. Seventy staff members are divided into three teams: one for outreach, one to close large encampments, and one to prevent them from reopening.

Within San Francisco's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, the encampment resolution team (ERT) is a specialized team of outreach staff.<sup>11</sup> During resolution, the ERT collaborates with encampment residents, neighbors, property owners, and other city departments to close encampments and help remaining people connect with residential programs. The department developed standards for clearing encampments that meet federal standards developed by the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. Using these standards, the ERT resolved 17 large encampments

in its first year. The ERT has engaged more than 450 people living in encampments and placed 70 percent of them into housing.

King County in Washington State recently revamped its approach to street outreach and has increased the share of unsheltered people it places into shelter or housing from less than 10 percent to 39 percent.<sup>12</sup> The outreach team posts data on the locations and sizes of homeless camps throughout Seattle and how often they have been cleared. Outreach workers work with the Seattle Police Department to coordinate outreach and encampment-clearing services. They do not clear an encampment unless they can offer shelter to everyone living there.

Maricopa County's human services campuses (HSCs) in Arizona have been discussed by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors as a strategy for providing services. The HSCs serve more than 1,000 people per day. The HSCs collocate critical services related to benefits, employment, and health care and provide a natural point of contact for efforts like coordinated assessment. The centers also improve quality of life and public safety in surrounding neighborhoods by providing people a clean, safe place to spend time. But HSCs have drawbacks. The large daily volume of clients makes the campuses hard to manage. It is difficult to manage multiple stakeholders and partners, and the density of clients creates a "street community" that makes engagement difficult. The biggest drawback is that these campuses are expensive to build and maintain, diverting resources that could be used to provide shelter and permanent housing. For example, the Haven for Hope services campus in San Antonio cost \$101 million to build. It cost Maricopa County \$25 million to repurpose its existing facilities into HSCs (Batko, n.d.).

## Housing Solutions

Some of our comparison communities are testing innovative ways to help people experiencing homelessness navigate the housing system to find and maintain permanent housing. This approach is not a new one, but it is important. Research has shown that the best way to help a family stabilize and prevent returns to homelessness is to provide them a long-term, low-cost, secure form of housing, such as Housing Choice Vouchers (Gubits et al. 2016). Although Alameda County has rising rents and a lack of subsidized housing, programs that move residents into housing quickly are worth pursuing.

One way to increase placements into permanent housing is through partnerships with local public housing authorities. In Maricopa, the county government works with the Housing Authority of Maricopa County to set aside 5 percent of Housing Choice Vouchers for homeless permanent

supportive housing. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles partners with the CoC to provide incentive payments to landlords that rent to homeless clients. The King County government, in partnership with the City of Seattle, operates the Landlord Liaison Project, a collaborative partnership between property managers and service providers that helps people leave homelessness and succeed in private-market and nonprofit housing. The project has housed more than 7,000 people since 2009.

In the following section, we discuss how Alameda County can incorporate best practices from similar communities to improve its response to homelessness.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on analysis of the city and CBO surveys, interviews with county staff, review of best practices in comparison communities, and our expertise. Alameda County is right to invest in permanent housing and to prioritize resources for people experiencing chronic homelessness. It also leverages different funding streams, including Medicaid, general funds, and HUD funds, to tackle complex problems, such as coordinated entry. We recommend that Alameda County strengthen a governance structure that is overly complex and lacking in accountability and increase the supply of deeply affordable and supportive housing. These two issues require leadership from the Board of Supervisors and agency heads. We also see short-term opportunities for the County to improve communication and planning in its efforts to implement coordinated entry and address homeless encampments and street homelessness. Long term, we encourage the County to increase investment in low-barrier emergency shelter and rapid re-housing and find other revenue sources to pay for housing and services for formerly homeless people who have stabilized in supportive housing.

### Improve Leadership and Coordination

Alameda County has taken several actions to improve interagency coordination on homelessness and to facilitate shared decisionmaking with city governments and community-based organizations. For example, the County's homelessness working group brings together agency heads and staff from the housing, social services, and health care departments and is convened by the County Administrator. The working group is new but has helped coordinate the data collection for this research and develop guidelines for one-time funding for responses to unsheltered homelessness. The County is also

convening a countywide homelessness summit in February 2018. In addition, EveryOne Home is working on an updated county plan to end homelessness.

