

Report of the San Leandro Homeless & Housing Task Force

**A Report in Response to Immediate Homeless Issues in San Leandro
December 2014**

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INTRODUCTION

On December 8, 2013, a homeless man was found dead on the streets of Hayward. Temperatures were near freezing that Sunday morning and the cold weather likely played a role in his death, along with the death of six other homeless persons in the bay area over the prior two week period. In response, Mayor Stephen Cassidy asked for Davis Street Family Resource Center's assistance in distributing sleeping bags to help mitigate the winter's cold weather for those sleeping unsheltered in San Leandro. In the aftermath, San Leandro's social service organizations recognized the need for a unified effort from the City and the nonprofit community in identifying and implementing long-term strategies for addressing and reducing homelessness in San Leandro. Earlier this year, Rose Johnson, Executive Director at Davis Street Family Resource Center, spoke to City Council on behalf of the three main nonprofits serving homeless individuals – Davis Street Family Resource Center, Building Futures with Women and Children, and Interfaith Homeless Network/April Showers – asking that a Task Force be formed to develop a unified effort and identify immediate steps to serve the homeless this winter.

At the direction of the City Council, a Homeless and Housing Task Force was formed to develop a plan to respond to immediate homeless issues in the City of San Leandro based on the priorities outlined in San Leandro's new Housing Element. The formation of the Task Force was the City's response to the needs of its unsheltered, chronically homeless residents.

The Task Force consists of the following individuals and organizations:

- Moira Fry, Interfaith Homelessness Network (IHN)/April Showers
- Rose Johnson, Executive Director, Davis Street Family Resource Center
- Ronald Keeney, Interfaith Homelessness Network (IHN)/April Showers
- Dan Martinez, Congregations Organizing for Renewal (COR)
- Liz Varela, Executive Director, Building Futures with Women and Children

Since September 2014, the Task Force convened six meetings. The meetings included Task Force members, City staff from the Community Development, Police, and Recreation and Human Services Departments, members of the public, as well staff from Alameda County Housing & Community Development, EveryOne Home, the San Leandro Unified School District, San Leandro Hospital, and the Downtown San Leandro Community Benefit District.

The Task Force immediately recognized that to more effectively and efficiently respond to the immediate needs of homeless San Leandrans, they are tasked with the following work:

- **Identifying the homeless.** The Task Force needs to identify the City's homeless residents. Currently, who, where, and how many homeless residents there are in San Leandro are unknown.

- **Coordinating the response to homelessness.** The Task Force members plan to collaborate and coordinate their respective homeless services so there is a single, comprehensive system that assists homeless residents in San Leandro.
- **Attracting federal, state, and philanthropic funds.** The Task Force envisions that the efforts that are mobilized could be used to leverage federal, state, and philanthropic funds to homeless services in the City.

The Task Force presented an update to the City Council at the October 20, 2014 council meeting. Task Force Co-Chair Liz Varela, Executive Director at Building Futures for Women and Children, presented the immediate needs the Task Force identified and a request for funding in order to provide the services. The immediate needs identified included a pilot warming center, an Outreach Coordinator, and funding for basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

The Task Force prepared this report that outlines the immediate, short term plan that will be implemented to assist the City's homeless residents in the upcoming winter months. The Task Force will leverage both the information gained as well as the proof of financial commitment from the community to apply for federal, state, and philanthropic funds to be used to implement programs and services to address and reduce homelessness in San Leandro.

MISSION OF THE TASK FORCE

The mission of the San Leandro Homeless & Housing Task Force is to develop a short term plan, by acting a catalyst and leadership resource, to bring the community together to promote affordable housing, end homelessness, and improve the situation of those who are homeless.

In pursuit of this mission, the Task Force will:

- Determine need, existing services and services gaps for homeless and those in housing crisis;
- Identify resources to support development of an implementation plan;
- Ensure stakeholder involvement; and,
- Develop timeline and identify next steps to achieve mission.

HOMELESS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Task Force acknowledged that their first task was to complete a Homeless Needs Assessment for San Leandro as currently there is no central agency in San Leandro that identifies and tracks the homeless population in the City. To have an effective response to homelessness and to garner support for the Task Force's recommendations for financial assistance and resources, it is imperative to quantify the severity of the homelessness issue in the City. The Task Force completed the following draft Homeless Needs Assessment for San Leandro. The draft includes a description of the methodology for collecting data and data available for the eight organizations which track the individuals they serve. Each organization was also asked to identify the existing services they provide and provide input on the critical service gaps for homeless individuals.

