



# The City of Petaluma's STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS



# Acknowledgements

The City of Petaluma would like to thank the many stakeholders, community members, people with lived experience, and local service providers who participated and provided valuable input for the development of this plan.

# **This Strategic Action Plan**

Homelessness is one of the great moral crises of our time. While it is a complex issue affecting a wide array of public, private, local, state, and national stakeholders, the City of Petaluma believes it can and should play a critical leadership role in supporting our most vulnerable community members. To that end, the vision and strategies outlined herein will guide the City's homelessness policies, programs, and investments during a three-year action cycle covering July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024.

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# I. Process

# Phase 1: Discovery

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Interviewed representatives from the City, County, Continuum of Care (CoC), and local service providers

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Conducted two outreach trips to local encampments and hosted a lived experience feedback session

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Reviewed past reports and studies specific to homelessness in Petaluma and Sonoma County

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Evaluated parallel county, regional, state, and federal planning processes

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Completed a program inventory of local services

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## Phase 2: Analysis

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Reviewed available data sources to better quantify the scale and scope of the need in Petaluma

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Created a stakeholder map of local programs to chart the lived experience of homelessness

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Identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the current system of care

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Developed a pathway to housing framework to better identify gaps and opportunities in the current system



# Phase 3: Feedback & Approval

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Have been iterating and reviewing the plan with staff throughout the process

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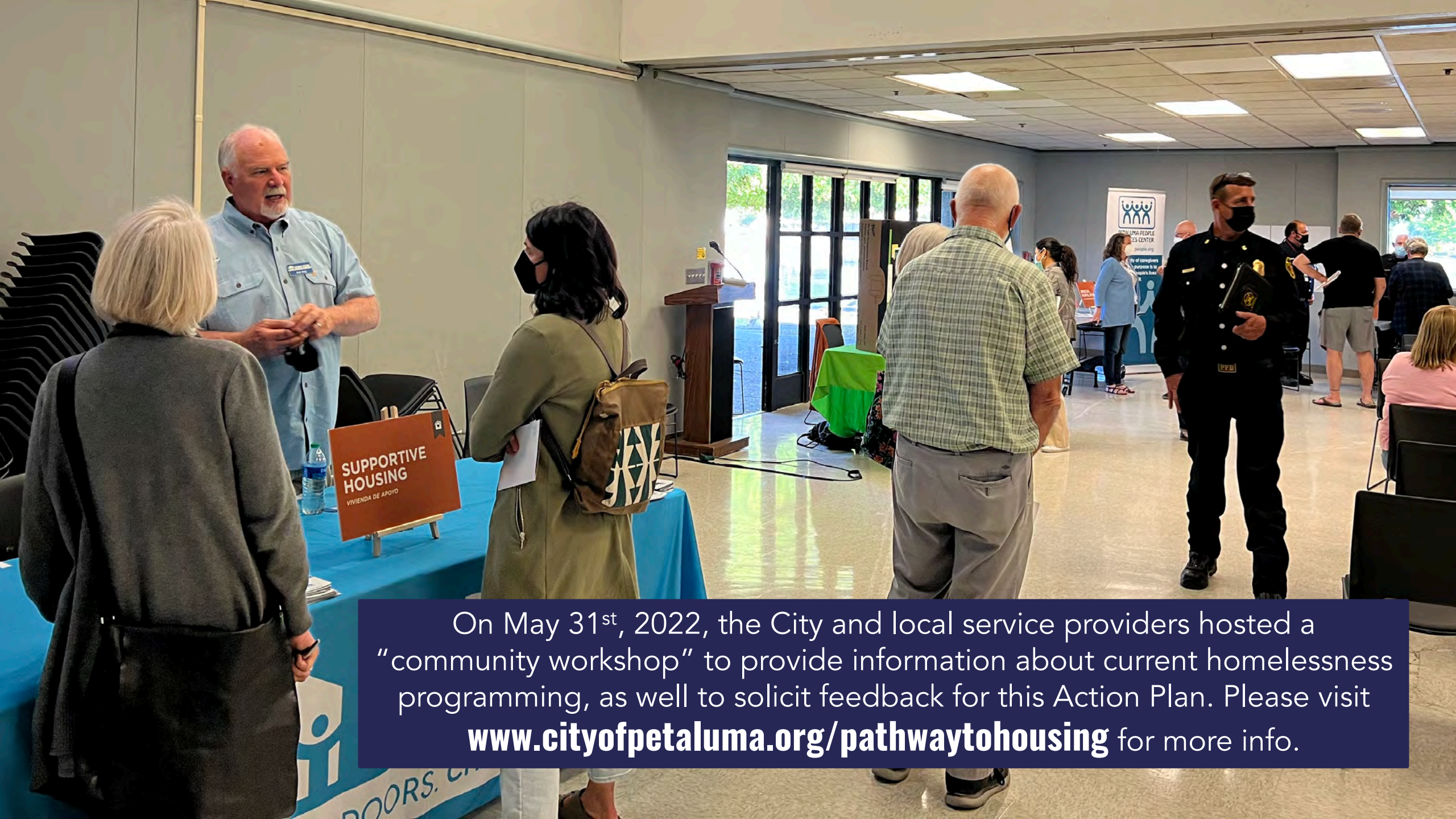
Have been working local service providers – executive level and frontline staff – to ensure alignment

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Hosted a community workshop to gather and incorporate public feedback; included an online option

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Final review and approval by the City Council



On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the City and local service providers hosted a “community workshop” to provide information about current homelessness programming, as well to solicit feedback for this Action Plan. Please visit [www.cityofpetaluma.org/pathwaytohousing](http://www.cityofpetaluma.org/pathwaytohousing) for more info.

