PROCLAMATION
CALLING A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL

In accordance with the authority in me vested, I do hereby call the Berkeley City Council in special session as follows:

Tuesday, July 29, 2025
4:00 PM

SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD ROOM - 1231 ADDISON STREET, BERKELEY, CA 94702

TELECONFERENCE LOCATION - TÜRKMEN MAH. ÜNLÜ SOK. NO. 6 KUŞADASI, AYDIN, TÜRKIYE

ADENA ISHII, MAYOR

Councilmembers:

DISTRICT 1 – RASHI KESARWANI
DISTRICT 2 – TERRY TAPLIN
DISTRICT 3 – BEN BARTLETT
DISTRICT 4 – IGOR TREGUB

DISTRICT 5 – SHOSHANA O'KEEFE
DISTRICT 6 – BRENT BLACKABY
DISTRICT 7 – CECILIA LUNAPARRA
DISTRICT 8 – MARK HUMBERT

This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid model with both in-person attendance and virtual participation. Live captioned broadcasts of Council meetings are available on B-TV (Channel 33) and via internet video stream at http://berkeley.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=1244. All Council meetings are recorded.

To access the meeting remotely use this URL: https://cityofberkeley-info.zoomgov.com/j/1601268556 To request to speak, use the "raise hand" function in Zoom. To join by phone: Dial 1-669-254-5252 or 1-833-568-8864 (Toll Free) and enter Meeting ID: 160 126 8556. To provide public comment, Press *9 and wait to be recognized by the Chair. To submit a written communication for the public record, email council@berkeleyca.gov.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting, however, if you are feeling sick, please do not attend the meeting in person. The City Council may take action related to any subject listed on the Agenda.

Pursuant to the City Council Rules of Procedure and State Law, the presiding officer may remove, or cause the removal of, an individual for disrupting the meeting. Prior to removing an individual, the presiding officer shall warn the individual that their behavior is disrupting the meeting and that their failure to cease their behavior may result in their removal. The presiding officer may then remove the individual if they do not promptly cease their disruptive behavior. "Disrupting" means engaging in behavior during a meeting of a legislative body that actually disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of the meeting and includes, but is not limited to, a failure to comply with reasonable and lawful regulations adopted by a legislative body, or engaging in behavior that constitutes use of force or a true threat of force.

Government Code Section 84308 (Levine Act) - Parties to a proceeding involving a license, permit, or other entitlement for use are required to disclose if they made contributions over $500 within the prior 12 months to any City employee or officer. Parties and participants with a financial interest are prohibited from making more than $500 in contributions to a decisionmaker for the 12 months after the final decision is rendered on the proceeding. The above contribution disclosures and restrictions do not apply when the proceeding is competitively bid, or involves a personnel or labor contract. For more information, see Government Code Section 84308.

Preliminary Matters

Roll Call:

Consent Calendar

The Council will first determine whether to move items on the agenda for "Action" or "Information" to the "Consent Calendar", or move "Consent Calendar" items to "Action." Three members of the City Council must agree to pull an item from the Consent Calendar or Information Calendar for it to move to Action. Items that remain on the "Consent Calendar" are voted on in one motion as a group. "Information" items are not discussed or acted upon at the Council meeting unless they are moved to "Action" or "Consent".

No additional items can be moved onto the Consent Calendar once public comment has commenced. At any time during, or immediately after, public comment on Information and Consent items, any Councilmember may move any Information or Consent item to "Action." Following this, the Council will vote on the items remaining on the Consent Calendar in one motion.

For items moved to the Action Calendar from the Consent Calendar or Information Calendar, persons who spoke on the item during the Consent Calendar public comment period may speak again at the time the matter is taken up during the Action Calendar.

Public Comment on Consent Calendar and Information Items Only: *The Council will take public comment on any items that are either on the amended Consent Calendar or the Information Calendar. If ten or fewer persons are interested in speaking on an individual agenda item, each speaker may speak for two minutes. If there are more than ten persons interested in speaking, the Presiding Officer may limit the public comment for all speakers to one minute per speaker. Speakers are permitted to yield their time to one other speaker, however no one speaker shall have more than four minutes. The Presiding Officer may, with the consent of persons representing both sides of an issue, allocate a block of time to each side to present their issue. A speaker may only speak once during the period for public comment on Consent Calendar and Information items.*

Additional information regarding public comment by City of Berkeley employees and interns: Employees and interns of the City of Berkeley, although not required, are encouraged to identify themselves as such, the department in which they work and state whether they are speaking as an individual or in their official capacity when addressing the Council in open session or workshops.

Consent Calendar

1. **Grant Award: Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) Cohort 2 Funding – Acceptance of Grant and Execution of Related Documents**
   From: City Manager
   Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept the Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) grant award of $1,000,000 from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC); execute any resultant agreements and amendments; appropriate the funding for eligible project activities consistent with the City's Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (GVIPP); approve the establishment and funding allocation for a temporary Crime Analyst position (not to exceed two years); and to amend Contract No. 32500002 with Live Free USA to expand violence intervention services.
   Financial Implications: See report
   Contact: Carianna Arredondo, City Manager's Office, (510) 981-7000

Action Calendar

The public may comment on each item listed on the agenda for action. For items moved to the Action Calendar from the Consent Calendar or Information Calendar, persons who spoke on the item during the Consent Calendar public comment period may speak again during the Action Calendar public comment period on the item

The Presiding Officer will request that persons wishing to speak line up at the podium, or use the "raise hand" function in Zoom, to determine the number of persons interested in speaking at that time. If ten or fewer persons are interested in speaking on an individual agenda item, each speaker may speak for two minutes. If there are more than ten persons interested in speaking, the Presiding Officer may limit the public comment for all speakers to one minute per speaker. Speakers are permitted to yield their time to one other speaker, however no one speaker shall have more than four minutes. The Presiding Officer may, with the consent of persons representing both sides of an issue, allocate a block of time to each side to present their issue.

Action items may be reordered at the discretion of the Chair with the consent of Council.

The Presiding Officer may open and close an additional comment period for Action items on this agenda (excluding any public hearings, appeals, and/or quasi-judicial matters), at the start of the Action Calendar. Those who speak on an item during this comment period may not speak a second time when the item is taken up by Council.

Action Calendar – New Business

2a. **Presentation: Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response**
From: City Manager
Contact: Peter Radu, City Manager's Office, (510) 981-7000, Scott Gilman, Health, Housing, and Community Services, (510) 981-5400

2b. **Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes**
From: Auditor
Recommendation: We recommend City Council request that the City Manager report back during the audit follow-up period in Fall 2026, and annually thereafter, regarding the status of our audit recommendations until reported fully implemented by the Homelessness Response Team and the City Manager's Office. The audit includes six recommendations to improve coordination with service providers, strengthen data procedures, expand and standardize outcome reporting, enhance public transparency, and assess staffing resources needed to support these efforts. The City Manager's Office agreed to our findings and recommendations. Please see our report for their complete response.
Financial Implications: See report
Contact: Jenny Wong, Auditor, (510) 981-6750

Adjournment

I hereby request that the City Clerk of the City of Berkeley cause personal notice to be given to each member of the Berkeley City Council on the time and place of said meeting, forthwith.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of the City of Berkeley to be affixed on this 24th day of July, 2025.

/s/ Adena Ishii, Mayor

Public Notice – this Proclamation serves as the official agenda for this meeting.

ATTEST:

Date: July 24, 2025
Mark Numainville, City Clerk

NOTICE CONCERNING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS*: If you object to a decision by the City Council to approve or deny a use permit or variance for a project the following requirements and restrictions apply: 1) No lawsuit challenging a City decision to deny (Code Civ. Proc. §1094.6(b)) or approve (Gov. Code 65009(c)(5)) a use permit or variance may be filed more than 90 days after the date the Notice of Decision of the action of the City Council is mailed. Any lawsuit not filed within that 90-day period will be barred. 2) In any lawsuit that may be filed against a City Council decision to approve or deny a use permit or variance, the issues and evidence will be limited to those raised by you or someone else, orally or in writing, at a public hearing or prior to the close of the last public hearing on the project.*

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https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/city-council/city-council-agendas.
Channel 33 rebroadcasts the following Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. and Sunday at 9:00 a.m.

Communications to the City Council are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. **Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to the City Council, will become part of the public record.** If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service to the City Clerk Department at 2180 Milvia Street. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the City Clerk Department for further information.

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the City Council regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the public counter at the City Clerk Department located on the first floor of City Hall located at 2180 Milvia Street, and through the City's online records portal: https://records.cityofberkeley.info/.

Agendas, agenda reports, and revised/supplemental material may be accessed via the online agenda for this meeting at:
https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/city-council/city-council-agendas
and may be accessed at reference desks at the following locations:

City Clerk Department - 2180 Milvia Street, First Floor
Tel: 510-981-6900, TDD: 510-981-6903, Fax: 510-981-6901
Email: clerk@berkeleyca.gov

Libraries: Main – 2090 Kittredge Street,
Claremont Branch – 2940 Benvenue, West Branch – 1125 University,
North Branch – 1170 The Alameda, Tarea Hall Pittman South Branch – 1901 Russell

COMMUNICATION ACCESS INFORMATION:
This meeting is being held in a wheelchair accessible location.
To request a disability-related accommodation(s) to participate in the meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please contact the Disability Services specialist at ada@berkeleyca.gov, (510) 981-6418 (V), or (510) 981-6347 (TDD) at least three business days before the meeting date.
Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting.

Captioning services are provided at the meeting, on B-TV, and on the Internet. In addition, assisted listening devices for the hearing impaired are available from the City Clerk prior to the meeting, and are to be returned before the end of the meeting.
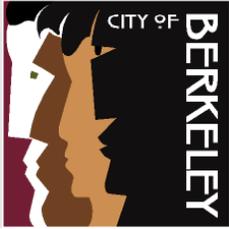
Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
July 29, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Carianna Arredondo, Assistant to the City Manager, Reimagining Public Safety

Subject: Grant Award: Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) Cohort 2 Funding – Acceptance of Grant and Execution of Related Documents

RECOMMENDATION
Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept the Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) grant award of $1,000,000.00 from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC); execute any resultant agreements and amendments; appropriate the funding for eligible project activities consistent with the City's Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (GVIPP); approve the establishment and funding allocation for a temporary Crime Analyst position (not to exceed two years); and to amend Contract No. 32500002 with Live Free USA to expand violence intervention services.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION
The City of Berkeley has been awarded $1,000,000.00 under the SCIP grant program administered by the BSCC. No local match is required, and acceptance of these funds will not impact the City's General Fund. The proposal allocations are as follows and subject to final approval by the BSCC:

- Establishment and funding for a temporary (non-sworn) Crime Analyst position (BPD, NTE 2 years): $458,276.00[1]

- Expansion of Live Free USA services: $417,220.00

- Procurement and implementation of investigative software to support case-linking and data analysis: $125,504.00

- Travel to Sacramento for mandatory BSCC convenings: $2,000.00

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[1]
https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/berkeley/classspecs/105888?keywords=crime%20analyst&pagetype=classSpecifications

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
On July 17, 2025, the BSCC notified the City of Berkeley that its application for SCIP funding had been selected for award. This followed a competitive proposal process that closed on April 7, 2025, with applications rated through July. The grant term begins August 1, 2025, and ends July 31, 2027.