Building Futures with Women & Children, Davis Street Family Resource Center, and Interfaith Homeless Network/April Showers are the prominent agencies that provide social services to homeless persons. Alameda County HCD, the San Leandro and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts, St. Leander Church, and San Leandro Hospital also provide services to homeless individuals. Each of these agencies implements its own intake process to track the homeless persons they serve. Consequently, each agency has its own assessment based on its own respective methodology. A description of the methodology and data available from each organization follows:

Building Futures with Women & Children (Building Futures)

The agency's 30-bed San Leandro Shelter and 20-bed Sister Me Home Safe House provide shelter for homeless women and children while providing case management and other support services to assist in resolving housing barriers and finding permanent

solutions to their homelessness. Clients receive domestic violence support and education; weekly case management; housing assistance; mental health services; help with medical issues; and dedicated services for children including counseling, school advocacy, and therapeutic activities. Building Futures also provides groceries and meals; clothing and toiletries; employment information, resources, and referral; and transportation. Building Futures' Housing Resource Center provides monetary assistance, landlord advocacy, and household establishment help to those who are at risk of homelessness or who have recently become homeless.

Building Futures uses the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) definition of "homelessness" for data gathering purposes and for most of their program eligibility unless program guidelines allow them to expand the definition. Building Futures uses the Homeless Management information System (HMIS). As a recipient of HUD Homeless Assistance Funding, Building Futures is required to add client data to the Alameda HMIS InHouse Database and staff are required to complete HMIS training programs to obtain access to the database.

Since 2007, Building Futures has been a housing first agency, linking their clients to permanent housing as a top priority. Alameda County's ranking of permanent housing outcomes for its 15 homeless shelter providers, consistently places Building Futures' two homeless shelters in the top five. Building Futures has provided Housing Assistance through its Housing Resource Center. The Housing Resource Center builds on the federally funded program Building Futures administered between 2009-2012 which ended homelessness for 2,000 individuals in need.

From January through September 2014 at its San Leandro Shelter, Sister Me Home Safe House, and Housing Resource Center, Building Futures served in San Leandro 422 individuals who identified themselves as homeless.

Despite expertise and breadth of service, Building Futures identifies the lack of affordable housing as critical service gap. Rising rents, even with new funding for rapid re-housing, and the dearth of stock make it difficult to place people into housing that they can then maintain. The continued volatility of funding for homeless programs and shelters also creates a challenge to maintenance of services and agency infrastructure. Building Futures believes it is crucial that funding for safety net programs be available from year to year.

The lack of Mid-County shelters for homeless men and the lack of street outreach teams are additional service gaps Building Futures identified. While the pilot warming center and an Outreach Coordinator will assist in providing needed services, Building Futures foresees that it will take a bigger commitment from both the County and the City to make this on-going service available to unsheltered homeless people on the streets. Access to healthcare and mental healthcare is also a huge barrier faced by this population.

One of the biggest causes of homelessness for women is domestic violence. In many cities, domestic violence is one of the top three violent crimes the community faces. To meet this need in San Leandro, the agency operates a 20-bed domestic violence shelter, a domestic violence outreach and education program, and domestic violence services at the San Leandro Shelter. Building Futures is asking the City of San Leandro to commit more resources to address the domestic violence and the ripple effect of damage and loss it creates in families, businesses, and communities.

Davis Street Family Resource Center (Davis Street)

Davis Street's Basic Needs Program provides groceries, clothing and toiletries, health services including medical and dental care and counseling, employment services, transportation, childcare, and case management to its clients. Davis Street has a long history of providing critical safety net services to the community, including homeless, working poor, underemployed and newly unemployed individuals and families.

Davis Street defines "homelessness" as anyone who is unsheltered: including those living in the street, in a shelter, in their car, couch surfing, or living doubled or tripled up. At intake, Davis Street clients can self-identify themselves as homeless. If they are self-identified as homeless, Davis Street staff inquires what their living situation is. Staff also asks clients if they have cooking facilities and refrigeration so they can determine what type of food to provide the clients.