# Already Putting the Plan in Motion over the Last 12 Months

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Created 25 new units of non-congregate, interim housing at the People's Village

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Secured funding for 60 new units of permanent supportive housing (PSH) at the Studios at Montero

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Launched and continuing to refine a weekly By-Name-List (BNL) outreach coordination meeting

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Awarded \$1.3M in funding through the State of California's "Encampment Resolution Grant"

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Ongoing advocacy and best practice sharing with the County and Continuum of Care (CoC)

# II. Findings



# Quantifying the Need: At-Risk

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There is a significant and ongoing risk of more Petalumans becoming homeless, especially among seniors who are unable to keep up with the cost of living.

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There are approximately 1,700 “extremely low-income” (ELI) households in Petaluma, earning less than 30% of the average median income.


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Of all ELI households in Sonoma County, 26% are “all senior” renters, and 33% are homeowners (typically seniors on fixed incomes).

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Approximately 3% of occupied dwelling units in Petaluma are “overcrowded (more than one person per room), which is significantly lower than the state average and potentially signals *relatively* less risk of family homelessness.

# ELI Households

 = 10 People



**60%**

SENIOR  
ELI HOUSEHOLDS

**40%**

NON-SENIOR  
ELI HOUSEHOLDS

**15%**

HOMELESS -  
SHELTERED

**15%**

HOMELESS -  
UNSHELTERED

# Quantifying the Need: Currently Homeless

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According to data from the Petaluma Health Center, approximately 750 unique households experienced homelessness at some point in 2021.

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At any given time, there are approximately 300 people experiencing homelessness in Petaluma, approximately 50% of whom are sheltered (much higher than the state average).


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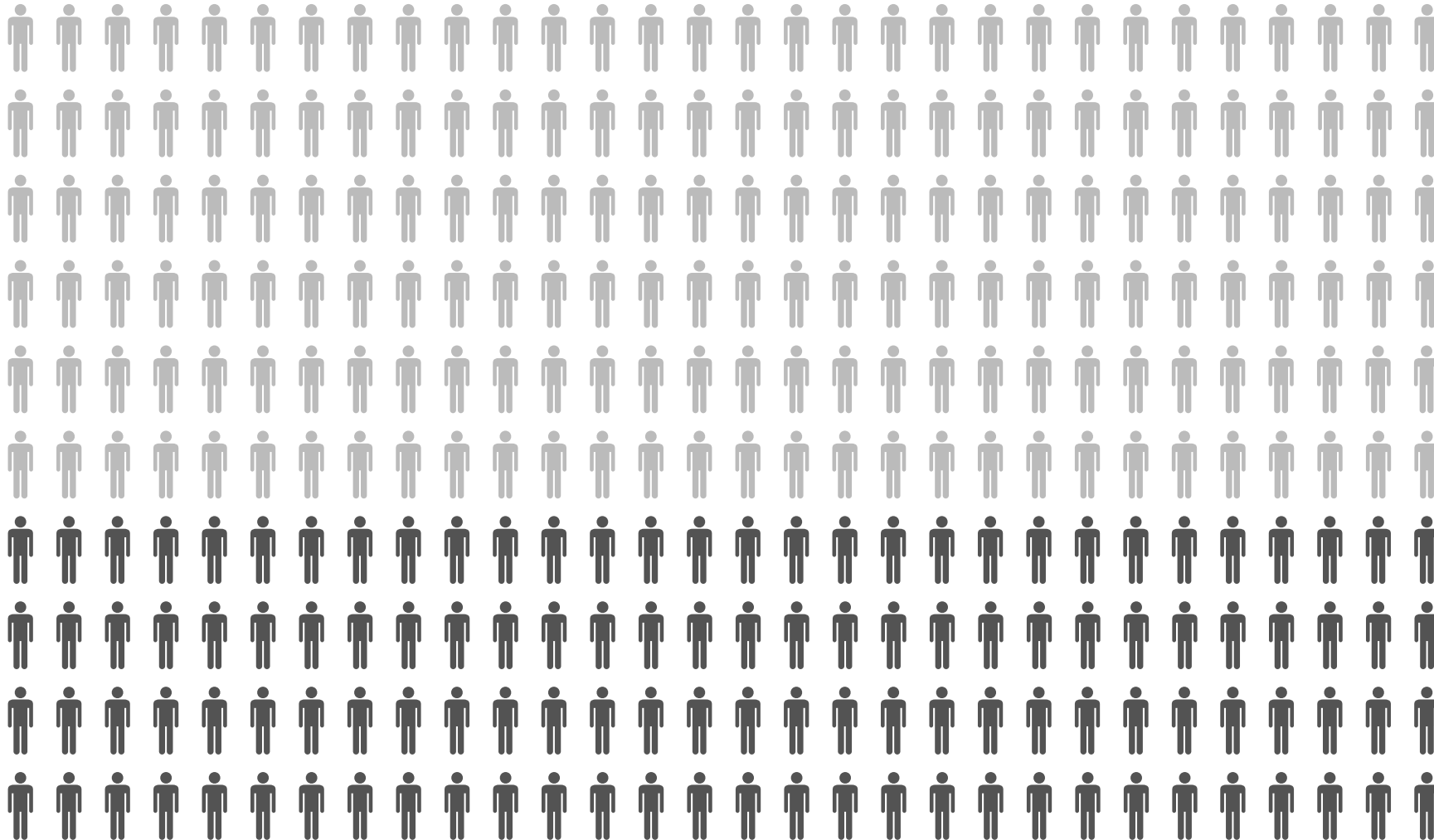
Based on the City's by-name-list (BNL) outreach coordination efforts, there are approximately 120 people experiencing long-term, chronic homelessness in Petaluma.

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This data suggests that at any given moment roughly half of Petaluma's homeless community is experiencing long-term, chronic homelessness, while the other half are people resolving their homelessness in a few short weeks or months.

