

# Responses to July 8, 2025 Homelessness Study Session

## City Council Questions

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### **General Questions**

**1. What is the origin of the City’s unhoused population, are they local or are unhoused individuals coming to city from other locations?**

According to the County’s 2025 Point-in-Time Count, most people experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County reported living in the county longer than ten years (70 percent), while only two percent lived there for less than a year. At this time, the City does not have this information at the jurisdictional level.

**2. What is the definition of “chronically homeless?”**

The County’s Point-in-Time Count uses the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition. Under this definition, an individual or family is considered chronically homeless if they have a qualifying disability, such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, developmental disability, or physical disability, and have either been continuously homeless for at least 12 months or experienced at least four separate episodes of homelessness in the past three years that together total 12 months. For families, the head of household or a minor child must meet these criteria.

**3. How is “at-risk of homelessness” defined?**

“At-risk of homelessness” is defined by HUD as individuals or families who are very low-income (below 30% of Area Median Income), lack the resources or support networks to maintain housing, and are at imminent risk of losing their housing within 14 days. This includes households facing eviction, unsafe living conditions, or discharge from an institution without stable housing identified.

The County’s Homelessness Prevention System also considers additional risk factors, such as high rent burden, sudden loss of income, pending eviction, domestic violence, or unsafe living arrangements in determining individuals who are “at-risk of homelessness.”

**4. Are the City’s homelessness prevention services only available to city residents?**

Tenant Based Rental Assistance is for Santa Clara residents, but other services are available countywide as the City participates in the County’s Homelessness Prevention System. Santa Clara is the only city in the County, other than San Jose, that has invested in the Homelessness Prevention System, and has done so for years. The \$50,000 annual investment directly benefits at-risk Santa Clara residents and contributes to the services/resources that they receive through the prevention system. These funds have contributed to the prevention support that over 1,500 Santa Clara residents have received over the past 5 years (2020-25).

**5. What is the relationship between the County and developers?**

The County typically lends out funding to developers to develop or preserve 100% affordable housing. The County supports the construction of new affordable rental and ownership housing as well as permanent supportive housing with wrap around services. In some cases, the County owns or acquires land and works with developers to produce new housing opportunities on those sites.

**6. Is it realistic that this type of homelessness (unhoused for 2+years) can be addressed?**

People who are unhoused for a number of years can and do exit homelessness. This typically requires permanent, stable housing, ongoing supportive services, income stability, among other things. Multiple work items in the Two-Year Plan aim to address these strategies.

**7. Is the Benton & Lawrence project interim or transitional housing?**

The Benton Lawrence project will provide interim housing for families with minor children. Staff is planning to bring the City/County revenue agreement to Council for consideration at a June or July 2026 Council meeting.

**8. Addressing rising unsheltered numbers despite increased shelter capacity: Are we looking at how the vacancy rates are increasing as the number of unsheltered individuals is also increasing?**

Overall, the inflow of unhoused people continues to outpace the housing and shelter that is available. The City receives annual updates on inflow/outflow at the City and County level. The City does not operate homeless shelters nor do we receive consistent data on the utilization of shelter beds throughout the County throughout the year. Anecdotally, we hear that some unhoused residents avoid congregate shelters for a variety of reasons including safety, lack of privacy, lack of secure storage for belongings, short term stays, prohibitions with bringing pets into shelter, and more. Shelter occupancy may also vary by season (less vacancy during extreme weather for example). Interim non-congregate housing tends to address some of these design issues and is generally viewed as more desirable than typical congregate shelter.

**Enforcement**

**9. What are the City's current creek access and enforcement policies?**

The City complies with state and federal laws, including Johnson v. Grants Pass, in determining when and how enforcement can be conducted. The Santa Clara Police Department's Community Response Team (CRT) coordinates with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) to enforce trespassing, public safety, and environmental protection policies along creeks. Enforcement is primarily complaint-driven, with prioritization given to locations presenting fire hazards, environmental degradation, and/or threats to public health and safety. Current enforcement practices involve a 72-hour advance notice and outreach to individuals prior to scheduled encampment cleanups which are coordinated by CRT and implemented through the City's existing agreement with Tucker Construction.