From July through September 2014, Davis Street assisted 99 individuals who identified themselves as homeless.

The need for more housing resources, and more importantly, monetary assistance is a critical service gap for Davis Street. Davis Street staff report that many families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless could be assisted with emergency rental and/or rental deposit assistance.

Interfaith Homeless Network (IHN)/April Showers (April Showers)

April Showers provides hot lunch or bag lunch, clothing and toiletries, barber services, and hot showers on the first, third and fifth Sundays of each month.

April Showers defines "homelessness" as a self-identified state. The information about an individual's state of "living" is neither requested nor required for services. In general terms, without using a definition for services, April Showers defines homeless as not having regular access to a space which provides room for sleeping, bathing, cooking, storage of personal belongings and access to a toilet.

April Showers typically conducts an every-other year survey at an events. Participation is voluntary, and all information collected by April Showers staff is provided by individuals without back-up documentation as staff does not require proof of identification or any other sensitive information such as social security numbers.

April Showers has averaged between 85 and 125 clients who have participated in the event in the past 18 months. In 2013, April Showers conducted voluntary in-depth interviews with 50 of its regular guests, and 35 of these 50 guests self-identified themselves as homeless. April Showers, though, is unable to verify and confirm who among these 35 self-identified homeless are unsheltered.

A critical service gap for April Showers is the provision of on-going regular access to services, such as comprehensive case management, which would assist individuals in finding permanent housing.

Alameda County Housing & Community Development

Alameda County HCD conducted a point-in-time biennial Homeless Count on January 30, 2013. The 2013 Homeless Count reflected a total of 4,264 individuals who identified themselves as homeless on the night of January 30. Using the Alameda Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) InHouse Database, HCD calculated percentages of homeless population by City. According to this methodology, there are 101 homeless persons in the City of San Leandro, including the Ashland area.

San Leandro and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts

Both the San Leandro and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts describe “homelessness” as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”, consistent with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Students are guaranteed enrollment in the school districts by the federal McKinney Vento Act if they live in any of the following situations:

- A shelter (family, domestic violence, or youth shelter or transitional living program).
- A motel, hotel, or weekly rate housing.
- Double-up or sharing the house or apartment with more than one family because of economic hardship or loss.
- An abandoned building, a car, at a campground, or on the street.
- Temporary foster care or with an adult who is not your parent or guardian.
- With friends or family because you are a runaway or an unaccompanied youth.
- In substandard housing (without electricity, water or heat).

District homeless liaisons work closely with school staff and local shelters to identify families in need of assistance. School liaisons conduct an intake and families are asked to complete an affidavit of residency (simple questionnaire) about their current housing situation in order to determine eligibility for services. Upon eligibility students are referred to a school for immediate enrollment and service referrals. Students receive breakfast, lunch, and a healthy snack if they attend the after school program; free backpacks and school supplies; behavioral health counseling; and bus passes for transportation. Old Navy clothing gift cards are handed out in extreme emergencies, and case management is provided for families in crisis.

The Districts maintain a spreadsheet that includes student name, school, grade, student identification, date of birth, and housing status (shelter, sharing, hotel, and/or car). Data input is also collected through the Districts' respective student database. Districts then report data to the state through its Consolidated Applications. Data input is ongoing, and at end of school year total numbers are consolidated and kept for future needs and grant reporting purposes.

As of October 30, 2014 in School Year 2014-2015, there are 145 homeless students in the San Leandro Unified School District and 17 homeless students in the San Lorenzo Unified School District which includes Corvallis Elementary, Dayton Elementary, and Washington Manor Elementary. These students, ranging from preschool to 12th grade, reside in shelters and transitional homes, shared housing, hotel/motels, or are unsheltered. The school districts only track students; consequently, 162 is likely an underestimation of the homeless in the City as parents, guardians, and siblings not enrolled in school are not included in this number.

The most critical service need according to both School Districts is lack of housing, especially for large families and families who are experiencing extreme economic hardships.