This award supports the continuation and expansion of the City's Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (GVIPP), which launched in July 2024. More specifically, the $1,000,000.00 BSCC SCIP grant will support:

- Hiring a temporary Crime Analyst within the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to enhance data-driven violence prevention strategies, including trend analysis, social network mapping, and custom notification support;

- Expansion of the City's partnership with Live Free USA to deliver outreach, mentorship, and crisis stabilization services, including the addition of a Life Coach and field outreach;

- Implementation of software to improve case-linking, investigative efficiency, and firearm case resolution.

This project aligns with SCIP Purpose Area 2 (referrals to community-based services) and Purpose Area 3 (law enforcement crisis intervention programs).

The City applied for this grant under the authority of the City Manager per Administrative Regulations 1.16 and 1.17, as no local match is required. However, City Council authorization is required to formally accept the award and execute the grant agreement.

BACKGROUND
The Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) is funded by the federal Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and administered in California by the BSCC. SCIP is designed to support state and local efforts to reduce gun violence through crisis intervention programs, community-based outreach, behavioral health stabilization, and improved law enforcement coordination.

Berkeley's SCIP proposal builds on the City's Reimagining Public Safety initiative and the Gun Violence Prevention Report released in 2023. The City launched GVIPP in July 2024 as a pilot focused on addressing firearm-related violence through a combined law enforcement and community-based response model. The City's partnership with Live Free USA was formalized to support this work through outreach, life coaching, and violence interruption strategies.

As implementation continues into Phase 3 of Reimagining Public Safety, the City's ability to secure external funding is critical to maintaining and scaling successful programs. The SCIP grant will help institutionalize Berkeley's violence prevention

infrastructure and support coordinated action across City departments and community partners.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS
There are no identifiable environmental effects, climate impacts, or sustainability opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION
Approving the resolution enables the City to formally accept the $1,000,000.00 BSCC SCIP grant award. This funding is critical to advancing the City's long-term gun violence intervention strategy by supporting a data-informed public health approach rooted in cross-sector collaboration and community engagement.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED
None.

CONTACT PERSON
Carianna Arredondo, Assistant to the City Manager, Reimagining Public Safety, 510-981-6903
Jennifer Louis, Chief of Police, 510-981-5700
Jen Tate, Deputy Chief, 510-981-5983

Attachments:
1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

ACCEPTING A $1,000,000.00 GRANT FROM THE BOARD OF STATE AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS (BSCC) THROUGH THE STATE CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM (SCIP), APPROVING A TEMPORARY POSITION AND FUNDING ALLOCATION, AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF RELATED DOCUMENTS

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley desires to participate in the 2024 Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program Grant administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (hereafter referred to as the BSCC); and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley's Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (GVIPP), launched in July 2024, is a multi-faceted violence prevention initiative aligned with the City's Reimagining Public Safety goals; and

WHEREAS, the City's SCIP proposal seeks to support the GVIPP pilot expansion by funding a temporary Crime Analyst position within the Berkeley Police Department, expanding the City's partnership with Live Free USA to deliver direct services and crisis stabilization, and implementing investigative software to improve firearm case resolution; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager, under the authority granted by Administrative Regulations 1.16 and 1.17, submitted an application for BSCC SCIP funding which does not require a local match, and on July 17, 2025, the City was notified that it had been selected to receive a $1,000,000.00 award for the period of August 1, 2025, through July 31, 2027; and

WHEREAS, Council approval is required to formally accept grant funds and authorize the execution of revenue agreements and budget appropriations.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Manager or designee is authorized on behalf of the Berkeley City Council to accept this funding up to $1,000,000.00 and sign the Grant Agreement with the BSCC, including any amendments thereof.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council hereby approves the establishment and funding allocation for a temporary Crime Analyst position (not to exceed two years) and authorizes an amendment to Contract No. 32500002 with Live Free USA to expand violence intervention services, consistent with the activities proposed in the grant application.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that grant funds received hereunder shall not be used to supplant expenditures controlled by this body.

CITY OF BERKELEY
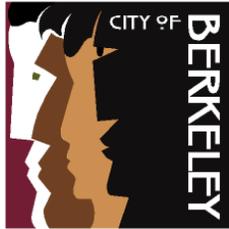
Office of the City Manager

<u>WORKSESSION</u>
July 29, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager

Scott Gilman, Director, Health, Housing and Community Services

Subject: Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

On May 20, 2025, the City Council voted on a comprehensive package of homelessness-related referrals to the City Manager.[1] This report responds to several aspects of that referral, specifically the direction that staff provide Council with a report that includes:

1. Ongoing efforts to address homelessness and the mental health crisis within Berkeley's jurisdiction, including the work of non-governmental organizations the City is relying upon and, where possible, the cost thereof.
2. A gap analysis between resources required by the City to fully address homelessness and its current financial position.
3. A feasibility and cost analysis of Berkeley's ability to support additional shelter or services sites, including staffing and operational constraints.
4. A geographic equity assessment of where homeless services, shelters, and encampments have historically been and currently are located in Berkeley.

In the last year, staff have produced two comprehensive reports on this matter, both of which are still highly timely and relevant to this request:

1. An off-agenda memo on October 2, 2024 (included here as Attachment 1) that provides a comprehensive overview of our homeless system response including high-level cost quantifications; and
2. An Action Calendar item presenting a needs and gap analysis of Berkeley's homelessness system from July 9, 2024 (included here as Attachment 2).

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[1] See: https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-05-20%20Item%2029%20Alternative%20Housing%20Options.pdf

WORKSESSION
Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response   July 29, 2025

Rather than recreate these reports, given their recency, the purpose of this report is to highlight their content while also providing key updates on the City's costs/fiscal position, programs, and other issues that have changed since their initial publication. Given these fiscal updates, the report also provides information on the City's current ability to support additional shelter and service sites. Finally, while providing historical maps of the locations of previous services and unsanctioned homeless encampments is not feasible, this report provides a comprehensive map of all current, City-funded homeless services programs.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
In July 2021, the City Council adopted the All Home Regional Action Plan, a Bay Area-wide homelessness plan calling for, above all else, an urgent response to the crisis of unsheltered homelessness with a push for a 75% reduction in street homelessness in 3 years. The Plan also encouraged jurisdictions to "right-size" their system according to data-driven analyses identifying the proportionally correct investments needed in homelessness prevention, interim housing, and permanent housing solutions. City staff immediately began working on the implementation of this plan and corresponding analyses.

The year 2024 represented the three-year mark for the Plan and thus an appropriate time for staff to report back to Council on progress. Staff produced the two reports to the Council included as Attachments 1 and 2. This section highlights the conclusions and recommendations from those reports, making key updates where necessary, and responds to additional related elements from Council's May 20, 2025 referral.

Homeless System Overview

On October 2, 2024, the City Manager provided an off-agenda memo to Council that overviews Berkeley's response to homelessness and the City's recent successes and remaining challenges in solving this humanitarian crisis. This memo is provided here as Attachment 1. Thanks to Measures O, P and U1, Berkeley has been able to open more than 790 interim housing beds and permanent housing units, together serving over 2,100 residents.

Since the publication of this off-agenda memo, the City has concluded Fiscal Year 2025, with the following updates:

- Berkeley allocated $25.4M in FY25 to fund a wide range of homelessness programs. Here is the breakdown of the funding streams as a percentage of the total budget:

    o General fund -- Measure P: 31%, $7.8M;

    o Federal: 29%, $7.2M;

    o State: 25%, $6.4M; and

      o General fund (non-Measure P): 15%, $3.9M.

Funding is allocated across five main categories:

1. Emergency Shelter ($13.3M),

2. Permanent Supportive Housing ($7.4M),

3. Immediate Street Conditions & Hygiene ($4.3M),

4. Homelessness Prevention ($401K), and

5. Other ($31K).

The City is funding 36 distinct projects across 16 providers.

- Since the off agenda memo's publication, the City was awarded a third round of Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) from the State. This grant totaled $5,395,637.04 and allowed the City to open Horizon Community Village (HCV) at the Capri Motel on University and Sacramento. Through this program, the City was able to respond to Council's direction in September, 2024 to resolve the 2nd St/Cedar Street encampments by moving 43 individuals indoors. The remaining 18 individuals have since relocated to other locations, shelters, or housing opportunities. In addition to HCV, the City also utilized ERF funding to pilot a successful RV buy back program that enrolled 32 participants. The program provides cash directly to a participant in exchange for their vehicle and a shelter move-in. This will be the working model for a City-wide RV buy back program to be launched in Fiscal Year 2026. Altogether, local funds have helped leverage over $45M in State Homekey and Encampment Resolution Funding grants since 2022, which altogether have created 160 rooms of interim- and permanent-supportive housing in private rooms at five (5) motels.

- Altogether, Berkeley supported 620 beds of permanent supportive housing (PSH) as of the 2024 Housing Inventory Count (HIC). This includes PSH units in City-funded affordable housing developments, as well as non-subsidized units that house residents holding Shelter + Care or Square One vouchers. The permanent supportive housing available in 2025 represents an increase of nearly 130 beds from the 2022 HIC.

- The City currently has over 1,200 new affordable housing units in its pipeline, including approximately 220 new PSH units. The ability of the nonprofit developers to deliver PSH in pipeline projects is subject to securing sufficient operating subsidies from state and local sources.

- In FY25, the City provided $900,000 in Measure U1 funds to local agencies for anti-displacement programs, including legal assistance for residents at risk of eviction, a housing retention program, and a flexible housing subsidy pool.

Intersecting Efforts Between Homelessness and Mental Health

In addition, 2024 saw two major shifts in the mental health system's landscape, namely the March 2024 passage by State voters of Proposition 1, remaking the Mental Health Services Act into the Behavioral Health Services Act, and the ongoing rollout of California Advancing and Innovating in MediCal or CalAIM. (Alameda County also began implementing CARE Courts in 2024, though the City does not play a direct role in implementation.) While not directly aimed at solving homelessness, together these initiatives fundamentally shift the State's mental health system to prioritize very high-needs, severely mentally ill and/or heavy substance-using populations; since many of these individuals are also unsheltered, the intent was to provide resources to help address the most acutely in-need people living on California's streets. The City's Health, Housing, and Community Services Department is actively planning for and implementing these initiatives.

MHSA to BHSA Transition: Key Changes and Impact

Proposition 1, the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), approved in March 2024 and effective July 1, 2027, will significantly alter both the amount and permissible uses of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding. BHSA reduces overall funding by shifting 5% to the state and redirecting 30% of current treatment funds to housing. The City has an option to opt out of the new 30% housing requirement.