**10. If a safe parking site is established, can the City develop policies that would limit RV street parking citywide? Such as, requiring individuals to move their residential vehicles (RV) to a safe parking site, and providing street parking permits when the site is full.**

Limiting or prohibiting RV parking on public streets would require the City to adopt an ordinance regulating when and where RVs may park. If the City pursues adopting such an ordinance, the ordinance could be developed to restrict RV parking on public streets and direct individuals to a designated safe parking site, while also establishing a permit system for special circumstances, such as when an RV safe parking site is full. Several cities in the region, such as San Francisco, San Jose, Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Cupertino, have adopted such ordinances, although each jurisdiction has different restrictions, and has faced different complications. It is important to note that at this time, the City does not have a RV safe parking program in place.

**11. Has the City considered prohibiting RV rentals to prevent exploitation of unhoused individuals?**

The City has not considered prohibiting RV rentals. Such prohibition would be difficult to monitor or enforce as most tenants are unlikely to report their landlord for fear of retaliation and/or displacement. However, vanlording does occur and staff recognizes the risks associated with renting unsafe or sub-standard RVs to unsheltered individuals and will monitor this issue for potential future action.

**Funding**

**12. Considering potential federal funding cuts, what are the financial challenges the City is facing and what programs would be impacted?**

Staff and the City’s legislative consultant, Townsend Public Affairs, continue to monitor federal legislation to assess their potential impact on local programs. Since the July 8, 2025 Study Session, there have been changes to certain federal program criteria and reductions to federal funding sources such as the Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). Legal concerns with new terms and conditions set forth in Federal Grant Agreements and new federal policies for entitlement funding are also creating financial challenges. Potential federal funding cuts or changes to program criteria may have eventual impacts on the City’s ability to offer Tenant Based Rental Assistance and it may impact how the County and the Santa Clara County Continuum of Care provide their services.

**13. What is the City’s future budget planning given the County’s reduced social services spending/funding?**

The Draft Citywide Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Its Impacts included a budget for the two-year plan. With respect to social services, the County does not currently fund many of the direct services at the local level that the City is looking to implement outlined under the ongoing and planned work items, including regular, locally based street outreach/case management, temporary hotel program, inclement weather hotel program. The City plans to utilize awarded State funds to cover the street outreach/case management, temporary hotel program, inclement weather hotel program. There is also an additional \$87,828 remaining from State funds that can be utilized for

other services, which may include pop-up resource fairs. There is an unfunded need for a safe parking program should the City move forward with this effort.

**14. Why is the County eliminating the CRT team’s PERT coordinator position? Is there any City funding available to help the County maintain its CRT PERT Coordinator?**

The County previously expressed an interest in transitioning the PERT Clinician position to the County’s Mobile Crisis Response Team. However, as a result of feedback from multiple cities, that the cities wished to continue with the assigned Clinician model, the County has engaged with the interested cities to prepare a new MOU, including Santa Clara (negotiations are underway). The funding source for the new MOU will likely be opioid settlement monies together with grant monies. Although the City’s MOU with the County for this service expired at the end of 2025, the Clinician assigned to the City has continued to work with, and is currently working with, the Police Department’s Community Response Team.

**Draft Citywide Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Two-year Workplan**

**15. There is a gap in in the workplan, Strategy 1: Preventive measures are largely unaddressed in the ongoing or pending work items.**

In the two-year workplan that was originally shared with the City Council on July 8, 2025, there were four ongoing work items related to Strategy 1. These work efforts focus on partnering with key organizations to reduce rent burdens for seniors at the Belovida apartment complex, exploring increasing the City’s investment in the County’s Homelessness Prevention System to increase access to rental assistance, deposit assistance, among other things, expanding the City’s investment in Tenant Based Rental Assistance to serve additional households, and exploring the implementation of policies to prevent displacement and/or facilitate a soft landing when relocation is unavoidable. Aside from increasing affordable housing, which the City continues to do, these work items will provide financial assistance and address root causes of housing instability. There are also other work items in the two-year workplan that focus on supportive services, such as behavioral and mental healthcare (offered respectively through PERT and Care Solace at the City). Together, these strategies provide a foundation of what the City can effectively do as a local jurisdiction to prevent homelessness.

