

Memorandum

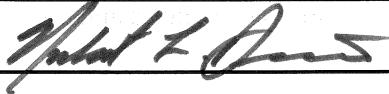
TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jacky Morales-Ferrand

**SUBJECT: RESULTS OF 2017 HOMELESS
CENSUS AND SURVEY**

DATE: June 30, 2017

Approved



Date

6/30/17

INFORMATION

All jurisdictions that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for homeless housing and services are required to conduct a homeless census every two years. The survey data brings greater perspective to current issues of homelessness, the services provided to homeless persons, and characteristics of the County's homeless population. The survey findings also measure the change in the composition of the homeless population since the 2015 census and survey.

The reports for San José and Santa Clara County have recently been finalized. This informational memorandum provides highlights of these documents. The full report for both the City and the County can be viewed on the Housing Department's Homeless Reports [website](#)¹.

Homeless Count and Survey Process

On January 24 and 25, 2017, Applied Survey Research conducted a count of the homeless population in San José and Santa Clara County. During the two-day effort, 215 volunteer census workers were paired with 132 trained homeless guides to complete the survey. In the weeks following the homeless count, a survey was administered to 331 sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons in the City. The survey was administered by trained workers who have experienced homelessness.

This year, HUD set a national priority on homeless youth counts. Historically, this is a sub-population that has been hard to reach and identify. In response to the federal directive, the City implemented a dedicated youth count and survey to improve data on unaccompanied children and youth in San José. The new approach included teams of youth and trained service providers which provided for a more extensive coverage of areas throughout San José than in past years. Staff collaborated with other homeless youth, Homeless Student Liaisons, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, and over a dozen School Districts, to further improve the data.

¹ <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=1289>

Homeless Count and Survey Findings

On January 24 and 25, 2017, 4,350 homeless individuals were counted in San José. This point-in-time figure represents a 7% increase from the number identified in the 2015 census, when 4,063 individuals were identified. Out of the total 4,350 persons, 74% of the population was unsheltered and residing in unsafe or unstable living environments. The census count for all of Santa Clara County was 7,394 homeless individuals. This is a 13% increase from the 2015 count, when 6,556 individuals were identified as being homeless.

Homeless Count Total	2015	2017	# Change	% Change
San José	4,063	4,350	287	7%
Santa Clara County	6,556	7,394	838	13%

A summary of San José’s Count and Survey data for sub-populations is provided below.

Sub-Population	2015	2017	# Change	% Change
Encampments	778	643	-105	-17%
Chronically Homeless	1409	1205	-204	-14%
Veterans	500	468	-32	-6%
Families with Children	121	104	-17	-14%
Individuals in Families	388	340	-48	-12%
Unaccompanied Youth	32	330	298	931%
Transition-age Youth	503	1436	933	185%

Note that the total of the sub-population figures exceeds the San José Homeless Count Total because some individuals are identified in more than one sub-population.

Highlights of the San José census results² for specific sub-populations are listed below.

- Encampments. These are defined as places with one or more inhabitants living in temporary structures or enclosures. There were 643 individuals experiencing homelessness in encampment areas in the City of San José. This represents a decrease of 17% from 778 in 2015 and continues a downward trend from 2013, when 1,230 individuals were counted in encampment areas. From 2013 to 2017, the number of individuals living in encampments has fallen by 48%. Individuals identified in encampments represented 15% of the overall population experiencing homelessness. This is a decrease from 2015 (19%) and 2013 (26%).
- The Chronically Homeless. A chronically homeless person is defined as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of

² <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/70076>

homelessness in the past three years. They must also have a condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing. A total of 1,205 individuals experienced chronic homelessness in 2017. This represents a 14% decrease from 2015. It also marks the lowest number of chronically homeless individuals enumerated in San José since 2009.

Many respondents reported experiencing multiple physical or mental health conditions. Seventy-one percent (71%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported alcohol or substance use. Forty-two percent (42%) reported a psychiatric or emotional condition, while 38% reported a physical disability. In general, higher rates of health conditions were reported for those who were chronically homeless compared to their non-chronically homeless counterparts.

- Veterans. Veterans include all individuals with military service currently experiencing homelessness. A total of 468 veterans experienced homelessness in San José. This represents a 6% decrease from 2015. Nearly 60% of veterans experiencing homelessness were living unsheltered.

The most common cause of homelessness among veteran survey respondents pertained to divorce, separation, or breakup (25%). This is a higher rate than non-veteran respondents (12%). Veteran survey respondents were less likely than non-veteran respondents to cite eviction, alcohol, or drug use. On the other hand, veterans were more likely to indicate rent increases and mental health issues as a primary cause of their homelessness.