But these efforts seem to occur on an ad hoc basis, not guided by a larger vision of how the County can work with cities and CBOs to end homelessness. In other communities that have made significant progress in addressing homelessness, elected officials have made the issue a priority, with staff empowered to make decisions about resources, policies, and priorities. In Alameda County, the lack of a clear leadership structure makes it difficult to set bold goals, make difficult decisions, and marshal resources.

The Board of Supervisors and County agencies see the rise in homelessness as one of the county's most pressing issues. Agencies are breaking down silos by blending funding streams and developing joint requests for proposals for addressing cross-cutting homelessness issues. But an absence of leadership may inhibit efforts to make connections between different initiatives, such as the A1 Bond fund and the AC3 development fund, or to get agencies to commit to bold, measurable goals for developing housing units or decreasing unsheltered homelessness.

We think the County would benefit from having increased personnel and resources dedicated to addressing homelessness. Having staff responsible for addressing homelessness, rather than implementing specific programs, would help the County set a vision for how it can reduce homelessness, establish concrete goals and performance measures, and determine how its various programs and initiatives fit into a larger vision. We see several approaches the County could take to implement this recommendation.

#### **1. STRENGTHEN THE COUNTY'S INTERAGENCY HOMELESSNESS WORKING GROUP**

The working group provides a structure for County agencies to share information about critical agency initiatives and make decisions about new investments and policies. Several stakeholders suggested that one way to strengthen homeless coordination within County government would be to have dedicated staff to support this working group. Dedicated staff could provide analytical support to analyze the performance of homeless programs and initiatives and identify untapped or underused resources that could be better used to address homelessness. It could also support interagency strategizing and coordination to make sure each agency understands its role in addressing homelessness and how it fits into the overall system.

An adequately staffed working group could play a role for the county analogous to the role the US Interagency Council on Homelessness plays within the federal government. The council does not make any programmatic or funding decisions, but it does set the federal strategy for addressing homelessness

and monitors implementation. Independent analysis has shown that having an agency solely dedicated to addressing homelessness increases the effectiveness of homelessness programs and holds agencies accountable for achieving results (Gillespie et al. 2016).

## 2. CREATE A HOMELESS COORDINATOR POSITION

The County could establish a senior-level coordinator position. Washington, DC, Minnesota, and others have taken this approach. The coordinator would oversee the county's homelessness programs and would work with agency staff on setting goals, establishing policies and procedures, and monitoring performance. The coordinator could also be the County's point person on homelessness issues in collaborations with other stakeholders, such as EveryOne Home, advocates, CBOs, philanthropists, and city governments.

## 3. CONSOLIDATE HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS WITHIN A SINGLE AGENCY

The County could move all programs related to homelessness and supportive housing programs into a single agency. San Francisco and New York City have agencies solely dedicated to homelessness and, in San Francisco, supportive housing. Santa Clara County has an Office of Supportive Housing, which is the lead agency for the Continuum of Care and implements the County's Measure A Housing Bond and other supportive and affordable housing initiatives. Fairfax County, Virginia, has an Office to Prevent and End Homelessness that coordinates county policies and administers homelessness programs but is not the CoC lead agency.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. We recommend that the Board, County agencies, and other stakeholders determine the best options for Alameda County. The first approach works within the County's existing framework and can be implemented quickly without major disruptions to current practices. But absent senior leadership, adding analysts or other support staff is unlikely to yield significant improvements in the county's overall response to homelessness. With or without additional staff, we recommend that the working group create a formal charter outlining its scope, membership, decisionmaking processes, and relationships with other stakeholders, including EveryOne Home and city governments.

The second approach establishes a leadership position with the sole responsibility of ending homelessness and marshalling resources, both within the County and elsewhere, toward that goal. The risk is that if the coordinator is not empowered to make changes, it creates an additional layer of bureaucracy around decisionmaking.