# Currently Homeless

 = 1 Person



**180**  
NON-CHRONICALLY  
HOMELESS

**120**  
CHRONICALLY  
HOMELESS



# Program Inventory & Systems Map: Process

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26-question survey, co-created with City and provider staff, targeted at programs (not organizations)

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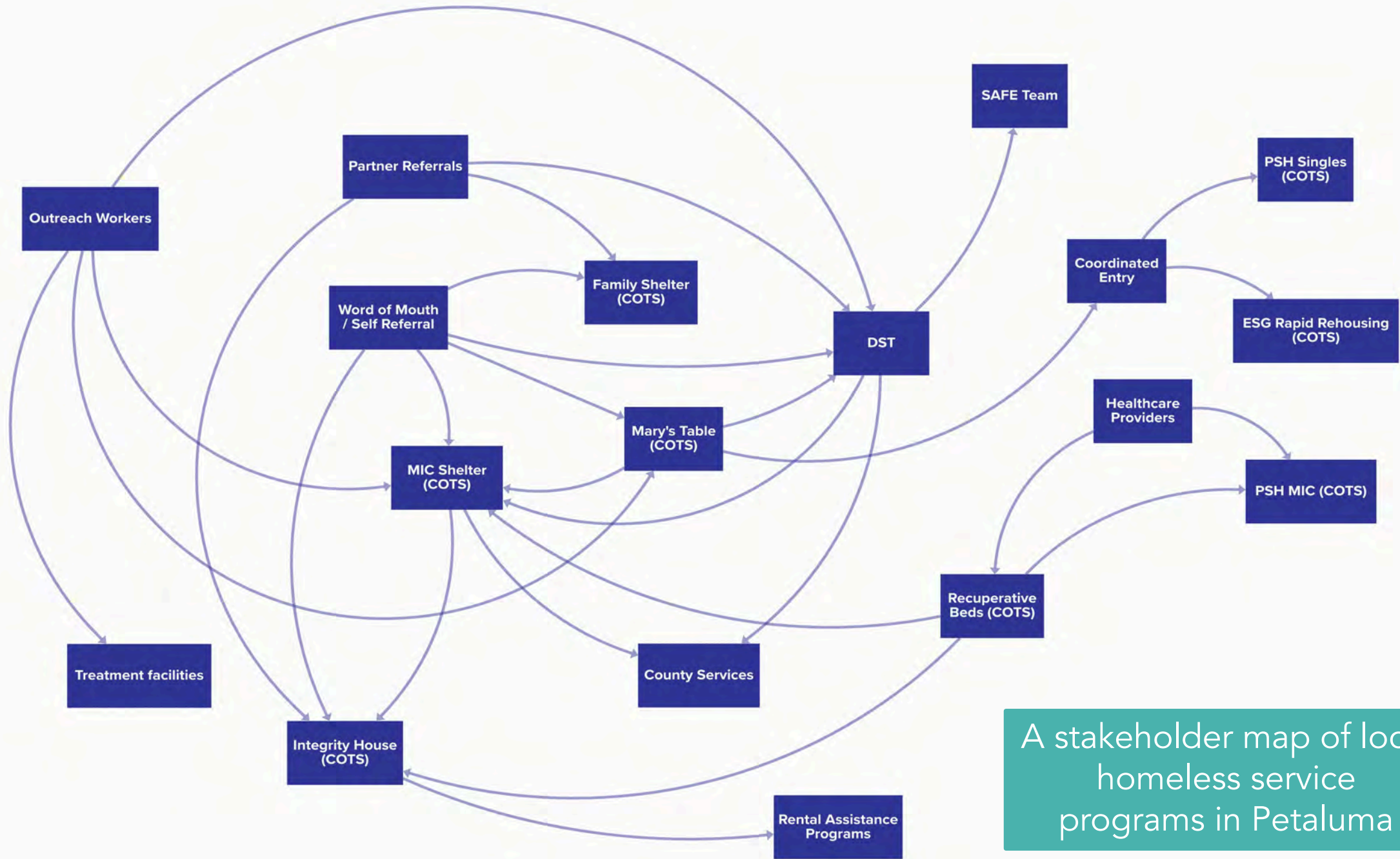
41 responses covering the full spectrum of programs, including: shelter, employment, food, and outreach

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In addition to questions about outcomes and access, the survey asked about the three most common incoming and outgoing referrals

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After filtering for programs where at least 60% of clients were homeless, mapped referrals to create a stakeholder map of the local system of care



A stakeholder map of local homeless service programs in Petaluma

# Program Inventory & Systems Map: Insights

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Programs are largely accessible: 85% Spanish speaking, 100% report trauma-informed, and comparable graduation rates for homeless and non-homeless clients.

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Program-level barriers do persist, mostly acutely around access to transportation, shelter, and behavioral health services (i.e., mental illness, substance abuse)

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Deeper structural challenges are also present, such as no clear “front door” for services and approximately seven different backend data tracking systems.

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Housing and shelter systems are largely behind firewalls the City cannot control (currently few referrals to Coordinated Entry and supportive housing).

# Lived Experience: Perspectives

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In addition to street outreach, hosted a three-hour lunch with financial compensation for participants

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Multiple participants grew up in Petaluma; some were newer to the area

---

Women, women of color, and LGBTQ+

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Chronically homeless to newly homeless

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An English language learner

---

Ages ranging from 20s to 60s

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# Lived Experience: Insights

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“Me and my dog all alone” ... All agreed on persistent feelings of isolation and loneliness.

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“Drugs become more of a solution when change feels impossible.”

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Being in community, whether with COTS or DST, makes people feel alive again.

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Better outreach and marketing of services; most found help through word-of-mouth / street outreach workers

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Ok with smaller housing units; like the idea of both permanent and transitional tiny home villages

---

Struggles with program design: “timing out,” not having ongoing support, “institutional” settings

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# III. Analysis

# Analysis: Strengths of the Current System

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Strong institutional knowledge through anchor service providers who have been doing this work for decades

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At the same time, a willingness to innovate –  
Downtown Streets Team, SAFE Team, People’s Village

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Political will from the Council ... to act urgently,  
compassionately, and with a human-centered lens

---

Matching new funding to that will ... financial  
commitments from the City across multiple projects

---

Early, client-level collaboration around the “by-name-  
list” (BNL) effort

---

Robust, existing prevention resources through the  
Petaluma People Services Center



Committee on the Shelterless (COTS) has been serving our community since 1988, providing emergency shelter, food, and wraparound support services.