- Families with Children. A total of 104 families experienced homelessness in 2017, representing 340 individuals living in those families. This represents a 14% decrease from 2015 when 121 families were counted. Additionally, a 12% decrease from 2015, when 388 individuals living in families were counted.

Due to a variety of factors, a very small number of individuals in homeless families with children participated in the City of San José Survey. Only nine respondents belonging to this demographic participated in the survey. Similar to the overall homeless population, job loss is a key factor for families experiencing homelessness. Mental health issues were more prevalent among the survey respondents when compared to non-family homeless individuals.

- Unaccompanied Youth and Transition-Age Youth. There were 330 unaccompanied children under the age of 18 who experienced homelessness in the City of San José. A total of 1,436 transition-age youth (young adults between the ages of 18-24) experienced homelessness. Both numbers represent large increases from the prior survey. In 2015, there were 32 unaccompanied children and 503 transition-age youth. Caution must be used when interpreting this result. Due to increased knowledge of the population and more youth participation than in past years, 2017's youth count was the most extensive conducted in the City of San José. It will act as a valuable baseline comparison for progress in future years and could provide direction for new services and housing developed to specifically serve this vulnerable population.

Analysis of Survey Data

In San José and Santa Clara County, the primary change in homelessness in the 2017 results is attributable to the significant increases in the number of unaccompanied youth and transition-age youth. As previously mentioned, the City implemented a dedicated youth count and survey in response to direction from HUD. The new approach provided for a more extensive coverage of areas throughout San José than in past years. The results from this work yielded significant increases for the numbers of both unaccompanied children and transition age youth. The data from this year will serve as a baseline for measuring progress towards the HUD objective of ending youth homelessness by 2020.

As has been the case in previous years, the vast majority of homeless individuals resided in the local area when they lost their homes. Of the total San José homeless population, 83% of survey respondents reported having lived in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless. The report also revealed 57% were living in Santa Clara County for more than 10 years.

The causes of homelessness cited in the survey varied widely. This reflects the complicated set of circumstances which can cause individuals to experience this situation. Survey respondents stated that the primary event or condition that resulted in their current episode of homelessness in San José ranged from job loss (33%), alcohol/drug addiction (23%), divorce/ separation/ break up (13%), to an argument with family/ friends (16%), and incarceration (6%). Obstacles to obtaining housing, however, were almost solely income related. Over two-thirds (67%) of respondents in 2017 reported an inability to afford rent, followed by 60% reporting unemployment or underemployment. Other obstacles reported were a lack of money for move in costs (17%) and bad credit (19%).

A common misperception about homeless people is that they do not want housing and prefer to live outdoors. The 2017 survey continues to disprove this belief by the fact that 91% of San José survey respondents said they would move into permanent housing if it were available to them.

Assessing the Impact of Community Efforts to Address Homelessness

Despite the increase in the homeless count attributable to the unaccompanied youth and transition-age youth numbers, the City of San José and its partners have made significant progress in moving more people off the streets and into housing. Based on the 2017 data, it appears that the City's efforts to address homelessness have been successful in reducing the number of those living in encampments (-17%), the chronically homeless (-14%), homeless families (-12%), and veterans (-6%).

These significant reductions in some of the most vulnerable populations reflects the continued work of the City, the County, the Housing Authority, Destination: Home, and local non-profit service providers dedicated to implementing the *Community Plan to End Homelessness*. The Plan is a focused, strategic response to the needs of unhoused populations in the community. Campaigns such as All the Way Home, an initiative to end veteran homelessness, and Project

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Welcome Home, an innovative Pay for Success pilot program targeting the community's most vulnerable homeless residents, have housed hundreds of homeless individuals over the past two years. During that same period, the City has also committed over \$700 million to build a pipeline of 700 new interim and permanent homeless housing opportunities. These combined efforts have and will continue to lead to a reduction in the overall homelessness throughout the region.

The biennial census and survey of San José's homeless population continues to be a valuable resource for tracking trends, shaping policy and designing programs that move homeless persons into permanent housing and prevent at-risk individuals from becoming homeless. With the passage of Measure A, \$700 million will be dedicated to creating affordable and supportive housing opportunities for thousands of extremely low income and homeless residents. Study after study shows that homelessness prevention efforts, Housing First initiatives and supportive services are the most effective means to end homelessness. The data in the report substantiates these approaches to address the needs of thousands of unhoused residents.

/s/

JACKY MORALES-FERRAND

Director of Housing

For questions please contact Jacky Morales-Ferrand, Director, at 408-535-3855.