As noted in a separate response, Santa Clara is the only city in the County, other than San Jose, that funds the County’s Homelessness Prevention System (the County and Destination: Home funds the remaining portion). Bill Willson Center is now a Homelessness Prevention System access point and the City’s designated Homelessness Prevention System service provider.

**16. Who is ultimately accountable for implementing and evaluating the strategy items in the City’s homelessness response plan?**

The City Manager’s Office and Community Development – Housing and Community Services Division is responsible for administering and coordinating the Citywide Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Its Impacts; however, the Two-Year Workplan (Appendix A in the Citywide Plan) designates the City departments responsible for/involved with implementing each work item. Staff plans to provide the City Council annual progress updates on the City’s workplan. In March 2026,

Community Development – Housing and Community Services Division hired a new Management Analyst to support with the day-to-day management of these work efforts.

**17. What is the City doing to prevent homelessness in the future, not just currently?**

The City invests annually in the County’s Homelessness Response System; funds a Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program that provides deposit assistance, case management, and rental assistance for a year, Project Sentinel to provide landlord and tenant education and conflict mediation to prevent eviction, displacement, and in some cases homelessness, and services that support survivors of domestic violence and help them find housing; has and continues to invest funds into Permanent and Interim Supportive Housing developments in Santa Clara.

Additionally, as part of a 2026 State budget request process, the City requested funding to support the implementation of a three-year pilot program that would expand in-person Homelessness Prevention System services through a dedicated case manager. This pilot program would increase capacity for local in-person case management services and would focus on the needs of seniors and other special needs residents who face barriers to staying housed or transitioning to housing they can afford. The program is designed to assist residents overcome challenges to navigating the complex and fast-moving affordable housing search process. Additionally, the program would allocate funding for one-time direct assistance to help cover essential costs such as transportation expenses, security deposits, and other housing related expenses.

**18. Structural inequities were not addressed in the presentation:**

- **How is the City addressing structural inequities and racial disparities?**
- **Are services being delivered in accordance with the racial makeup of the City’s unshoused community?**
- **What racial equity metrics is the City using in its interventions?**

Staff recognizes that different groups are disproportionately represented among the City’s unshoused community based on the County’s data. At this time, the City is in the process of trying to initiate a number of direct services and these will include metrics for client demographics and languages spoken to help inform future services and program development.

**RV Safe Parking**

**19. Any possibility of drug-sniffing dogs at safe parking sites?**

Safe parking program rules would prohibit drug use, violence, and disruptive behavior. While the City can develop the program however it wishes within legal parameters, best practices emphasize supportive rules rather than program policies that are associated with policing such as drug sniffing dogs, which may be stigmatizing to participants and deter program participation.

**20. What are the City’s RV towing costs vs. operating a safe parking program?**

The City’s FY 2025/26 and FY 2026/27 budget includes \$67,000 per year for citywide towing, which is not specific to RVs. As part of the Draft Citywide Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Its Impacts Two-Year Workplan Work Item 5.2, staff recommended expanding the City’s towing capacity. In the

draft workplan, staff also recommended increasing the budget for encampment cleanups, which are performed through a third-party vendor and used at the same time as towing abandoned/illegally parked vehicles. Due to increased enforcement of RVs, the Police Department and Finance plan to bring forth budget amendment(s) for this fiscal year at year-end related to these costs.

The cost of operating an RV safe parking program depends on multiple factors including use of City-owned property versus leasing a private property site, program model type: 24/7 versus overnight parking, lot size, and services provided. In early 2025, staff estimated \$1.6 million in funding is needed to operate a 24/7 safe parking pilot program on a City-owned property that can host 30-40 RVs for 2–3 years assuming there is minimal site preparation cost and no lease payment. However, staff is exploring alternative options to identify potential private properties that may be interested in hosting safe parking at this time.