The new allocations will be:

- 35% for Behavioral Health Services and Supports (treatment and early intervention)
- 35% for Full Services Partnerships (highest-need treatment)
- 30% for Housing

These reductions, coupled with Medi-Cal reimbursement rate cuts due to CalAIM changes, are anticipated to result in a 14% decrease in the City's Mental Health Division budget, or approximately $3 million. This will severely impact the City's ability to provide mental health services to vulnerable populations, necessitating structural changes to maintain financial viability.

Among Berkeley residents' many concerns, the ongoing "mental health crisis" is frequently cited as a top priority. These challenges are often exacerbated by increased substance use and the structural and systemic impacts on vulnerable populations. There is broad agreement that current services face underfunding, accessibility challenges, and a lack of infrastructure. The surge in substance use, particularly methamphetamine, has led to worsening health outcomes, reduced engagement in vital

services, and increased housing instability. Addressing these critical community impacts will be prioritized in the next budget cycle.

Billing Medi-Cal and Neighborhood Services

While provider rates have been cut under CalAIM, new billing opportunities are now available. The City is enhancing Medi-Cal reimbursement through the Administrative Activities (MAA) Program, aligning with CalAIM. The Neighborhood Services Team's outreach, coordination, and linkage services for unhoused residents are eligible for federal MAA reimbursement.

This strategic alignment, coupled with CalAIM readiness, enables the City to secure additional Medi-Cal funds and expand services for Berkeley's unhoused population. CalAIM participation further strengthens coordination between healthcare and social services, leading to more integrated and effective support.

However, while the reductions in funding above are concerning, HHCS also views this as an opportunity to create better synergy and collaboration between Berkeley Mental Health and the Homeless Response Team, who now must focus on a shared population of acutely in-need people on our streets. As a first step, the City is sponsoring a legislative effort to amend AB 210 to allow the creation of multi-disciplinary homeless teams in cities (not just counties), thus allowing two-way sharing of need-to-know information between the Berkeley's mental health and homeless response systems, with the goal of better coordinating care for high-needs people across a range of providers.

Needs and Gaps Analysis of Berkeley's Homelessness System

In July 2024, a data-driven performance and gaps analysis of Berkeley's homeless services system,[2] utilizing Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, was presented to the City Council. The data confirm that while Berkeley has made measurable improvements in increasing the supply of interim non-congregate and permanent supportive housing, resulting in higher program uptake rates among those who have been outside for years; many vulnerable and disabled people remain stuck in a permanent supportive housing bottleneck: a dramatic decrease in homelessness (on the order of 75% from 2022 levels) would require an additional $300 million over five years, largely for new affordable housing. Alarmingly, a disproportionate number of people stuck on our streets or in our shelters are Black or Indigenous. The report provided recommendations to guide future funding opportunities, specifically that the City should prioritize:
- Accelerating the transition to non-congregate shelter
- Funding permanent supportive housing

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[2] See: https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07-09%20Item%2016%20Referral%20Response%20%20Gap%20Analysis%20of%20Berkeley%E2%80%99s%20Homelessness.pdf

WORKSESSION
Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response   July 29, 2025

- Investing in targeted homelessness prevention

The findings and recommendations in this report, included here as Attachment 2 remain as timely and relevant today as when they were presented to the City Council last July. The only significant update would be to the City's fiscal position, addressed later in this report.

*Geographic Equity Analysis of Homeless Programs*

As part of their May 20, 2025 referral, the City Council asked staff for a geographic equity assessment of where homeless services, shelters, and encampments have historically been and currently are located in Berkeley. Unfortunately, a geographic assessment of homeless encampments is not possible for staff to produce, as the City lacks a formal definition of "encampment" and the Homeless Response Team has found it infeasible to collect and update such information (which can be highly fluid, and change daily or weekly) due to limited database tools and staffing capacity. Moreover, a geographic assessment of all historical homeless programs in Berkeley is also infeasible, as staff turnover in recent years has resulted in losses of institutional knowledge necessary to produce such a report, and staff lack clear direction on how far back to look.

That said, the map below and linked here provides a geographic overview of all homeless shelters, permanent supportive housing, and services currently funded by the City of Berkeley. Even this map is not fully representative of the entirety of Berkeley's efforts in providing permanent supportive housing, as the City directly administers over $7.3M in HUD funding for rental subsidies for formerly chronically homeless individuals at housing locations scattered throughout Berkeley and adjacent cities in Alameda County; these locations are private rentals and are not amenable to inclusion in the map below.
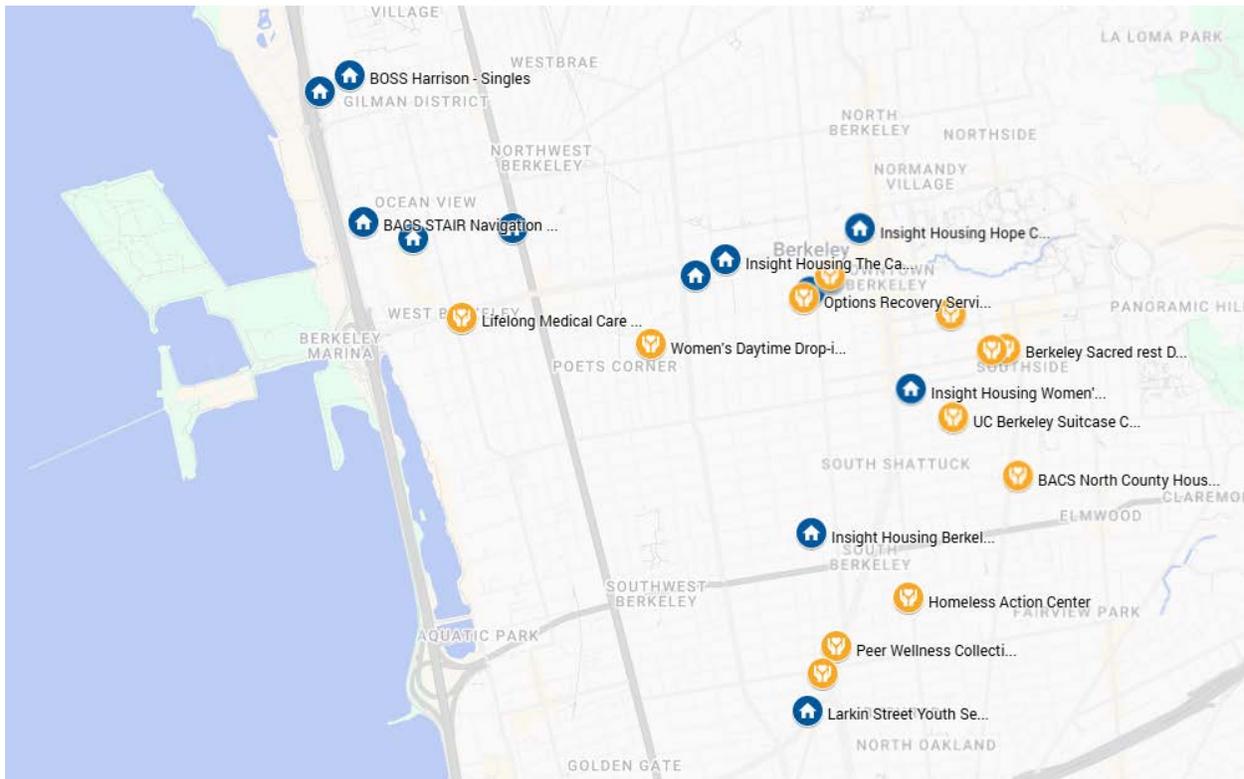
Updates to the City's Fiscal Position

The City is posed to spend $18.9M altogether in FY26 on homelessness, including $13M in Measure P funding and $1.4M in Measure U1.

However, the City is currently facing a significant and structural fiscal challenge, with ongoing general fund deficits projected at over $20M annually. Additionally, the most recent State budget includes no money for the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program, the State's most significant source of flexible local funding for homelessness; while Berkeley is not a direct recipient of these funds, shelter operations in Berkeley benefit from this funding and are at risk of reduced hours of operation if this funding is not backfilled. Federal funding, which provided 29% of all funding for Berkeley's homeless programs in FY25 – including deep and permanent housing subsidies for approximately 280 high-needs, formerly homeless individuals through the City's Shelter Plus Care program – remains at risk under the current Administration and Congress.

Altogether, the City's existing portfolio of homeless services is at significant risk if alternative external sources of revenue cannot be identified, and the following programs are specifically at imminent risk of significant reduction in services and/or complete closure:

- **24/7 operations at Men's and Women's shelter programs**

- o HHAP funding ends December 31, 2025;
- o Total Cost: $603k annually
- **Continued operations at three noncongregate, motel-based shelters**
  - o Funding ends 2027 and 2028
  - o Total cost: $7.2M annually for 77 rooms at Beyond Horizon, Capri, and Campus motels
- **Continued operations at Homekey housing sites**
  - o Funding ends 2030 and 2033
  - o Total Cost to City: $1.43M annually to sustain services for 87 rooms of permanent supportive housing at Golden Bear Homes and University Homes

Given these challenges, and absent external funding sources, the City is not in a position to open new programs nor expand existing programs until and unless the City makes difficult decisions about which existing programs to cut.

Though the fiscal outlook is not positive at this time, there are a number of positive developments that City staff are actively working on:

- In November, 2024, Berkeley voters passed Measure W, which expanded and made permanent the real estate transfer tax on high-value property transactions. This measure, which takes effect in 2027, is projected to increase Measure P's baseline revenues by $2-4M annually. At this time, City staff are still working on how best to forecast revenues and build forecast assumptions into budget and program projections and cannot offer specifics yet. Once these are available, we will share them with the Council.

- In November 2020, Alameda County voters passed Measure W, a general fund sales tax increase, with the expectation that these funds be used to address our County's homelessness crisis. These funds have been collected since the measure's passage, but their use has been tied up in ongoing litigation, which was resolved in April 2025. Alameda County is actively debating how best to use these funds, and the City Council directed the City Manager on June 24, 2025 to send a formal letter to the Board of Supervisors outlining the City's Measure W priorities.[3] City staff will continue to work with County staff on ensuring that the priorities for Berkeley's homeless system, as identified in this letter, remain front-and-center in the County's conversation.