San Leandro Hospital

San Leandro Hospital, part of the Alameda Health System, is a 93-bed facility in Central Alameda County. The hospital offers a wide range of medical services including 24-hour emergency services, critical care, a full complement of skilled surgeons, rehabilitation services, and ancillary services. The hospital offers meals; clothing; health services including medical and dental care, counseling, and drug/alcohol rehabilitation services; employment information, resources, and referral; transportation; and case management.

The hospital describes "homelessness" as an individual living in a non-structural dwelling, such as tent or car, or a person that does not have a regular sheltered place to live i.e. someone who sleeps on the streets and stays with friends or family when possible.

The hospital's Admitting and Registration Departments records on the homeless are based on either the patient self-reporting their homeless status or paramedics identifying the patient as being homeless.

From January 1 through November 6, 2014, the hospital admitted/registered 134 homeless individuals in the Emergency Room.

According to San Leandro Hospital, emergency housing for frail and elderly individuals is the most critical service gap.

St. Leander Church

The Church has several programs that assist the homeless.

- Pennies for the Poor serves 900 individuals annually, providing breakfast, lunch and clothing from 9:30am to 1:00pm on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Saturdays each month.
- The Monday Night Adoration/Homeless Program offers the Church as a shelter from 6pm Monday night until 6am Tuesday morning. This program annually welcomes 411 individuals. However, the Church does not track the number of participants who use the Church as an overnight shelter.
- St. Leander's Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul provides food and assists individuals with rent payments, utility payments, rental deposits, transportation, and other needs. 7,200 individuals are assisted annually, of which 15% (or 1,080) are presumed to be homeless.

The Church does not define "homelessness". The Church provides services to anyone who requests assistance. Church staff does not require its guests to self-identify if they consider themselves homeless. Individuals seeking services are also not required to provide identification. Consequently, the Church does not have a methodology to track the homeless population.

St. Leander Church identifies the most critical service gaps as volunteers and financial support to continue providing services.

As these different and varied methodologies attest, the Task Force found it challenging to define "homelessness". The new Outreach Coordinator funded by recommendation of the Task Force and further described in the "Task Force Recommendations", will be responsible for implementing a single, comprehensive intake system for San Leandro's homeless which should assist in determining future needs.

Another challenge is ensuring that the methodology used to track homelessness is consistent with the HUD's definition of "homelessness" contained in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) of January 18, 2012. The definition affects who is eligible for various HUD-funded homeless assistance programs. The definition includes four broad categories of homelessness:

- People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided. The only significant change from existing practice is that people will be considered homeless if they are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days (it was previously 30 days), and were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution.
- People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or

support networks to remain in housing. HUD had previously allowed people who were being displaced within 7 days to be considered homeless. The proposed regulation also describes specific documentation requirements for this category.

- Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This is a new category of homelessness, and it applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment.
- People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. This category is similar to the current practice regarding people who are fleeing domestic violence.

Consequently, the single, comprehensive system that will be coordinated to track and assist homeless residents will be designed to be consistent with HUD's newly revised definition of "homelessness". Doing so will ensure that San Leandro would be eligible to apply and receive HUD-funded homeless assistance programs funds for the first time.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The immediate, short term plan the Task Force developed for the City of San Leandro includes a pilot warming center, a temporary Outreach Coordinator and enhanced funding for basic needs.

Warming Center

The Task Force recommended \$15,000 in funding for the development of a pilot warming center program for the upcoming winter in order to provide emergency shelter on evenings when the temperatures fall below 40 degrees as well as on extremely wet evenings. On October 20, 2014, the Council granted this request to Building Futures for Women and Children who will serve as the lead agency.

This pilot program will operate for a three-month period from December 2014 through February 2015. The Task Force anticipates that the warming center will be open for approximately 50 nights during this winter when the weather is at or below 40 degrees or when the nights are rainy. The warming center program will be overseen by the Outreach Coordinator, and monitored by two paid staff per shift each night the center is open with assistance from community volunteers.

The warming center will require all guests be pre-screened. Pre-screening intakes will be conducted in the field by the Outreach Coordinator and at April Showers events and St. Leander Lunch Program events.

The Task Force has already begun mobilizing its efforts to open the warming center in early December. These efforts included contacting local churches and faith communities to engage their interest and cooperation in serving as a warming center site; outreach to recruit volunteers and obtain donations for sleeping bags/cots, blankets, clothing, toiletries, paper cups and towels, and plastic utensils; and a volunteer/donation hotline has been established. A warming center hotline to inform clients when the warming center will be activated is also now operational. Clients will be able to call 510-924-3787 to find out if the shelter is open.