The third approach could improve coordination between programs that have traditionally been siloed and increase the visibility and accountability of the County’s response to homelessness. The downsides are that it would be a major overhaul that would take time and resources to accomplish and, in the long-term, it may create new silos between homeless and “mainstream” programs.

#### CLARIFY THE COUNTY’S RELATIONSHIP TO EVERYONE HOME

As Alameda County strengthens its internal capacity to address homelessness, it should also clarify roles and responsibilities between Everyone Home and County and city governments. As the CoC lead entity, Everyone Home convenes stakeholders from County and city government as well as CBOs through its leadership board, committees, and subcommittees and implements the county’s plan to end homelessness.

We did not evaluate the effectiveness of Everyone Home or provide recommendations on its actions. Our perception is that Everyone Home is focused on HUD-required activities, such as implementing coordinated entry and completing the annual grant application. It has secured HUD funding for the county through this application and is on the cusp of implementing coordinated entry. Although Everyone Home is also tasked with implementing the Everyone Home plan to end homelessness and is developing an updated plan, we rarely heard this plan discussed in our interviews or in survey responses. In addition, while Everyone Home convenes county stakeholders, including County and city governments and CBOs, this process does not appear to be coordinated with how County agencies make funding and policy decisions.

As it strengthens its leadership structure around homelessness, the County should clarify its expectations for Everyone Home, such as whether Everyone Home should meet HUD requirements or take a more expansive role in policymaking and funding decisions. The County should also work with Everyone Home to create shared expectations around sharing data on homeless programs and funding sources. This would address some of the limitations we encountered in collecting data for this report. The County should also work with Everyone Home to make sure its new homelessness plan helps generate investment and innovation, like the plans in Los Angeles and Santa Clara that we highlighted earlier in this report.

#### CLARIFY THE COUNTY’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITIES

Alameda County contains 14 cities, each with its own priorities and concerns. Although the move to coordinated entry will help standardize how people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access services, the County cannot dictate to cities how they invest their resources or operate their programs.

The County needs to find the right balance of carrots and sticks to coordinate city efforts and guide city agencies to adopt best practices. Other counties of similar size with multiple cities within their jurisdictions, such as Santa Clara, California, and Fairfax, Virginia, have dedicated county agencies devoted to homelessness and supportive housing. These agencies have consolidated city and county funding streams into a single application process to standardize policies and procedures and make it easier for CBOs to receive funding.

Alameda County's recent efforts to convene city agencies and CBOs to coordinate outreach and share best practices is a positive step in this direction, as is the planned homelessness summit. Once the County strengthens its leadership structure, it should develop more consistent policies and a communications strategy for how it works with city agencies and CBOs.

## **Take Bold Action on Housing**

Over the past three years, the number of people exiting homelessness into permanent housing has decreased, creating a bottleneck where people spend years in temporary homelessness programs or on the streets because no housing is available. One of the purposes of this contract was to identify untapped or underused funding streams that could be better used to address homelessness. Alameda County is using all appropriate federal funding streams and investing them in evidence-based interventions, primarily permanent supportive housing. But the County could more aggressively use local funding to increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing.

We recommend that the County increase its supply of deeply affordable and supportive housing, starting with the A1 Bond, which represents a breakthrough for the County in addressing the affordable housing crisis. But if it does not target at least 20 percent of units to households earning 20 percent or less of the area median income, it will miss an opportunity to move the needle on homelessness. One basis of the County's reluctance to dedicate a higher proportion of new units to low-income households stems from uncertainty about the availability of operating subsidies. These subsidies must cover the difference between the rents these households can afford to pay and the revenue owners need to maintain the properties. But the County could use its general fund to cover this subsidy or introduce a small tax to raise dedicated funds, similar to recent efforts in Los Angeles. Alameda County could also work with local housing authorities to project-base some of the vouchers they receive from HUD to ensure that new developments have a dedicated operating subsidy. Aside from Oakland, Alameda's public housing authorities have been reluctant to dedicate rental assistance to people experiencing homelessness, but they may be persuaded to support these efforts. The A1 Bond already heavily

subsidizes the costs of developing these units to make them affordable to low-income renters. Because these units are already priced below market rates, public housing authorities can serve more households with their HUD funding by tying their vouchers to these projects. The County could also provide dedicated funding for supportive services to ensure that tenants have assistance with the lease-up process and case management to help them stay housed and address issues that may arise with landlords or other tenants.