- In May, 2025, Alameda County released a notice of contract opportunity to nonprofit partners in the County's homeless system vendor pool, announcing an initiative to rapidly increase new interim housing units that can be used to support encampment resolution. City staff worked with Episcopal Community Services (ECS), a San Francisco-based nonprofit with extensive experience in homeless

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[3] See: https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/6.19.25%20-%20Supp%20Rev%20Agenda%20Material%20Cover%20Template.pdf

WORKSESSION
Comprehensive Summary of Berkeley's Homeless Response   July 29, 2025

services, to sponsor ECS' application for this funding which, if awarded, would fund the master-lease of another motel (the Sather Motel, at 1820 University Avenue) to create a noncongregate shelter. Staff proposed that this shelter be used to target the large RV encampments in West Berkeley along Dwight and Grayson, using existing Measure P allocations for an expanded RV buy-back program. On July 2, the City learned that the County abruptly canceled this solicitation but would be re-issuing it within 23 days. As of report submission, that re-issuance had not yet occurred. While this funding would be awarded to ECS directly, and the City plays only a sponsoring/partnership role, we are hopeful that the County will see the value and potential in this proposal and allocate it funding.

Despite the City's fiscal challenges, continuing to find creative solutions that leverage external funding remains a top priority for staff as we continue to address the homelessness crisis.

BACKGROUND
On May 20, 2025, the City Council directed the City Manager to provide the City Council with a report that includes:

1. Ongoing efforts to address homelessness and the mental health crisis within Berkeley's jurisdiction, including the work of non-governmental organizations the City is relying upon and, where possible, the cost thereof.
2. A gap analysis between resources required by the City to fully address homelessness and its current financial position.
3. A feasibility and cost analysis of Berkeley's ability to support additional shelter or services sites, including staffing and operational constraints.
4. A geographic equity assessment of where homeless services, shelters, and encampments have historically been and currently are located in Berkeley.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS
There are no environmental impacts associated with this report or recommendation.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION
City Council direction will continue to shape how the City responds to homelessness within the constraints of available funding. Staff will return with further updates and recommendations as additional fiscal and programmatic information becomes available.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION
Unknown at this time.

CONTACT PERSON
Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, (510) 981-7045
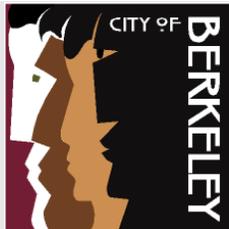Scott Gilman, Director, HHCS, (510) 981-5404

Attachments:

1:   Off-Agenda Memo from October 2, 2024: Berkeley's Response to Homelessness:
     New Materials Tell the Story of the City's Success

2:   City Council staff report from July 9, 2024: Referral Response: Gap Analysis of
     Berkeley's Homelessness System of Care

Office of the City Manager

October 2, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Re: Berkeley's Response to Homelessness: New Materials Tell the Story of the City's Success

We are pleased to provide an update on our continued efforts to address homelessness in Berkeley, emphasizing both our progress and the enhanced communication strategies we've implemented to share information about our work with the community.

Data from the federal Point-in-Time Counts in 2022 and 2024 show that overall homelessness is declining in Berkeley, with a particularly significant reduction in unsheltered homelessness. While there is still work to be done, these trends clearly demonstrate that our City's approach is impactful and delivers meaningful results.

On July 9, 2024, City staff presented a comprehensive analysis of our homeless system's performance to the Council,[1] demonstrating key successes and future challenges. However, that report was dense and technical, making it difficult to fully understand the impact of our work to date. Recognizing the need for clearer communication, this summer, Neighborhood Services contracted with Berton Media to create materials that better inform residents of our continued progress.

Working closely with Berton Media and Health, Housing, and Community Services, we developed three deliverables that will help convey our successes:

- An overview summarizing our homelessness response.

- A slide deck highlighting key focus areas.

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[1] See: https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07-09%20Item%2016%20Referral%20Response%20%20Gap%20Analysis%20of%20Berkeley%E2%80%99s%20Homelessness.pdf

Page 2
October 2, 2024
Re: Berkeley's Response to Homelessness: New Materials Tell the Story of the City's Success

- Vignettes that illustrate key successes in expanding non-congregate shelters and enhancing outreach to break barriers to housing.

These materials reflect the principles guiding our Homeless Response Team (HRT) as we work to reduce street homelessness by 75%, in alignment with the All Home Regional Action Plan. Our approach follows three core principles:

1. **Housing First**: We prioritize outreach to encampment residents to connect them with housing resources, aiming to transition individuals from the streets into safe, stable housing whenever possible.

2. **Health and Safety**: While services remain our priority, we also address health or safety risks posed by certain encampments, striving to protect both encampment residents and the broader Berkeley community.

3. **Maintaining Clean Streets**: Homeless encampments can accumulate debris, impacting public spaces. The City is committed to keeping our streets clean and accessible for all.

These resources will help us communicate the City's ongoing efforts and demonstrate the impactful work we are doing to address homelessness. We hope they will be useful. For more information contact Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, at 510-981-7045 or pradu@berkeleyca.gov.

Attachments:
1. Coordination and Compassion: Berkeley's Response to Homelessness (three-page report)
2. Coordination and Compassion: Berkeley's Response to Homelessness (slide deck)
3. With More Privacy, a New Incentive to Move Indoors: Why Berkeley is Increasing Private, Individual Units for Homelessness
4. More Outreach Improves Odds for Housing: Two-Thirds of People Served by Berkeley's Homeless Response Team Move into Interim or Permanent Shelter

cc: Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager
        LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager
        Anne Cardwell, Deputy City Manager
        Scott Gilman, Health, Housing and Community Services Director
        Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
        Jenny Wong, City Auditor
        Mark Numainville, City Clerk
        Farimah Brown, City Attorney

BERKELEY'S RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

In 2024, **the City of Berkeley saw a 45% decrease in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness**. It was the largest reduction of street homelessness for a city of our size in the Bay Area and a ray of hope in the humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold on our streets and across the region. Berkeley's progress is due to **our coordinated strategy** to reduce homelessness in our city, and the generous support and investments from the **compassion** of our residents. **In Berkeley, we center our response to homelessness on "coordination and compassion."**

In Berkeley, we center our response to homelessness on "coordination and compassion."

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT
Alameda County's Five Largest Cities

CITY	2022	2024	# OF INDIVIDUALS	CHANGE
Berkeley	**803**	**445**	**-358**	**-45%**
Fremont	866	614	-252	**-29%**
San Leandro	312	227	-85	**-27%**
Hayward	267	278	+11	**+4%**
Oakland	3,337	3,664	+327	**+10%**

Coordination

In 2021, Berkeley's City Council voted[1] to adopt a three-pronged coordinated strategy outlined in All Home's Regional Action Plan. First, we aim to prevent homelessness before it happens by helping our residents avoid eviction, pay their rent, and keep a roof over their heads. Second: We have dramatically increased – and improved – our private interim housing units to move people off sidewalks and into the safety and dignity of their own personal unit. Finally, we offer a wide array of permanent affordable housing options. We've built more new affordable housing units and provided more vouchers and subsidies compared to other jurisdictions our size that have allowed our residents to remain in their homes. **All three strategies – prevention, interim housing, and permanent housing – must work concurrently to reduce homelessness.**

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES FUND SOURCES, FY 2024

Federal funds | **Other local funds** | **State ERF grants** | **Berkeley's Measure P**

| 4% | 12% | 18% | 66% |

Compassion

Our coordinated strategy only works with the continued support of Berkeley's residents, who have generously and compassionately provided funding for our homelessness response mainly through Measures O, P and U1. Perhaps most critically, **Measure P, a tax on the highest-value homes sold, provides more than 65% of the $35 million Berkeley spent last year on homelessness**. With the passage of Measure P back in 2018, Berkeleyans foresaw the scale and severity of the crisis at its onset and acted with conviction. Measure O, also passed in 2018, has increased permanent affordable housing in Berkeley. Berkeley has committed Measure O funding to build 1,050 new units, of which 240 units (+44 shelter beds) have already been constructed. The remaining units are at various stages of development. Measure U1, passed in 2016, creates funds for eviction defense to keep our residents housed, as well as contributes to affordable housing production. And although we are committed to working with "coordination and compassion," we understand that if we let up on investments into any one of our strategies right now, our gains are at risk, and street homelessness and encampments will likely spike again.
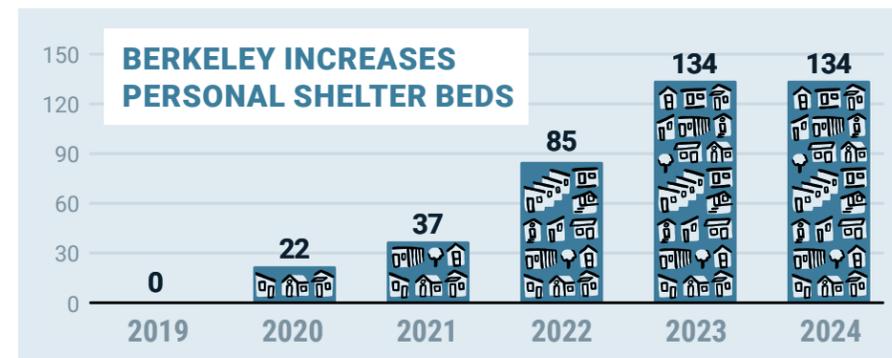
CURRENT CHALLENGES

Homelessness does not respect city limits. And while Berkeley has recorded a 45% drop in street homelessness due to its disciplined approach of "coordination and compassion," our residents are always vulnerable to the region's ongoing affordability crisis. Simply put, our Bay Area region remains unaffordable for many families and continues to see people forced into homelessness at an unacceptable rate: **For every person who exited homelessness in 2023, nearly three others in the Bay Area experienced homelessness for the first time**. Until the region slows the rate of those who fall into homelessness, Berkeley and every other city will continue to witness the human tragedy on our streets. And due to historical and present institutional racist policies – including redlining and housing segregation – close to 60% of Berkeley's homeless population identify as Black, a dramatic over-representation of our population, where just 8% of the City's residents are Black. Berkeley must commit to centering racial equity by finding solutions that meet the unique challenges faced by unstably housed and unhoused Black and Brown people.

Additionally, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley who report having a disability is growing, and they are more likely to wait longer on lists for limited permanent supportive housing – and far more likely to return to the streets. Serving this vulnerable population will require close collaboration with other systems of care across many levels of government.

Although Berkeley has managed to "bend the curve" by decreasing overall homelessness and the number of large encampments since 2019, our greatest challenge may be the immediate risk of back-sliding if we lose the local sources of funding that have been critical to our success. In November 2024, Berkeley residents are expected to be asked whether they will extend Measure P through a ballot initiative. **Since Measure P provides roughly 66 percent of Berkeley's funding for homelessness services, and has helped permanently house over 1500 people since its passage, losing these revenues will inevitably result in cuts to affordable housing, interim housing, and prevention funding.**

WHAT'S WORKING

Private Interim Housing

Since 2021, **Berkeley has more than tripled the number of beds in private interim housing units**, where residents sleep in a personal space rather than dorm-style shelter. The individual housing units are far more appealing to those moving off the streets: In January and February of 2024 – during the height of a rainy and cold winter season – just 82% of available shelter beds at Berkeley's typical "dorm style" shelters were occupied, compared to 93% of our city's private interim housing units. Our unhoused neighbors report they are reluctant to enter dorm-style housing, where they have experienced theft or traumatizing interactions, and they prefer to move into spaces where they can stay with a partner, retain their privacy, their pets, and their possessions. The increased intake into interim housing also gives us a greater opportunity to connect individuals with the critical services they need, and greatly improves our ability to match them with permanent housing.