In 2020, the City launched a local chapter of the Downtown Streets Team (DST), providing additional outreach capacity, workforce development services, and community-building opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.





In 2020, the City, County, and Petaluma People Services Center launched the SAFE Team, a crisis response alternative to local law enforcement.

# Analysis: Weaknesses of the Current System

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Petaluma removed from the main County service core in Santa Rosa (e.g., HOST team, County IMDT)

---

A lack of effective landlord engagement efforts in South County (and countywide for that matter)

---

Challenges getting local people placed through the countywide “Coordinated Entry” system

---

At times uncoordinated and overlapping outreach efforts

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Difficulty supporting people in housing because of a lack of ongoing services, especially for mental health, substance use, and co-occurring conditions



# Analysis: Opportunities for the Current System

---

Rapidly improving communication and partnership with the County

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Significant new funding opportunities (e.g., Project Homekey, CalAIM, State encampment grant)

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Petaluma *is* its own island... can pilot and test new ideas and initiatives

---

Support countywide landlord recruitment efforts to accelerate and expand housing placement opportunities

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Continue to build community among people who are homeless (e.g., peer support roles, a local social enterprise)

---

Not seeing all new supportive housing as “new buildings” (e.g., better leverage housing vouchers, tiny homes / other modular construction)

# Analysis: Threats to Progress Part 1

---

Not including the lived experience perspective and fully addressing remaining barriers to access

---

Insufficiently involving the broader community (e.g., education, ways to get involved)

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Failing to address the cost-of-living imbalance pushing more vulnerable people to the street

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Insufficiently responding to the end of current emergency rental assistance programs

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Local providers not having clearly defined “theories of change” that fit within a community-level pathway to housing

# Analysis: Threats to Progress Part 2

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Duplication and inefficiency from not aligning efforts across partners, providers, and government agencies

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Insufficiently addressing the gaps around mental health, substance use, and co-occurring services

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An erosion of trust among people experiencing homelessness through criminal justice actions

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An opaque and difficult to navigate housing system, especially for people seeking help

---

Not building in financial sustainability for new and current programming

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An inability to hire and retain staff

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# IV. Vision

# Vision Statement

Our vision is to end long-term, chronic homelessness in Petaluma by the end of 2024. In the process, we will create a crisis response system that ensures homelessness becomes a rare, brief, and one-time experience in our community.



# STEP: A Template for a More Connected System of Care

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STEP is an example of how to think about a more effectively coordinated system of care.

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**S – Systems:** The conditions that are making it more likely for a personal crisis to result in homelessness

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**T – Triage:** Creating a crisis response system that can quickly prevent and divert people from homelessness

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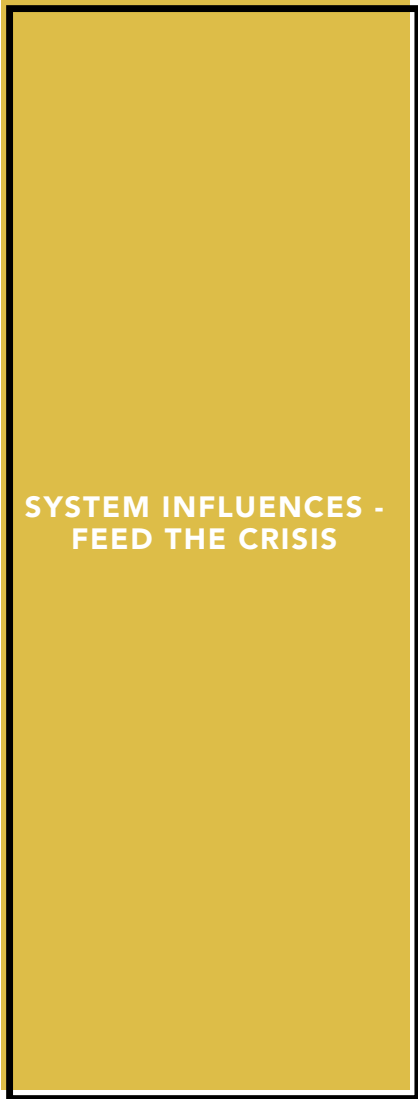
**E – Engagement:** Having a clear process for identifying and coordinating care for people who are currently homeless

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**P – Placements:** Orienting every point of engagement towards permanent (or temporary then permanent) housing