We recommend that the County design its competitive application process for A1 Bonds so that nonprofit supportive housing developers can compete with larger, more experienced affordable housing developers. One way to make supportive housing projects more competitive is through a consolidated funding application that allows developers to apply for capital, operating, and services funding in the same funding round, reducing the delays and uncertainties that complicate supportive housing development. New York State, Santa Clara County, and Washington, DC, use this approach. The County should also consider how the AC3 development fund for supportive housing can work in conjunction with the A1 Bond.

Maximizing the A1 Bond should be the County's focus, but we recommend that the County pursue a detailed housing affordability needs assessment to determine how many housing, permanent housing, and rapid re-housing units are required to address the homelessness problem. Like Los Angeles' action plan, Alameda County should develop a plan and hold itself accountable to creating the number of units the assessment identifies.

We do not have sufficient knowledge of local markets or political realities to provide detailed recommendations on how Alameda County can develop more affordable housing aside from the A1 Bond. Recommendations that came from survey respondents that we thought had merit were to establish local, dedicated funding streams through a new tax or bonds or encourage the development of new units that you can build a lot of cheaply, such as microunits or accessory dwelling units. As a long-term strategy, the County should consider shifting some of the costs of providing rental subsidies and services to long-term supportive housing tenants. The County has a program with the Oakland Housing Authority to transition Shelter Plus Care tenants who no longer need that program's case management services into the regular Housing Choice Voucher program. This creates additional Shelter Plus Care supportive housing opportunities for homeless people with disabilities. The County should expand this program and replicate it with other local public housing authorities. The County should also identify whether supportive services and rental subsidies currently paid for out of CoC funds could be absorbed by other funding streams, such as the Medi-Cal program or the Mental Health Services Act. This would



free up funding to pay for rapid re-housing, street outreach, or new permanent supportive housing units.

## **Ensure a Successful Rollout of Coordinated Entry**

County and city governments should support the coordinated entry rollout. The new system could improve targeting of limited resources and make accessing shelter, permanent housing, and services easier and more transparent. Based on our interviews and survey responses, local stakeholders were excited about coordinated entry but were concerned about whether it would benefit all people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or just those who are chronically homeless. In addition, key decisions had still not been made about how resources would be allocated across the new HRCs. The decisionmaking process for coordinated entry, which involves eight committees and subcommittees, may contribute to some of these challenges (EveryOne Home 2016).

We recommend that the County work with EveryOne Home and other stakeholders to establish a shared vision for how coordinated entry will improve the system, including clear accountability for implementation progress, transparency on how resources are allocated, and clear policies on how vacant housing units are filled. The County should align contracts and other leverage points to increase participation among non-HUD-funded providers, particularly outside Oakland and Berkeley, including outreach teams. The County should also work with EveryOne home to make sure that the HRCs can connect people to available shelters and permanent housing resources.

Coordinated entry can also provide data on the need for shelter, housing, and services. Alameda County should make sure its Homeless Management Information System can capture and analyze these data to inform systems planning. The County should work with EveryOne Home to report on gaps and inefficiencies in the homelessness response system and differences in access to resources across regions. These reports should inform decisions about what programs to invest in and where they should be targeted geographically and by population type.

## **Address Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments**

Large homeless encampments are the most visible manifestations of the rise in unsheltered homelessness in Alameda County. Responding to this problem is difficult because the outreach system is fragmented, with the County responsible for specialized services like medical care and the cities

responsible for general outreach. The County has taken steps to coordinate outreach efforts through the county and with cities, including coordinating outreach schedules by geography and promoting best practices across regions. But one obstacle to better coordination is a lack of data sharing that would make it easier for outreach teams to know about previous engagements with clients. We recommend that the Alameda County Department of Housing and Community Development and EveryOne Home use data collected by outreach teams in the Homeless Management Information System to integrate outreach into coordinated entry. We also recommend the approach adopted in New York City, which assigned a lead outreach team to each region (borough) and gave that lead team the authority to contract out specialized services to other providers. New York City also implemented performance-based contracts for outreach providers, which tied payments to the number of temporary and permanent housing placements they made (Leopold 2014).