Thanks to our residents, and their support of Measure O, P and U1, **Berkeley has been able to open more than 10 new facilities – like the Dorothy Day House's Berkeley Inn program and Insight Housing's Hope Center, which includes transitional housing specifically for our veterans**. Since the inception of Measure O, P, and U1, more than 650 interim housing beds and permanent housing units have been funded and have served over 2,000 residents.

Innovative + Expanded Prevention Efforts

Stopping homelessness before it starts is critical to reduce homelessness, and between 2020 and 2024 Berkeley expanded its homeless prevention efforts – **serving more than 900 households with rental assistance and eviction defense funds.** Voter-approved Measure P and U1 provided a $4.25 million investment and leveraged more than $3 million in federal funds that helped prevent our fellow Berkelyans from falling into homelessness. These efforts combined with Berkeley's extended eviction moratorium, helped ensure we had the lowest eviction rate of any city in Alameda County [insert chart here]. In 2022, the City also began a pilot rental assistance program that provides up to $1,800 a month for up to 3 years to some of our most at-risk residents and some unhoused people who are ineligible for permanent supportive housing. Although the "shallow subsidy" pilot is relatively small and limited to just 49 people right now, the subsidy provides a safety net for those who are most likely to return to our streets.

BERKELEY INCREASES PERSONAL SHELTER BEDS

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0	22	37	85	134	134

Stable Funding Attracts More Funding

Thanks to Berkeley's residents, and particularly their support of Measure P, Berkeley creates more revenues to address housing and homelessness than many other cities. For instance, while Berkeley spent $35 million on homelessness last year, Fremont – a city nearly double Berkeley's population – allocated less than half that amount ($15 million), despite having about the same number of people experiencing homelessness.

Providing a stable funding source actually creates more opportunities for Berkeley, as partners at the State – like the successful HomeKey effort that converted two motels into permanent housing in two years – sought out cities that could cover funding gaps and collaborate quickly on new projects. In the past three years, the City of Berkeley received over $40 million in State funds to create 134 private units for our residents, far exceeding what cities of similar size were prepared to accept.

BRINGING HOPE TO BERKELEY

The third week in July 2024 marked a momentous occasion at Berkeley's Hope Center according to Kyomi Williams, a senior program manager at one of the city's newest and most innovative facilities that assists people experiencing homelessness.

A record four people moved out that week and into permanent housing of their own, and one of them – Milton Thomas – took a moment to pose proudly for a picture with the keys to his new apartment.

"The staff at the Hope Center did just that – they gave me hope," said Thomas, 63. "After living outside off-and-on for 10 years, I've now got a place of my own that I can call home."

Thomas was just one of Berkeley's formerly unsheltered residents who moved into the Hope Center six months after it opened in Sept. 2022. The Hope Center integrates multiple housing types – an overnight shelter for 32 people, transitional housing for veterans, and 53 permanent affordable housing units – along with daily meals and support services for residents.

The community is designed, as Williams put it, "To get people back on their feet and provide the care they need" – people like Milton Thomas.

Thomas had been evicted from his apartment and struggled with alcohol and drugs. By the time he arrived at Hope Center, he needed help attaining medicine to ward off seizures and getting access to benefits that he was unaware of.

He needed a coordinated and compassionate response, which Hope Center provided over the course of eight months.

"We nursed him back to health," Williams said. "Because he didn't have a chance to last much longer on those streets."

Today, Thomas has his health issues under careful watch and has been reunited with his family.

"It's rewarding to see people like Mr.Milton move on," Williams said. "He had his ups and downs, but no one gave up on him. He knew he could always find us at the Hope Center."

> After living outside off-and-on for 10 years, I've now got a place of my own that I can call home.
> —*Milton Thomas*

LOOKING AHEAD

Thankfully, more local cities and counties have formally adopted All Home's Regional Action Plan, as Berkeley's City Council did in 2021, and moved toward a unified homelessness response system.

But to see real change across the Bay Area, where homelessness is "brief, rare, and non-occurring," it will take an urgent and comprehensive regional effort with significant investments.

Using All Home's solutions modeling, **Berkeley could see a 75% reduction in homelessness in as soon as five years with an investment of $294 million.**

The model shows Berkeley would need to double the number of households we prevent from falling into homelessness every year (up to 750), build 270 additional interim housing units, and create 910 permanent affordable housing options, including building new units and providing vouchers and subsidies to keep people housed.

The projections show that homelessness is a not an intractable problem – and though we have more work to do, the path to ending homelessness in Berkeley is clear.
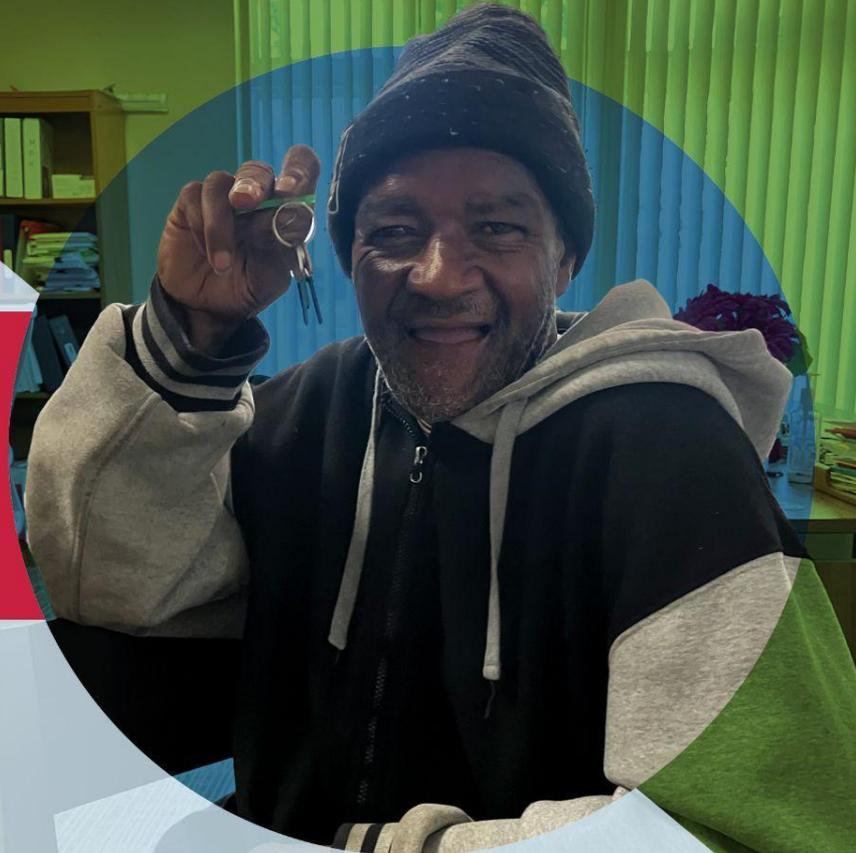
CITY OF BERKELEY
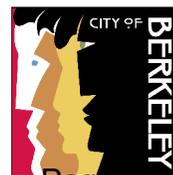
BERKELEY'S
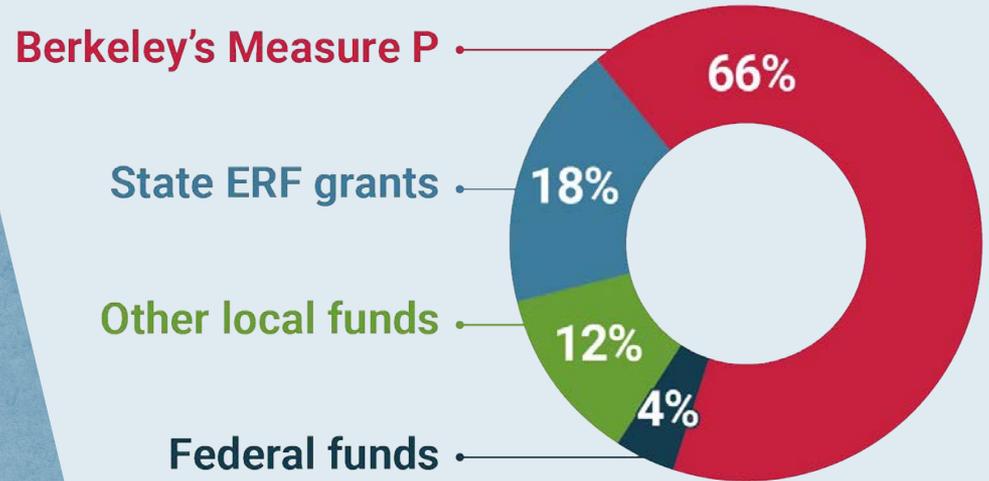
COORDINATED & COMPASSIONATE

RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

THE PROBLEM

Homelessness in Berkeley
Sheltered vs Unsheltered

THE PROBLEM

Berkeley Faces a Fiscal Cliff for Homeless Resources

Berkeley's Measure P — 66%

State ERF grants — 18%

Other local funds — 12%

Federal funds — 4%

Berkeley Experiences 45 Percent Drop in Unsheltered Homelessness

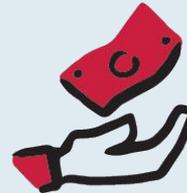| CITY	2022	2024	# OF INDIVIDUALS	CHANGE
Berkeley	**803**	**445**	**-358**	**-45%**
Fremont	866	614	-252	-29%
San Leandro	312	227	-85	-27%
Hayward	267	278	+11	+4%
Oakland	3,337	3,664	+327	+10%