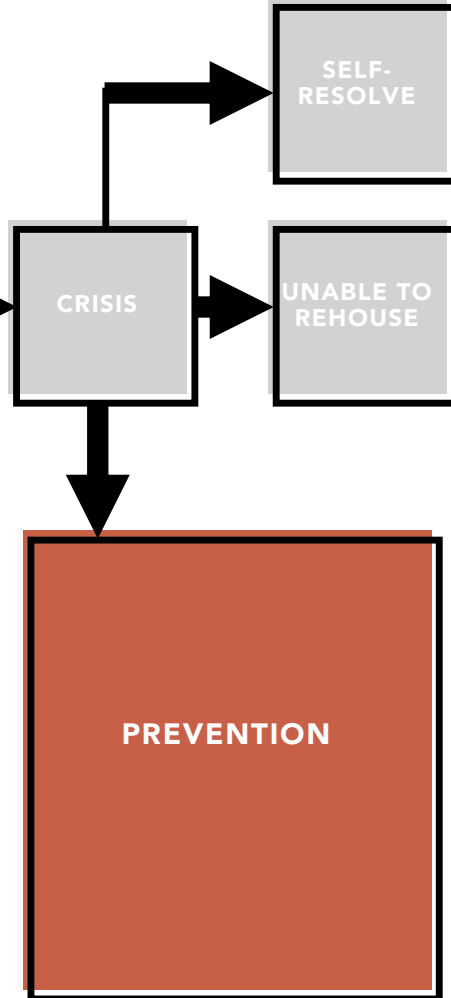
# S

SYSTEMS



# T

TRIAGE



# E

ENGAGEMENT



# P

PLACEMENT



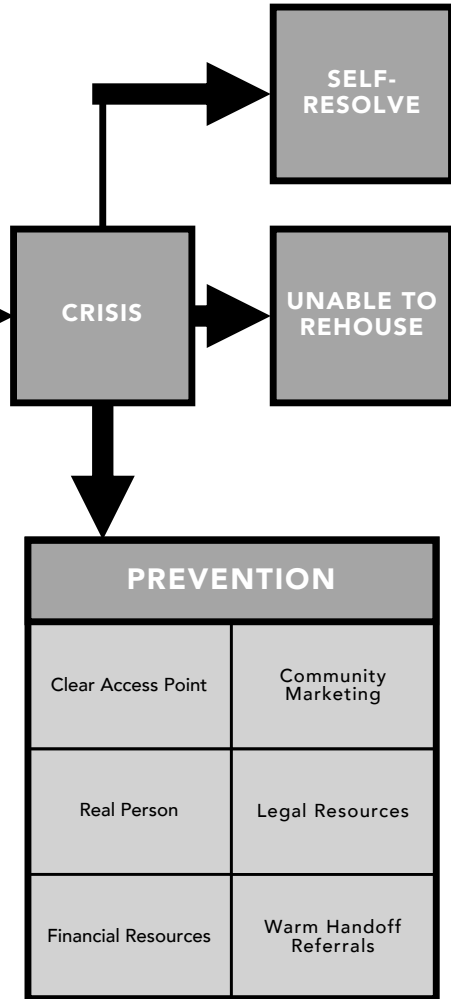
# S

## SYSTEMS

COST OF LIVING	
COST OF HOUSING	FINANCES
Production	Living Wage
Preservation	Income Supports
Protection	Lack of Education
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	
Mental Health Services	Affordable Drug / Alcohol Treatment
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	
PERSONAL HARDSHIP	
Divorce	Family Conflict
Bankruptcy	Roommate Conflict
Foreclosure	Natural Disaster
UNIQUE NEEDS	
BIPOC	Foster Youth
Seniors	Reentry
LGBTQ	Veterans

# T

## TRIAGE



# E

## ENGAGEMENT

COORDINATION	
Project Manager	By-Name-List
Release of Information	Shared Data Tracking
Open HMIS System	Inter-disciplinary
STREET OUTREACH	
Outreach Teams	Cahoots
Street Medicine	Proactive First Responders
DROP-IN SERVICES	
Meals / Pantry	Showers
Clothing	Laundry

# P

## PLACEMENT

PERMANENT HOUSING	
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING	ONE-TIME ASSISTANCE
RAPID REHOUSING	HOUSING VOUCHERS
BELOW MARKET RATE UNITS	"STEP DOWN" / TURNOVER
LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT	HOME-SHARING / ADUs / JADUs
INTENSIVE CARE	
Drug / Alcohol Treatment	Skilled Nursing Facility
Conservatorship	Psychiatric Facility
FAMILY & FRIENDS	
SHELTER	
Congregate	Non-Congregate
Hotel / Motel Vouchers	Safe Parking
Safe Sleeping	Seasonal

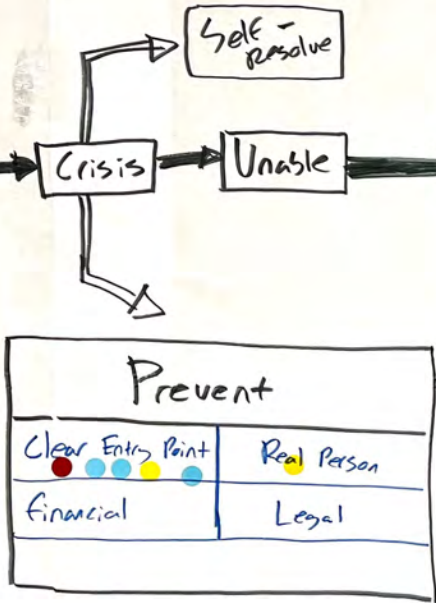
# S Systems

# T Triage

# E Engage

# P Placement

Cost of Living	Living Wage	Income Supports
	Housing Costs	Production Preservation Protection
MH Services	Tx Options	
Foster Youth / TAY	Reentry	
Legal Advocacy	Equity	
Change of personal circumstances - ie divorce		



BNL Coordination		
Outreach Team #1	Outreach Team #2	Contracts
PD	Street Med	County
Drop-in Services	Meals / Pantry	
Open HMIS	Showers / Hygiene	
Shared Data	ROIs	

Shelter	
Congregate	Non-Congregate
Hotels / Motels	Safe Parking
Safe Sleeping	

Permanent		
Coordinated Entry	RRH PSH	Landlords Vouchers
New Dev.	Turnover	
Tx / SLEs	SNIF	
Conserve	24/7 Care	
Reconnect Friends / Family		
Permanent Housing		

Using the STEP framework for community feedback and prioritization during the May 31<sup>st</sup> Workshop

# V. Strategies

# Strategies

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**#1:** Create a “housing-focused” outreach system

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**#2:** Increase permanent supportive housing units

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**#3:** Explore shelter options for vulnerable sub-populations

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**#4:** Improve the Petaluma Coordinated Entry access point

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**#5:** Increase the City’s internal capacity to respond

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**#6:** Tackle the root causes of homelessness

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**#7:** Leverage the community to accelerate progress

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**#8:** Build alignment with other cities and subregions



# #1 Create a “housing-focused” outreach system that reorients every touch point towards housing placements, delineates provider outreach efforts, and establishes a framework for tracking and accountability

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Contract with / hire a by-name-list (BNL) project manager	City						
Provide training and other supports to improve BNL process	City / County						
Work with providers to refine outreach contracts	City / COTS / DST						
Increase County IMDT presence in Petaluma	County						
Advocate for improved an improved Release of Information, open HMIS data system, and more streamlined Coordinated Entry processes	City / County						