The County should work with city governments and CBOs to address the public health risks posed by homeless encampments, by making sure these areas have access to running water, bathroom facilities, needle exchange programs, and medical care. To deal with the increase in unsheltered homelessness, the County should work with the cities to increase shelter capacity, with investment in housing resources needed for exit (while being mindful of the 3 Ps that people bring with them: partners, pets, and personal belongings). In trying to increase capacity, the County, cities, and CBOs should respect the rights and wishes of people who are unsheltered, while establishing countywide policies and procedures for encampment clearing. The County could follow the lead of other jurisdictions like Seattle and San Francisco that provide extensive warnings before encampment clearing and place all interested residents into shelter or other housing options. The County should also work with the cities to monitor sanctioned encampments.

# Appendix. Survey Questionnaires

## Survey Questions for City-Level Agencies with Alameda County That Engage with People Experiencing Homelessness

1. For our internal data collection purposes:
  - a. Name
  - b. Agency/Organization
  - c. Email Address
2. For which city does your agency have jurisdiction?
3. Which of the following homeless services does your department fund? (Select all that apply)
  - a. Coordinated entry/homelessness resource centers (HRC)
  - b. Homelessness prevention
  - c. Street outreach
  - d. Emergency shelter
  - e. Transitional housing
  - f. Permanent supportive housing
  - g. Supportive services programs (e.g. healthcare, transportation, or jobs programs specifically for people experiencing homelessness)
  - h. Other
4. What are the funding sources for your department and approximate annual funding amounts for [each of the homeless services selected from the previous question] for the current year?
  - a. Funding source #1 and approximate amount
  - b. Funding source #2 and approximate amount
  - c. Funding source #3 and approximate amount
  - d. Other funding sources and approximate amounts
5. Which of the following homeless services are funded by other departments within city government?
  - a. Coordinated entry/homelessness resource centers (HRC)
  - b. Homelessness prevention
  - c. Street outreach
  - d. Emergency shelter
  - e. Transitional housing
  - f. Permanent supportive housing
  - g. Supportive services programs (e.g. healthcare, transportation, or jobs programs specifically for people experiencing homelessness)
  - h. Other
6. What are the funding sources for other departments, if applicable, and approximate annual funding amounts for [each of the homeless services selected from the previous question] for the current year?
  - a. Funding source #1 and approximate amount
  - b. Funding source #2 and approximate amount
  - c. Funding source #3 and approximate amount
  - d. Other funding sources and approximate amounts
7. Are your programs focused on any of the following population groups? (check all that apply)
  - a. Families with children
  - b. Single adults
  - c. Adult couples with no children
  - d. Youth

- e. Veterans
  - f. People experiencing chronic homelessness
  - g. People with substance abuse disorders
  - h. Domestic violence survivors
  - i. Prisoner reentry/returning citizens
  - j. People with serious mental illness
  - k. People with HIV/AIDS
  - l. Other
8. Are any of your funding streams specifically earmarked for programs focusing on the following population groups? (check all that apply)
- a. No, funds are not earmarked/targeted to particular subpopulations or are for general support
  - b. Yes, Families with children
  - c. Yes, Single adults
  - d. Yes, Adult couples with no children
  - e. Yes, Youth
  - f. Yes, Veterans
  - g. Yes, People experiencing chronic homelessness
  - h. Yes, People with substance abuse disorders
  - i. Yes, Domestic violence survivors
  - j. Yes, Prisoner reentry/returning citizens
  - k. Yes, People with serious mental illness
  - l. Yes, People with HIV/AIDS
  - m. Yes, Other
9. How are homelessness efforts across departments coordinated with your city/jurisdiction? (e.g. interagency councils, working groups, committees, coordinating non-profits)
10. Do you regularly engage with or have an established relationship (e.g. sit on a committee, are a member) with EveryOne Home?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
11. Please describe your/your agency's engagement/relationship with EveryOne Home.
12. What performance indicators does your city/jurisdiction use to track funding and outcomes around homelessness?
13. For contracted services, what is the process for awarding contracts, monitoring performance, and deciding whether contracts will be renewed?
14. In your opinion, is homelessness in your city/jurisdiction increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?
- a. Increasing
  - b. Decreasing
  - c. Staying the same
15. Why do you think that is (if increasing or decreasing)?
16. Have you observed any differences in trends for different populations? (e.g. families, youth, people experiencing chronic homelessness)? If so, please describe.
17. How, if at all, have recent trends in local homelessness affected the programs that you fund?
18. Have you observed best practices that other localities are using to address homelessness?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
19. Could those best practices be applied here? Why or why not?
20. What support from the County of Alameda would be useful in helping you better serve those experiencing homelessness?
21. In your opinion, what would make the biggest difference in addressing homelessness in Alameda County? What can county and city governments do to facilitate that change?