COORDINATION

Innovative + Expanded Prevention Efforts

Private Interim Housing

Stable Funding Attracts More Funding

COORDINATION

PREVENTION

Between 2020-2024 Berkeley

Served Over
900 Renter Households

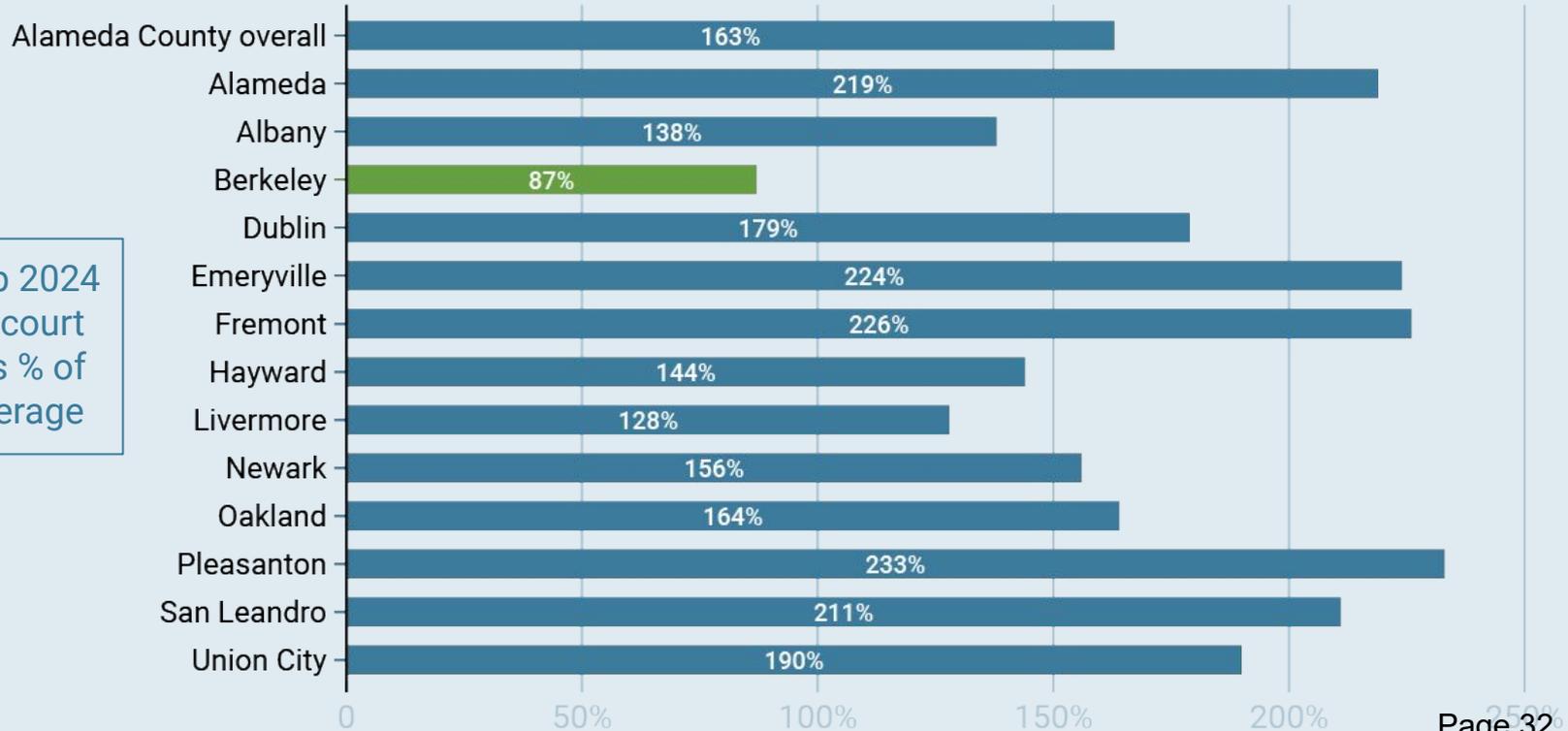with rental assistance and eviction defense funds

Served Over
50 Households with up to $1,800 per month
for up to 3 years

to our most at-risk residents and some unhoused people who are ineligible for permanent supportive housing

Berkeley: Eviction Rates Lowest in Alameda County

Variation in eviction wave across jurisdictions

Jan & Feb 2024 eviction court filings as % of 2019 average

Jurisdiction	%
Alameda County overall	163%
Alameda	219%
Albany	138%
Berkeley	87%
Dublin	179%
Emeryville	224%
Fremont	226%
Hayward	144%
Livermore	128%
Newark	156%
Oakland	164%
Pleasanton	233%
San Leandro	211%
Union City	190%

ENCAMPMENT RESOLUTION

⅔ of residents served by the Homeless Response Team **move into permanent or interim housing**

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COORDINATION

Increased Interim Housing Units

COORDINATION
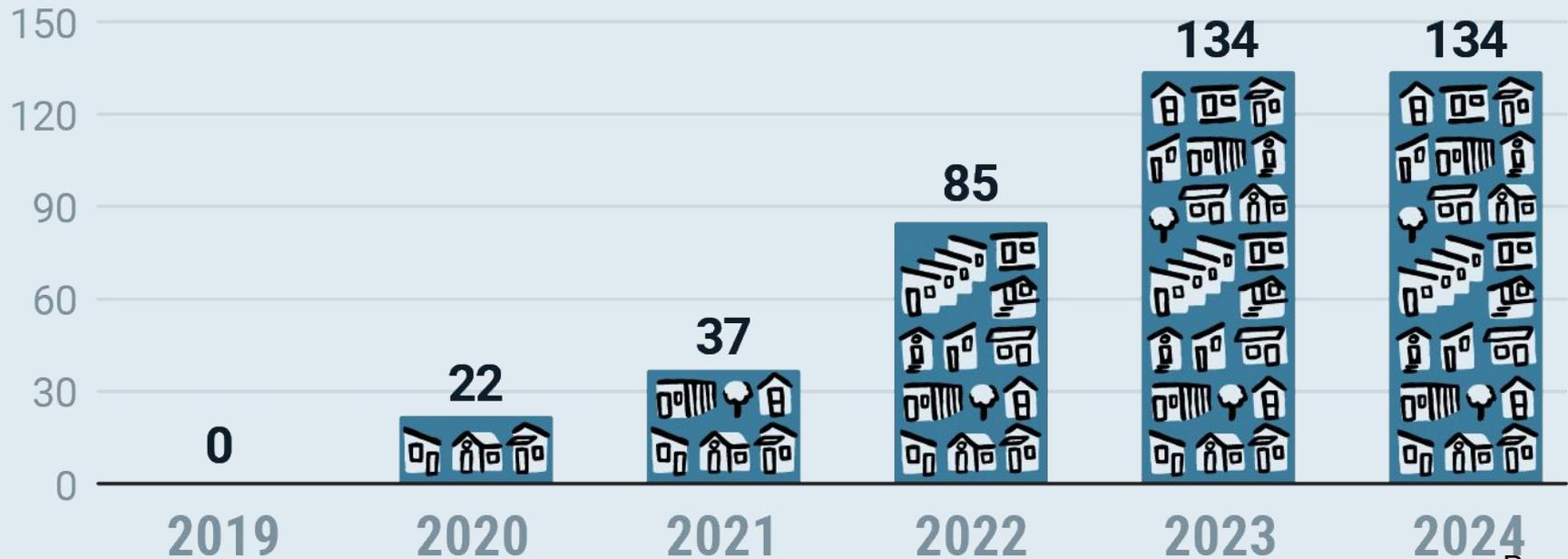
Increased Interim + Permanent Housing

Insight Housing's Hope Center

Over 10 new projects with **more than 700** interim housing beds and permanent housing units completed.

These projects have served **over 2,000 residents**.
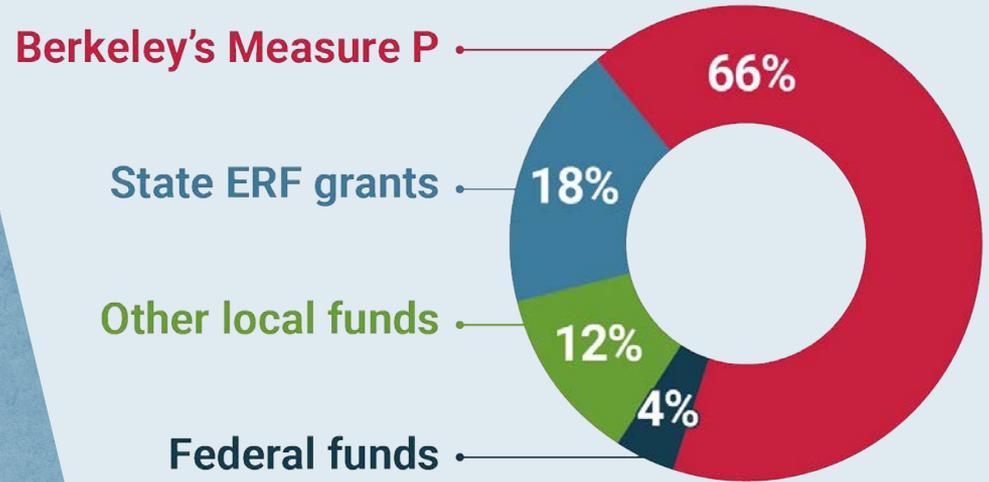
COMPASSION