# #2 Create and/or secure access to 200 new Permanent Supportive Housing units

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Homekey 2.0	City / County/ Burbank / COTS						
Homekey 3.0	City / County						
Fund new housing case management (1:15 ratio)	City						
Secure new housing vouchers to pair with services	County						
Fund a 2-year landlord recruitment pilot program	City / County / PPSC						
Fold Veteran services into BNL efforts	VA						
Carve out supportive units in new affordable housing	City						





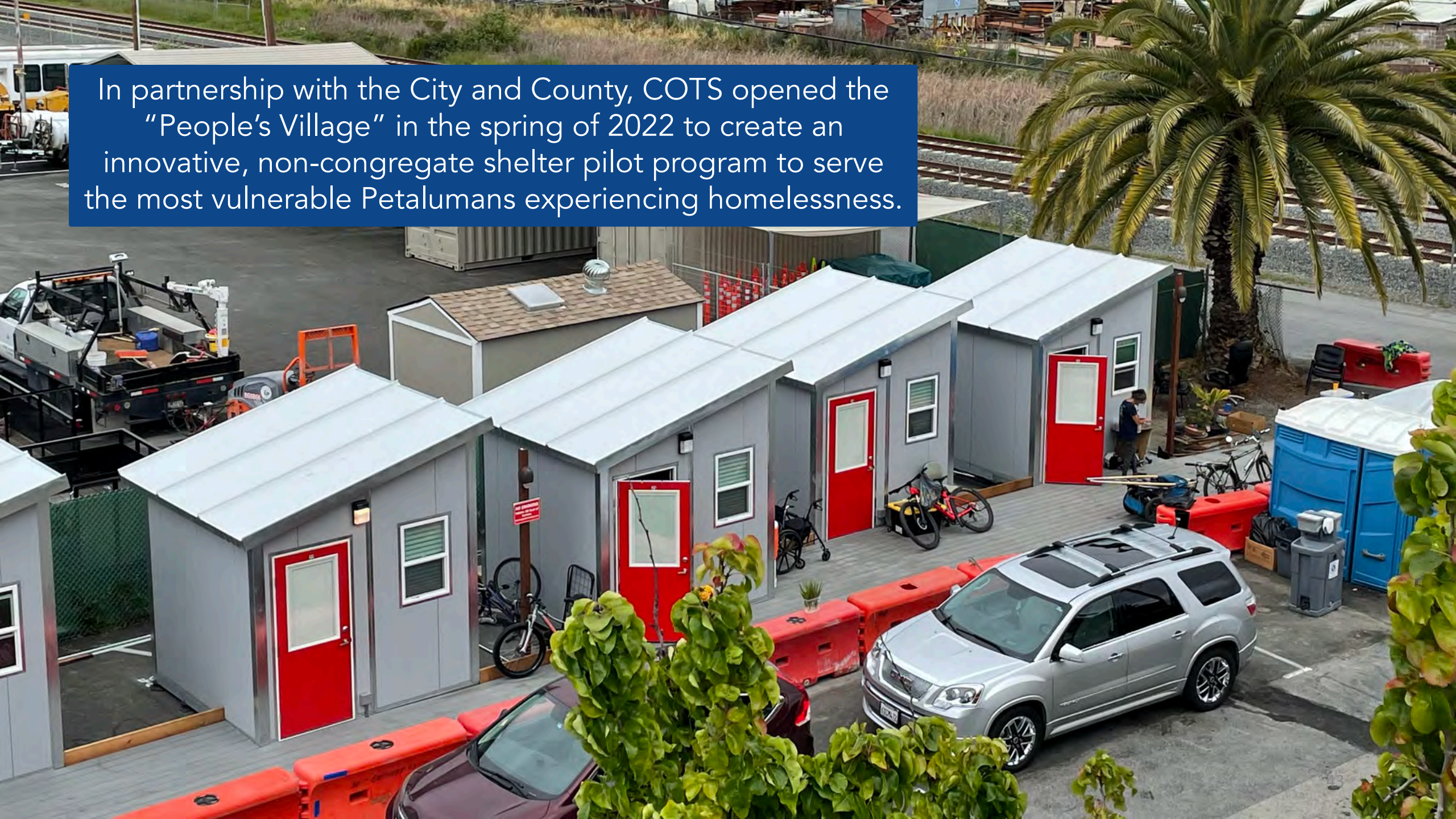
The City, County, Burbank Housing, and COTS have secured \$15.7M in State Project Homekey funding to create 60 new units permanent supportive housing in Petaluma. (photo courtesy of the Petaluma Argus Courier)

# #3 Continue to evaluate and pilot innovative shelter models for vulnerable sub-populations

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
100% utilization of low-barrier shelter at People’s Village	City / COTS						
Explore safe parking for vulnerable seniors priced out of their homes	City / County						
Explore new religious zone housing overlay to pilot new public-private housing and shelter programs at faith-based locations	City						
Utilize grant funding from the State of California to increase outreach, case management, and housing options for people living in local encampments	City / County						
Provide expedited review and fee waivers for privately-sited, innovative shelter models	City						