## Survey Questions for Service Providers in Alameda County

1. For our internal data collection purposes:
  - a. Name
  - b. Company/Organization
  - c. City/Town
  - d. State
  - e. Email address
2. Which of the following homeless services do your programs provide? (check all that apply)
  - a. Coordinated entry/homelessness resource centers (HRC)
  - b. Homelessness prevention
  - c. Street outreach
  - d. Emergency shelter
  - e. Transitional housing
  - f. Permanent supportive housing
  - g. Supportive services programs (e.g. healthcare, transportation, or jobs programs specifically for people experiencing homelessness)
  - h. Other
3. Which cities/areas of the County do you work in?
  - a. Alameda
  - b. Albany
  - c. Berkeley
  - d. Dublin
  - e. Emeryville
  - f. Fremont
  - g. Hayward
  - h. Livermore
  - i. Newark
  - j. Oakland
  - k. Piedmont
  - l. Pleasanton
  - m. San Leandro
  - n. Union City
  - o. Unincorporated county
4. Are your programs focused on any of the following population groups? (check all that apply)
  - a. Families with children
  - b. Single adults
  - c. Adult couples with no children
  - d. Youth
  - e. Veterans
  - f. People experiencing chronic homelessness
  - g. People with substance abuse disorders
  - h. Domestic violence survivors
  - i. Prisoner reentry/returning citizens
  - j. People with serious mental illness
  - k. People with HIV/AIDS
  - l. Other
5. What are your three largest funding sources and approximate annual funding amounts for homeless services for the current year? If you are unsure, please provide the name and contact information for the person that would have this information.
  - a. Largest funding source

- b. Second largest
  - c. Third largest (if applicable)
  - d. Name of person familiar with funding sources and contact information
6. How do you coordinate homelessness efforts with other service providers and city and county agencies in Alameda County?
  7. What performance indicators do you use to track organizational outcomes around homelessness?
  8. Is any of your funding tied to meeting specific performance indicators? If so, can you describe how that process works?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
    - c. If yes, please describe
  9. In your opinion, is homelessness in Alameda County increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?
    - a. Increasing
    - b. Decreasing
    - c. Staying the same
  10. Why do you think that is (if increasing or decreasing)?
  11. Have you observed any differences in trends for different populations (e.g. families, youth, people experiencing chronic homelessness)? If so, please describe.
  12. How, if at all, have recent trends in local homelessness affected the programs that you offer?
  13. How will the new coordinated entry system impact your operations?
  14. Do you regularly engage with or have an established relationship (e.g. sit on a committee, are a member) with EveryOne Home?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  15. Please describe your/your organization's engagement/relationship with EveryOne Home.
  16. Have you observed best practices that other localities or service providers are using to address homelessness?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  17. Could those best practices be applied here? Why or why not?
  18. Are there ways in which your organization could better serve people experiencing homelessness?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  19. What support from the County of Alameda would be useful in helping you better serve those experiencing homelessness?
  20. In your opinion what would make the biggest difference in addressing homelessness in Alameda County? What can county and city governments do to facilitate that change?

# Notes

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