The continued successful operation of the warming center will depend on many variables including the weather, participation of agencies willing to host the site, the number of clients, volunteers, and in-kind donations such as meals. The Task Force anticipates that more funds may be needed to continue operating the Warming Center throughout the winter months. The Task Force plans to present a progress report on the warming center operations and outstanding needs at the January 20, 2015 City Council meeting.

Outreach Coordinator

The Task Force recommended, and the City Council agreed to fund, \$32,000 for a temporary Outreach Coordinator to manage the implementation of the warming centers

and provide outreach to the homeless, including connecting the homeless with rapid rehousing and other resources. Another important task that the Outreach Coordinator will assist with is completing a needs assessment of the homeless in the City of San Leandro.

The Outreach Coordinator will be recruited, trained, and managed by Building Futures for Women and Children.

Davis Street's Basic Needs Program

The Task Force recommended, and the City Council agreed to fund, \$15,000 to enhance Davis Street's Basic Needs Program which provides comprehensive family support services, including food, clothing, counseling, medical assistance, and case management. Davis Street will extend case management and direct services to previously unidentified homeless individuals and families, as well as qualified individuals who may be unaware of the services available to them.

With these funds and with the opening of its Primary Care Clinic (including medical, dental and counseling services), daily outreach efforts to reach targeted populations, especially the Limited English Proficient and homeless individuals, and our certification as an enrollment entity for Covered California, Davis Street is well positioned to identify community needs and provide immediate services—emergency food, clothing, medical care, child care, employment, and housing information

As an initial point of entry, clients will be informed of the warming center, April Showers services, etc. and referred as the client desires. Likewise, initial points of entry through other organizations will be referred to Davis Street for the provision of basic needs services not available elsewhere in the community.

CONCLUSION

The work of the San Leandro Homeless and Housing Task Force the past several months has positioned San Leandro to be able to provide needed services for homeless individuals in the upcoming winter months. The warming center pilot program will provide homeless individuals with a safe and warm shelter throughout the winter. The Outreach Coordinator will be instrumental in connecting the City's homeless with needed services and in identifying homeless individuals by completing the homeless needs assessment for San Leandro. Davis Street will be able to extend its case management services to more homeless individuals. These three immediate services make up the Task Force immediate, short term homeless plan.

The Task Force is not tasked with providing a long-term plan addressing the City's homelessness issue. However, the Task Force recognizes that federal, state, and philanthropic funds for homeless assistance programs are currently not directed to Mid-County, including San Leandro. Thus, a unified long-term strategy for addressing and reducing homelessness in the City of San Leandro involves obtaining federal, state, and philanthropic homeless assistance funds for San Leandro's homeless.

Building Futures with Women & Children has already successfully leveraged the Task Force's short-term homeless plan to submit an application, through Alameda County Housing & Community Development's Continuum of Care Program, to obtain 25 Shelter Plus Care vouchers for chronically homeless individuals in San Leandro. If granted, HUD will provide indefinite supportive housing subsidies to 25 eligible households to move them out of homelessness and into safe, permanent housing. This HUD funding will have a big impact on the unsheltered population of homeless individuals on the streets of San Leandro.

Funding may also be available from Alameda County Housing & Community Development's soon-to-be released Request for Proposal (RFP) for its "Boomerang" Rapid Re-housing program. The goal of this program is to prevent and end homelessness by providing short-term tenant-based rental assistance, housing navigation and case management services to homeless and at-risk individuals and families in Alameda County. The Task Force hopes that its work allows local non-profits to be eligible to apply for these funds when the County releases its RFP this winter.

The Task Force cannot emphasize enough how vital additional funding and resources are to the long-term blueprint of addressing and reducing homelessness in San Leandro. The Task Force's short-term plan, along with the City's funding commitments, have already initiated the process of directing financial funds for homeless assistance to the City for the first time. The Task Force appreciates the City of San Leandro's role in coordinating the task force and acknowledges that more work must be done to ensure that funds and resources are directed to serving homeless San Leandrans now and in the future.