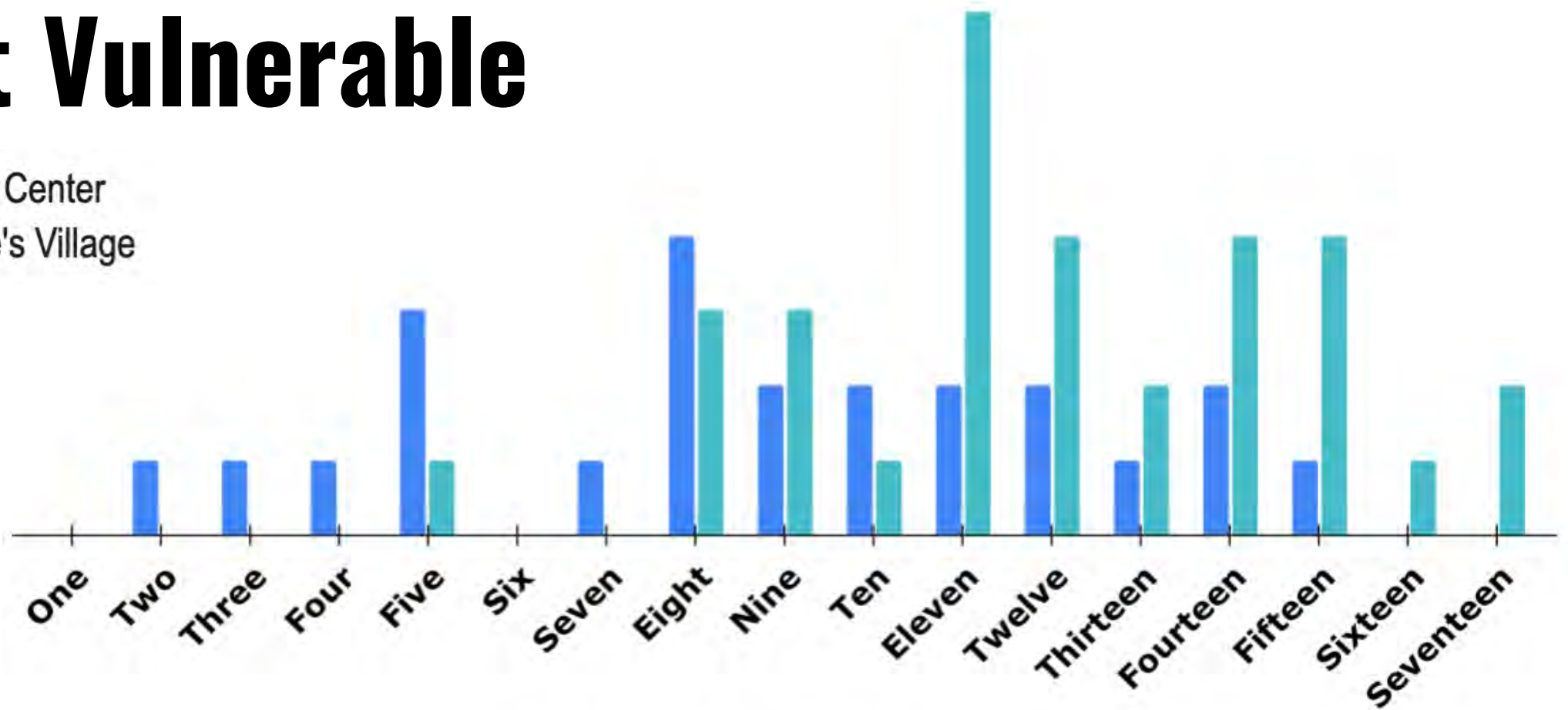
In partnership with the City and County, COTS opened the “People’s Village” in the spring of 2022 to create an innovative, non-congregate shelter pilot program to serve the most vulnerable Petalumans experiencing homelessness.





# Progress Serving the Most Vulnerable

- Mary Isaak Center
- The People's Village



**VI-SPDAT Scores**

# #4 Redesign Petaluma’s Coordinated Entry “Access Point” to a level where no Petaluman experiences homelessness for more than 90 days.

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Sustain emergency rental assistance efforts that began during the Pandemic	City / Cunty / Private						
Use human-centered design to evaluate current process for people seeking assistance	City / County / Providers						
As needed, roll out new marketing campaign and collateral	City						

# #5 Improve the City's internal capacity to respond to homelessness

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Created a dedicated homeless service coordinator position	City						
Reconstitute PD's "Community Impact Response Team"	City						
Join and support countywide data sharing agreements	City						
Standardize City's statements of work with local providers	City						
Develop a data dashboard to measure progress	City						
Leverage contractors and other consultants to help staff apply for State and Federal grant funding, provide training and coaching, and drive countywide systems change	City						



# #6 Commit to tackling the root causes of homelessness that are within the City's control

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Support the creation of affordable housing through alignment with the 2023-2031 Housing Element	City						
Strengthen local tenant protection measures and increase support resources (e.g., financial, legal)	City						
Deploy flexible local money for the creation and/or preservation of extremely low-income housing	City						
Explore the feasibility of local increases to the minimum wage to provide for a living wage	City						
Support the creation of new and/or expanded local behavioral health programming	City						
Advocate for increased county, state, and federal funding and access to safety net services	City						

# #7 Leverage the spirit, compassion, and social capital of our community to accelerate progress

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Host more resource and information fairs for both the public and people experiencing homelessness	City / Providers						
Develop a training course or academy for community members that want to be more involved	City / Providers						
Create a community steering committee to convene and build partnerships across key stakeholders	City						
Develop fee waivers and expedited review for community-based shelter and/or housing proposals	City						
Create strategy and programs for better engaging landlords and facilitating home-sharing opportunities	City / Providers						

# #8 Spearhead cross-agency, cross-sector, and cross-jurisdictional alignment

Workstream	Owner	2022		2023		2024	
Ongoing going collaboration with other subregions	City / Subregions						
Develop shared funding agreements with the County and other subregions	City / Subregions / County						
Advocate for subregional resource commitments from the County	City / Subregions / County						

# VI. Evaluation

# Holding Ourselves Accountable

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Create a “Community Steering Committee” of local stakeholders who can support systems change efforts

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Publish monthly stats on the City’s website

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Send out monthly newsletters with the latest stats

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Align stats and data across other cities, subregions, and County efforts

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Present bi-annual informational items to Council

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# What Questions Do We Want to Answer?

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How many people are experiencing homelessness in Petaluma?

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For people experiencing homelessness, what percentage are sheltered?

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What is our current progress towards ending chronic homelessness?

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Are we preventing new homelessness? (distinguish 1<sup>st</sup> time homelessness vs. returns to homelessness)

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How long are people remaining homeless? What is the housing placement rate for City-funded programs?

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Is our system equitable?