How Berkeley Residents Provide Resources

Berkeley's Measure P — 66%

State ERF grants — 18%

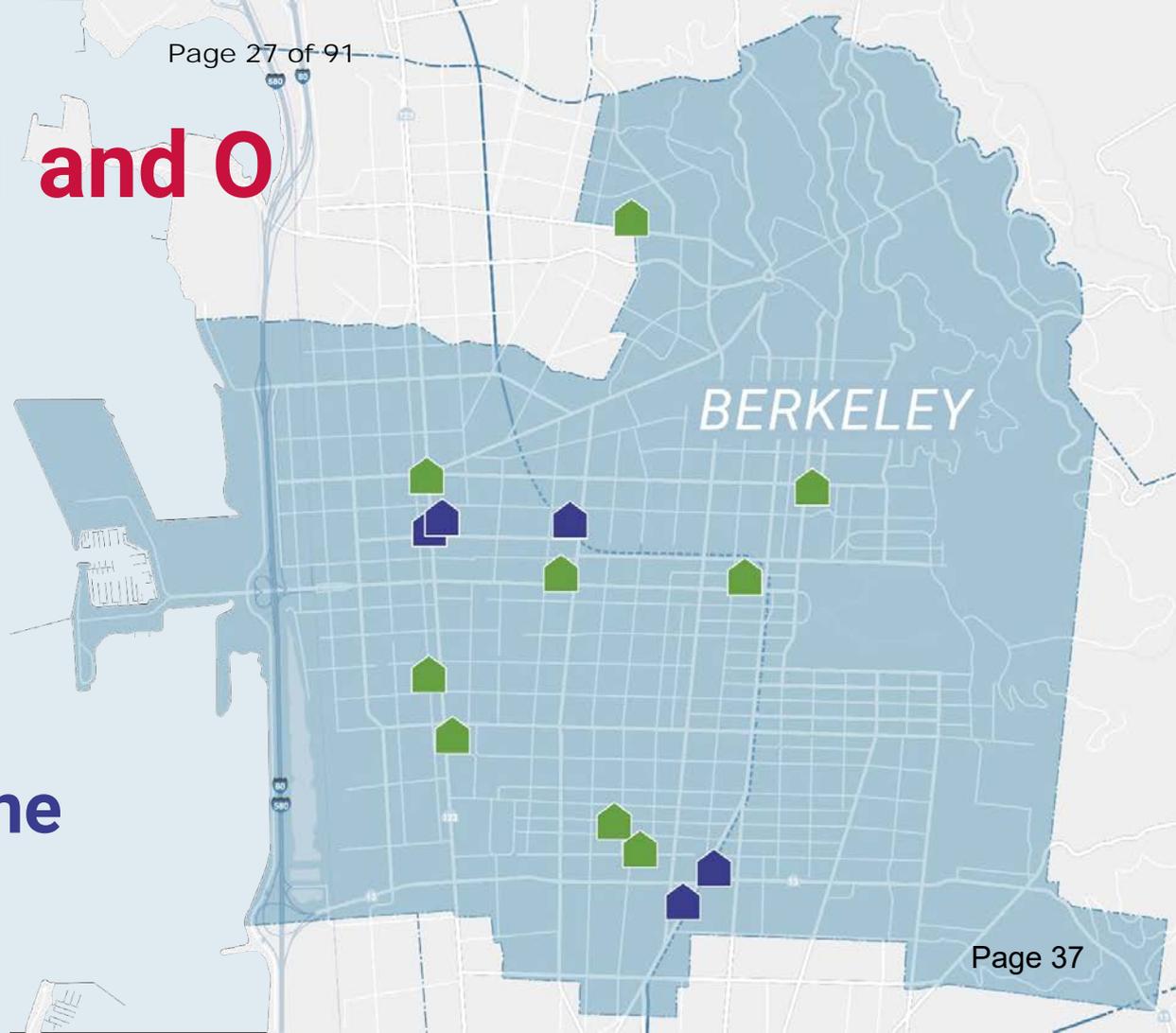Other local funds — 12%

Federal funds — 4%

COMPASSION

Measures U1 and O

Permanent and Interim
Housing Projects Funded
by Measures O and U1

Occupied

In the Pipeline

COORDINATION

Permanent Affordable Housing

Berkeley committed Measure O funding to build new units

240
UNITS
COMPLETED
(+44 shelter beds)

1,050
UNITS
IN THE PIPLINE

Milton Thomas

"The staff at the Hope Center did just that – they gave me hope. After living outside off-and-on for 10 years, I've now got a place of my own that I can call home."

WITH MORE PRIVACY, A NEW INCENTIVE TO MOVE INDOORS

Why Berkeley is Increasing Private, Individual Units for Homelessness

City of Berkeley outreach worker Okeya Vance-Dozier (right) makes daily rounds into encampments to offer services and shelter to those experiencing homelessness.

Just a few minutes into her outreach rounds at an encampment on Harrison Street in Berkeley, Okeya Vance-Dozier spotted a woman she's been working with to move out of a tent and into a private room at a local hotel.

"You know we got a room with your name on it," Vance-Dozier said to the woman who goes by "T" and has lived on-and-off the streets for several years.

"I am ready," T responded with some exhaustion. "And you know I prefer that hotel room any day of the week over those crazy shelters."

The preference for a private unit over dorm-style congregate shelter is a frequent request outreach workers like Vance-Dozier hear on the streets – and it can serve as the key incentive for residents to move indoors.

"It's the one thing all of them say they want," Vance-Dozier said. "Everyone needs a little something different to finalize the deal, but they all seem to want their own place."

Interim housing units that offer privacy – in converted hotel rooms, cabins, or trailers on secured lots – have dramatically increased in Berkeley in recent years, from zero units in 2019, to 134 in 2024.

Thanks largely to funds provided through Measure P passed by Berkeley voters in 2018, Berkeley has been able to increase all forms of shelter, while reducing street homelessness by 45% in just the last two years.

This steep decline marked the largest reduction of unsheltered homelessness in Alameda County's five largest cities.

In part to further address demand for the highly-sought private interim housing units, in the fall of 2024 the City will begin the process of converting the STAIR Center – a large congregate shelter that opened in 2018 – into more private units.

"They're far more likely to take our offer for help if we can say, 'We've got a place just for you."

"People have had bad experiences in the big shelters, and they don't want to go back," Vance-Dozier said. "And they're far more likely to take our offer for help if we can say, 'We've got a place just for you.'"

For T., her experiences at dorm-style shelters left her overwhelmed each time. Staff at the shelters were often outnumbered by residents experiencing mental health crises, she said. One man, she added, went through her laundry and she's been robbed of possessions countless times as she slept. Visitors are barred from most congregate shelters, and many also ban pets and have strict in-and-out rules.

"It's just too chaotic in those places," T. told Vance-Dozier. "And it doesn't feel like you have any freedom."

Once residents move into the private units, city data shows, they are also more likely to access the services the City of Berkeley offers them.

"The outreach doesn't stop just because they got a room," Vance-Dozier said.

Vance-Dozier visits five encampments every weekday with her outreach team to make constant contact with dozens of people each day – and offer services every time.

It's a pitch that, more often than not, can take weeks or months, before it gets accepted. The key, Vance-Dozier said, is to stay consistent.

"I tell them, 'I'll be back here tomorrow to check in on you' and sometimes it's just a 'hello' and sometimes I sit down with them for lunch."

As Vance-Dozier continued her visit through the encampment, a woman living in an RV stepped outside and said she was interested to learn more about what it would take to get housing.

But the woman was most concerned that if she moved off of Harrison Street, she'd lose all of her possessions in the RV, including some family heirlooms and her electric bicycle.

"I can do (private unit) housing," the woman stressed, "but I can't go into those shelters."

MORE OUTREACH IMPROVES ODDS FOR HOUSING

Two-thirds of people served by Berkeley's Homeless Response Team move into interim or permanent shelter

City of Berkeley outreach worker Christina Murphy (left) consistently meets with residents experiencing homeless to help them transition from the streets and into shelter and services.

Everyday, outreach workers with Berkeley's Homeless Response Team visit encampments throughout the city to knock on RV doors, peek into tents, and connect with residents experiencing homelessness to offer two things: services and shelter.

"What we try to do is take all the steps out of the way for them to make it easy to get indoors," said Christina Murphy, a member of the outreach team as she walked through the Harrison Street corridor recently. "We try to give them a one-stop shop for services."

The city's outreach team has shown encouraging signs of success since it formed in 2021, thanks to an annual investment from Measure P, a measure passed by Berkeley voters. Since the Homeless Response Team formed, which brings together several departments across the city, two out of every three people they've served have either moved into interim shelter or permanent affordable housing.

The Homeless Response Team's persistent outreach has contributed to Berkeley's remarkable 45% decline in street homelessness over the last two years, down from 803 individuals living on the streets in 2022, to 445 in 2024.

Unlike other cities, Berkeley does not contract-out its encampment management-focused outreach work to third party vendors, and its team leader, Okeye Vance-Dozier, grew up in Berkeley and attended Berkeley High School. The commitment to the community is clear.

"We all know everyone out here," Vance-Dozier said. "I went to high school with some of these folks. We notice when a new tent pops up, and we want to know right away where they're from and what they need. We pay very close attention to everyone."

The daily work to move people out of their make-shift communities in the encampments and into shelter, where they can receive services and assistance for long-term housing, can take time – and requires a lot of trust.

"We're upfront, honest and direct," Vance-Dozier said. "We don't over promise what we can't give, but we will go out of our way to help them and do what it takes to help them transition them indoors."

The stories of "what it takes" varies for each individual. Getting to a "yes" can be the most rewarding part of the work, said Joshua Jacobs, homeless services coordinator.

Jacobs worked directly with a man in his 60s who had lived in an RV on Harrison Street since 2019. For months, Jacobs tried to ensure the man had everything he needed to accept an offer to move into a hotel room.

"It's identifying each of their concerns and then working through each one of them to come up with solutions," Jacobs said.

After overcoming several deal-breakers and making progress, Jacobs took the man to visit the hotel room, but another barrier quickly sprouted up: The man's cat, who liked to roam freely in-and-out of his RV, would have to make a dangerous jump from the hotel's window sill to the street below. The man feared, if he moved in, his long-time companion could get stuck outside.

Together, Jacobs and the man agreed they needed a "cat tree" that ramped up to the window so the feline could enter and exit without hassle.

Relieved, the man agreed to move out of his RV and into the hotel room.

"It cost us $20 to purchase the cat tree," Jacobs recalled, "but it took us a long time to get to that moment. But all along the way, he knew I was there to help him figure it out."

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT: Alameda County's Five Largest Cities

CITY	2022	2024	# OF INDIVIDUALS	CHANGE
Berkeley	**803**	**445**	**-358**	**-45%**
Fremont	866	614	-252	**-29%**
San Leandro	312	227	-85	**-27%**
Hayward	267	278	+11	**+4%**
Oakland	3,337	3,664	+327	**+10%**

16
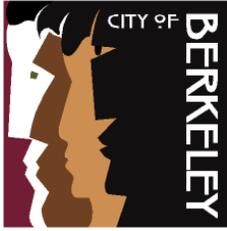
Office of the City Manager

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager, Neighborhood Services

Subject: Referral Response: Gap Analysis of Berkeley's Homelessness System of
               Care

RECOMMENDATION
Receive and file a report and presentation from staff, responding to the City Council's
July 13, 2021 referral to the City Manager to analyze current homelessness
expenditures and programs and to explore recalibrating and prioritizing investments to
align with the 1-2-4 All Home Regional Action Plan framework.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION
There are no fiscal impacts associated with this recommendation. However, to right-size
Berkeley's homeless system of care across all components (prevention, shelter, and
permanent housing) to be consistent with the All Home Regional action plan framework,
the report anticipates total costs of about $300 million over five years. This expansion in
services would require significant new resources above what the city, county, state, and
federal governments are currently spending on homelessness services and housing in
Berkeley. The projected need would require an additional $75 million per year on average
(Exhibit A, p. 40).

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
In July 2021, the City Council adopted the All Home Regional Action Plan (RAP),
committing Berkeley to an ambitious 75% reduction in unsheltered homelessness over
three years. One of the core components of the RAP model is establishing a
comprehensive system encompassing prevention, interim housing/shelter, and
permanent housing in order to reduce and end homelessness. The July 13, 2021 action
by Council referred to the City Manager an analysis, through the lens of the All Home
framework, of our existing homeless services system. In January 2024, the City
Manager's Office procured consulting services from the Goldman School of Public Policy
to provide recommendations to the City on prioritizing funding to align with the RAP goals.
The resulting report, attached to this memo, responds to Council's 2021 referral.

As of 2023, as many as 2,000 Berkeley residents experienced homelessness over the
course of a year. Most of these Berkeleyans are unsheltered, meaning that they sleep in

Gap Analysis of Berkeley's Homelessness System of Care

a tent, vehicle, or on the street. However, these numbers are shifting. Since this report was commissioned, Berkeley's January 2024 Point in Time (PIT) count data was released and shows that street homelessness has decreased by 45% and sheltered homelessness has increased by 57%. In comparison, the 2022 Point in Time Count saw a slight reduction of sheltered homelessness due, in large part, to the reduction of shelter capacity as a response to COVID concerns. In the 2024 PIT Count, the shelter utilization rates rebounded and have increased by over 35% relative to the pre-pandemic 2019 PIT Count.