It is important to note that a key tradeoff to consider when comparing towing costs versus the costs of operating a safe parking program is that towing unhoused individuals' automobiles, including RVs, does not directly address homelessness. In contrast, a safe parking program has ongoing costs but provides structured services and pathways to housing, which are crucial in addressing homelessness.

**21. Currently there are too many requirements to set up a safe parking site on non-City properties and would like less stringent requirements.**

Safe parking programs that are operated on private property need to comply with zoning, fire safety, Americans Disability Act accessibility, environmental health requirements, among other things. Whereas some regulations are under the City's authority and can be addressed in a City ordinance should the City continue its efforts to develop a safe parking program, other regulations are beyond the City's ability to modify.

**22. Requesting additional details about a potential City RV safe parking program, including:**

- **General program rules**
- **Are there time limits for participants?**
- **What support services would be available onsite? Would WeHOPE Dignity on Wheels services be available?**
- **How will waste management be handled?**

**23. Will there be public meetings regarding potential RV parking sites?**

**24. Will the City present one or multiple RV safe parking sites and gather public feedback?**

Responses to #22-24 are included below.

Safe parking programs require participants to sign a participant agreement acknowledging and adhering to program rules. Program rules generally prohibit weapons, drug use, and disruptive behavior to ensure a safe and secure environment for all participants and the surrounding community.

Safe parking program time limits generally range from 30 to 90 days, with extensions possible if space is available. Additionally, requirements also vary by program type, overnight or 24/7. For example, at an overnight program with operating hours from 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM, participants are

assigned a space for X days but must move their vehicle each morning by 7:00 AM and may return at 7:00 PM to park in the same space. In contrast, at a 24/7 parking site participants can remain parked in their assigned space for the entire X days without ever needing to move their vehicles. The safe parking programs that staff visited in the region and discussed in detail with other local cities' staff operated on a 24/7 model.

Safe parking programs generally provide onsite support services, such as case management and basic needs services, and bio-waste removal. The City's service agreement with WeHOPE for mobile shower and laundry services through its Dignity on Wheels program will term out in February 2027. Should a safe parking program be implemented before then and if the Council wants to incorporate the service onsite as part of the program, additional funding will be required as it is only currently funded to operate once a week.

If the City identifies one or more potential safe parking sites, staff plans to complete a robust community outreach process to gather feedback before presenting a proposed program to Council for consideration.

### **WeHOPE Services – Temporary Hotel Program (THP) and Inclement Weather Hotel Program (IWHP)**

#### **25. What are the room capacity & damage protocols for the Temporary Hotel Program (THP) and Inclement Weather Hotel Program (IWHP)?**

The City and WeHOPE anticipated initiating services in November 2025 after Council approval of the service agreement; however, the vendor subsequently requested updates to the service agreement prior to execution. Staff has been working with WeHOPE to address their requests in a way that is feasible for the City.

It should be noted that each service operator will have different program rules, however, these are up to the City's administrative review and approval. WeHOPE's policy for both the THP and IWHP is to limit room occupancy to a maximum of four clients per room, unless hotel policy states a maximum of less than four, in which case the hotel policy will apply. Additionally, WeHOPE will verify that all individuals sharing a hotel room are family members or otherwise have an established prior relationship.

The agreement currently being negotiated with WeHOPE proposes to allocate \$12,813 for the THP and \$5,625 for the IWHP for potential hotel room maintenance and repairs. These allocations will ensure that resources are available to address any potential damages or repairs, thereby maintaining program continuity and supporting positive partnerships between the City, WeHOPE and participating hotels.

#### **26. What are the locations of the THP and IWHP hotels?**

If the City and WeHOPE reach agreement, it is proposed that the THP and IWHP will be operated in partnership with hotels located within the City of Santa Clara. The proposed terms of the agreement under negotiation with WeHOPE provide that in the event that no rooms are available during an inclement weather activation, the contractor may secure hotel rooms as close to City

limits as possible, preferably within five miles. At the time of the November 2025 Council approval of the agreement, a hotel located on El Camino Real was confirmed as the THP and intended IWHP hotels.