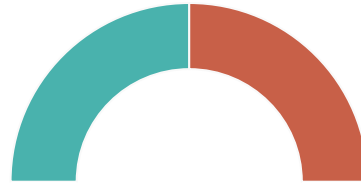


# Draft Data Dashboard



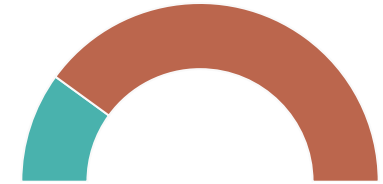
How many people are currently homeless?

Annual # from PIT  
Monthly # from BNL



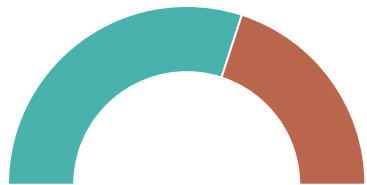
For people who are still unhoused, what % are unsheltered?

Total # of shelter units  
% of people sheltered



What is our housing placement rate?

% of exits to permanent housing  
Length of time in program



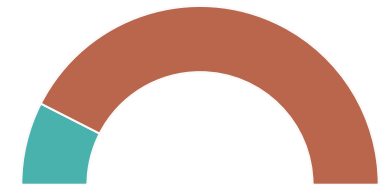
What is our progress towards ending chronic and veteran homelessness?

Monthly # from BNL  
Cumulative housed from BNL  
# of PSH units created  
Housing retention rate



Are we preventing new homelessness?

# of people requesting help  
Breakdown of intervention  
% who became homeless



Is our system equitable?

Race, gender, and ethnicity reports from HMIS  
Lived experience representation  
The rate of overcrowding in rental units  
Language service availability

# VII. Funding

# The City's Current Funding for Homeless Services (as of FY21-22)

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**City General Fund:** \$800K for direct homelessness programming (e.g., COTS, DST); approximately \$1M for indirect support and programming (e.g., the SAFE Team)

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**Housing Development:** Currently 337 affordable units in development, leveraging \$3.2M in City funding (could be higher as projects progress)

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**In-kind Staff Time:** Housing Manager, City Manager's Office, Police, Fire, Public Works, Planning

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**City-Directed State and Federal:** \$350k in annual federal CDBG funding for homelessness prevention; \$1.3M in one-time State encampment funding; \$1.5M in one on-time federal ARPA funding

# How the City Can Better Utilize County, State, and Federal Funding

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**Project Design:** Innovative, replicable projects with clearly identified impact objectives, developed in context of existing evidence and aligned with clear long-term strategy

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**Collaboration:** Effective, demonstrable collaboration among city, county, service providers and/or other partners - with proven success on prior projects

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**Leveraging:** Availability of resources that complement the requested funding - e.g., matching funds, and in-kind contributions such as staff time, services, land or facilities

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**Implementation Capacity:** Adequate systems and staffing for data collection and analysis, project management, contract compliance, and quality assurance

# Implications for the City's Funding Strategy for this Action Cycle

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With approval of this plan, the City is establishing its homelessness strategic priorities for the next three years

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Staff will work to more clearly define the desired outcomes for each strategy, as well as the level of need

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Staff will work with funding partners to identify collaborative and leveraged investment opportunities

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Staff will use this information to develop new scopes of work for local programs and services

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Staff will then RFP new service contracts, with a focus on outcomes-based performance

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# Focus Areas for Future Funding

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Increasing the City's internal coordination, grant writing, and project management capacity

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Leveraged opportunities to create new permanent supportive housing

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Continued support for Petaluma-based homelessness prevention, shelter, and outreach services

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Multi-year pilot programs with collaborative funding commitments



# VIII. Appendix

# Glossary & Acronyms A - C

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**ARPA - American Rescue Plan Act** - A one-time infusion of funding from the federal government in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**BNL - By Names List** - A way to focus on housing the most vulnerable (and often most service-demanding) first by looking at individual needs and histories

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**Case Conferencing** - Where service providers strategize about individuals and how to best address their service needs.

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**Case Management** - Working with one client to address their needs.

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**CDBG - Community Development Block Grant** – Federal funding to support local affordable housing and economic development efforts

# Glossary & Acronyms C-D

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**Chronically Homeless** - A federal designation for a person experiencing long-term homelessness with a disabling condition

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**Coordinated Entry System** - A housing placement system required to receive Federal and State funding that coordinates care and reduces barriers to access

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**Continuum of Care** - The governing body that determines federal funding allocations and develops regional policies for addressing homelessness.

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**COTS - Committee of the Shelterless** - Service provider in Petaluma and South County, operates Mary Isaak Center Emergency Shelter

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**DST - Downtown Streets Team** - outreach provider in Petaluma

# Glossary & Acronyms H

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**HMIS - Homeless Management Information System** - A countywide system to collect data about people experiencing homelessness

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**Homekey** - A State program inviting localities to purchase hotels and apartments and turn them into interim / supportive housing

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**Housing First** - Putting someone into housing first and then supporting their recovery from homelessness

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**IMDT** - The County's Interdepartmental Multi-disciplinary Team for serving people with complex needs

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**Interim Housing** - Short-term housing placements in emergency shelter

# Glossary & Acronyms L - V

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**Lived Experience** - Persons who have been or are currently homeless who serve as representatives for the unhoused.

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**PPSC - Petaluma People Services** - A social safety net provider in South County

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**PSH - Permanent Supportive Housing** - Housing units with services on-site, serving the chronically homeless

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**RFP - Request for Proposals** - A competitive process for awarding grant funding

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**SAFE Team** - Petaluma's crisis response alternative to Police and Fire

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**VI-SPDAT - Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool** – Assessment for housing needs

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**Vouchers** - Subsidized housing whereby vouchers holders pay 30% of their income to housing costs



# Further Reading

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[Built for Zero](#) (national)

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[All Home](#) (regional)

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[California Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) (state)

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[Sonoma County Point-in-Time Counts](#) (county)

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[The City of Petaluma's Housing Element](#) (city)

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[The City's "Pathway to Housing" webpage](#) (city)

**This report and strategic planning process was  
led by Andrew Hening Consulting, LLC.**