**27. What services are offered at the THP and IWHP hotel sites?**

The agreement is still being negotiated, however, the City desires that the THP will provide five hotel rooms year-round for unhoused residents actively participating in WeHOPE case management services. Under the current draft agreement, participants may occupy a hotel room for up to 30 days while working toward a permanent housing solution or other transitional housing opportunity. During their stay, each participant works with a WeHOPE case manager who helps them develop a housing plan, secure any necessary documents, enroll in benefits, and connect to health and behavioral health services as needed. While in the program, participants receive daily meals, hygiene supplies, wellness checks, and regular room inspections to ensure a safe and supportive environment.

The current draft of the agreement being negotiated provides that the IWHP will provide up to ten hotel rooms during severe weather activations for a maximum of 45 nights per year. Rooms are offered on a first-come, first-served basis to unhoused Santa Clara residents. WeHOPE staff are onsite 24/7 to ensure program rules are followed. Participants receive meals, intake and exit planning, and access to WeHOPE’s case management services. Similar to the THP, case managers will provide supportive services and connections to health and behavioral health services as needed.

**28. Provide a status update on Abode outreach positions; did these positions ever get funded? Is the City transitioning to WeHope for outreach?**

Abode’s HEAT team provides periodic outreach to 13 cities and is funded by the County. Their schedule rotates bi-weekly. The HEAT team consists of one program manager, three Community Health Outreach Workers, and three outreach specialists. They focus on people with moderate to severe mental health issues and work to enroll clients, help clients work towards being “document ready” for supportive housing, conduct VI-SPDAT vulnerability assessments, and provide items needed for unsheltered living. The HEAT team works closely with the County’s Coordinated Entry Team to find clients and help them through the steps of getting placed into supportive housing. The HEAT team has established a good working relationship with the Police Department’s CRT but they are stretched thin and some cities have opted to pay for a dedicated staff or a team to provide more in depth services.

**29. Requesting additional details about the Dignity on Wheels Program, including:**

- **How effective is the program?**
- **Why is the program located at Marsalli Park?**
- **Can the program rotate locations?**
- **Can the program be located at food distribution sites or other locations where unhoused individuals are located such as libraries or senior centers?**

The Dignity on Wheels program was moved from Bassett Drive to Marsalli Park due to low usage, lack of transit access, and changing patterns of RV encampments. Marsalli Park is more centrally located and adjacent to three bus lines. Since relocating to Marsalli Park in October 2024, the

Dignity on Wheels program has increased average monthly usage from 15 people at Bassett to 28 at Marsalli Park, despite lower than average utilization during the first three months. In most months, more than 30 people use the program at its current location at Marsalli Park.

It is not recommended to rotate locations because unhoused people may not be able to find the service if they do not have regular internet access or a cell phone. Generally, it takes several months for unhoused residents to trust that the service will be there and to use it.

At the July 8, 2025 Study Session, several Councilmembers expressed interest in relocating this service to a different location where unhoused individuals could also receive other basic needs services (i.e., food), which the agreement with WeHOPE for the mobile shower and laundry services does allow. Staff has identified a potential site to relocate the Dignity on Wheels program that is accessible to several north/south and east/west transit lines, and in proximity to resources. As part of the April 21, 2026 Study Session, staff is requesting Council feedback on the potential relocation. If relocated, staff will monitor and evaluate program data and other considerations to measure the effectiveness of the new site.

**30. Can the City conduct quarterly surveys through its outreach services for the City to better understand its homelessness issue?**

The City participates in the County's Point-in-Time Count, which is a national effort to complete a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The 2025 Point-in-Time Count included a survey. Together, the count and survey provide data and information that provides more details about people experiencing homelessness in our community and the causes of their homelessness. A street outreach team's primary responsibility is to provide assessments and service connection; however, they can collect data and feedback on the program which will further inform the program and future services.

**Proposed Additional Homelessness Services/Programs**

**31. Is the City considering tiny homes as a cost effective, more permanent solution to housing individuals?**

There is currently no work item in the Two-Year Workplan related to tiny homes. Similar to a potential safe parking program, there will be difficulty finding a City-owned site that can host the program.