The attached report finds that homeless program enrollments have gradually increased since 2021, corroborating the 2024 PIT Count's increase in shelter utilization. This reduction in street homelessness and increase in sheltered homelessness is in large part due to the City's Measure P commitments, state homelessness funding, and COVID-era investments. However, in the face of state and local budget deficits, the biggest issue Berkeley will face is an imminent fiscal cliff (Exhibit A, p. 3) that may stall or even reverse these recent gains if not addressed. Failing to address this fiscal cliff threatens to jeopardize the positive momentum that we have built towards reducing and ending homelessness.

The report highlights three main goals for the City's homeless system moving forward: (1) accelerating the transition to non-congregate shelter, (2) funding permanent supportive housing, and (3) investing in homelessness prevention (Exhibit A, p. 4). The report also suggests exploring the expansion of medium-term subsidies and investments in homelessness prevention services (Exhibit A, p. 49). In addition, the report makes recommendations to reduce inflow into the homeless services system and increase interim housing and permanent housing solutions. Many of these recommendations are already in progress, including: regional efforts to launch new homeless prevention programs in Bay Area counties; looking for ways that Berkeley's Housing Retention and Flex Fund programs can target insecurely housed households that are more likely to fall into homelessness, if not assisted; and facilitating care conferences with shelters and service providers that focus on participant document readiness in preparation of moving into permanent housing. (In the absence of new interim housing, this latter practice has the possibility of shortening shelter lengths of stays, thereby increasing the number of participants served at shelters.) Additionally, there are 39 deeply affordable housing units that will be available through a master lease and 188 permanent support housing (PSH) units in the Housing Trust Fund Program pipeline. All these efforts rely on continued and expanded funding.

BACKGROUND
The attached Gap Analysis of Berkeley's Homelessness System of Care was referred to the City Manager as part of the City Council's July 13, 2021 action endorsing the All Home Regional Action Plan. The resulting report (1) provides an overview of Berkeley's current services, (2) analyzes the needs and demographics of people experiencing homelessness, and (3) projects the resources needed to achieve a significant reduction

in street homelessness (Exhibit A, p. 3). The report relies on Homeless Information Management System (HMIS) and PIT Count data and showcases the current service utilizers known to date.

As we have seen in the most recent PIT Count, unsheltered homelessness is down by 45% and sheltered homelessness has increased by 57%. It is difficult to determine exactly what is driving these changes to our homeless population, but finding an increase in the number of clients seen by our HMIS system (Exhibit A, p. 22) is consistent with the PIT Count results that show more people are accessing services and fewer people are experiencing homelessness without touching our homelessness response system. This also means that the demographics of our homeless population are more known to us now than ever before. The report confirms that (1) Measure P funding has been effective in addressing homelessness in our community, (2) fewer people are exiting Berkeley services back to homelessness compared to before the pandemic, and (3) we have succeeded in increasing our non-congregate shelter bed capacity and, as a result, have also increased the number of sheltered persons in our homeless population. The report also highlights that (1) racial inequity for African-American and Indigenous folks in our homeless population remains stark (Exhibit A, p. 22) and (2) vulnerable people are often stuck in the Coordinated Entry System's bottleneck waiting for permanent housing (Exhibit A, p. 35).

These findings were presented to the Homeless Services Panel of Experts at their May 1, 2024 meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE EFFECTS
There are no identifiable environmental impacts except that whenever unhoused persons are housed in Berkeley, it contributes to a better, healthier environment for all.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION
This report responds to a July 13, 2021 referral from the City Council to the City Manager to provide these analyses and to return to the Council with findings.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED
None.

CONTACT PERSON
Josh Jacobs, Homeless Services Coordinator, (510) 225-8035

Attachments:
1. Exhibit A: Gap Analysis of Berkeley's Homelessness System of Care.

Gap Analysis of
Berkeley's Homelessness System of Care

SPRING 2024

Prepared by Zoe Klingmann
for the City of Berkeley City Manager's Office

The author conducted this research as part of the program of professional education at the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgements and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Goldman School of Public Policy, by the University of California, or by any other agency.

Acknowledgements

2

Executive Summary

More than 2,000 Berkeley residents experience homelessness over the course of a year. Most of these Berkeleyans are unsheltered, meaning that they sleep in a tent, vehicle, or on the street. This report explores how the City of Berkeley can align with the All Home Regional Action Plan (RAP), which seeks to reduce unsheltered homelessness across the Bay Area by 75 percent. It provides an overview of Berkeley's current services, analyzes the needs and demographics of people experiencing homelessness, and projects the resources needed to achieve a significant reduction in street homelessness.

Key findings

Berkeley will need more funding to keep up momentum. Berkeley has made strides in expanding services in recent years, but the resources the City has available now are not enough to reduce unsheltered homelessness. System modeling suggests that a 75 percent reduction in street homelessness will require an additional $300 million over five years, largely for new affordable housing. More urgently, Berkeley faces a fiscal cliff in the coming years due to the volatility of local funding sources, state budget woes, and the end of pandemic-era programs.

Inflows to and outflows from homelessness add up to increasing need for services. The number of people accessing homelessness services in Berkeley increased 11 percent between 2022 and 2023. This increase comes down to a math problem: more people are entering or returning to homelessness than are exiting to housing.

Black and Indigenous Berkeleyans are dramatically overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. Black people make up a majority of people who accessed homelessness services in Berkeley in 2023 but only eight percent of Berkeley residents. Indigenous people are similarly overrepresented. People of color in the Bay Area are more likely to face low incomes and high rent burdens, making them especially vulnerable to homelessness.

Berkeley has made progress in increasing its supply of permanent supportive housing (PSH) and non-congregate interim housing. Since 2021, Berkeley has more than tripled the number of shelter beds in non-congregate settings, where residents sleep in a private space rather than a dorm-style shelter. These new facilities have higher utilization rates and have successfully sheltered people who have been outside for years. The city now has nearly one hundred additional beds of permanent supportive housing, which serves vulnerable people who need support to stay housed.

Vulnerable people are still stuck in a bottleneck. Despite increases in supply, people eligible for permanent supportive housing still wait a long time for housing. More than 95 percent of people waiting on the housing queue have some form of disability.

Targeted prevention is key to reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness. Berkeley's current housing retention programs have been successful at preventing evictions, but are not targeted to the people most likely to become homeless, many of whom do not have a formal lease. System modeling suggests that Berkeley will need to more than double the number of households served by targeted prevention in order to achieve a 75 reduction in unsheltered homelessness.

3

Recommendations

In order to effectively reduce unsheltered homelessness, **Berkeley should look for opportunities to increase funding for homelessness services and affordable housing.** The City should prioritize the following specific investments:

- Accelerating the transition to non-congregate shelter
- Funding permanent supportive housing
- Investing in targeted homelessness prevention

In addition, the City should consider doing additional research into rapid rehousing and the needs of people with lower levels of acuity. More detail about these recommendations can be found in Part VII.

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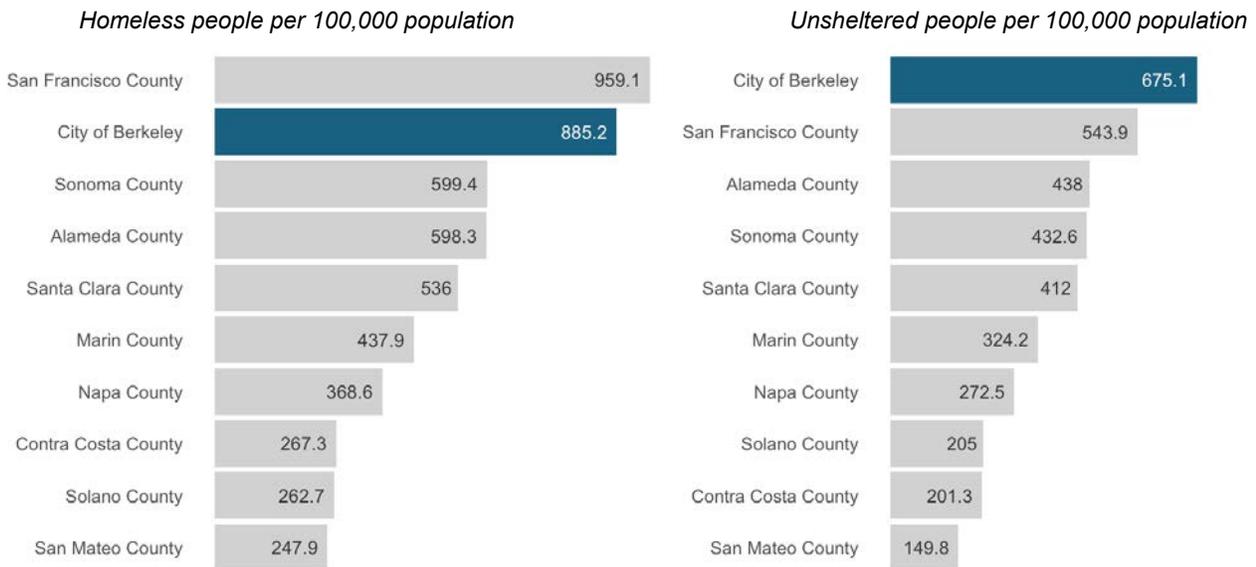
Part I: Background

A. Problem definition

About a thousand Berkeley residents experience homelessness on a given night. Most of those Berkeleyans—about 75 percent—are unsheltered, meaning that they sleep in a tent, vehicle, or on the street rather than in a shelter or interim housing.[1]

Homelessness is a regional problem with roots beyond Berkeley's borders, driven by a shortage of affordable housing and federal disinvestment during the twentieth century.[2] Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 17 percent of households in the Bay Area had extremely low incomes, making an average of $17,800 per year. More than half of these households were at high risk of losing their housing.[3] Rising housing costs and pandemic-related instability have put further pressures on this population.[4] As of 2022, more than 38,000 people in the nine-county Bay Area were homeless on a given night, a nine percent increase since 2019.[5]

That said, Berkeley's level of homelessness is disproportionate among its neighbors. Berkeley residents make up about seven percent of Alameda County's population, but were 11 percent of unsheltered people on a given night in 2022.[6]

Figure 1: Berkeley's rate of unsheltered homeless people is higher than area counties

Homeless people per 100,000 population

San Francisco County	959.1
City of Berkeley	885.2
Sonoma County	599.4
Alameda County	598.3
Santa Clara County	536
Marin County	437.9
Napa County	368.6
Contra Costa County	267.3
Solano County	262.7
San Mateo County	247.9

Unsheltered people per 100,000 population

City of Berkeley	675.1
San Francisco County	543.9
Alameda County	438
Sonoma County	432.6
Santa Clara County	412
Marin County	324.2
Napa County	272.5
Solano County	205
Contra Costa County	201.3
San Mateo County	149.8

Source: 2022 PIT Count

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[1] EveryOne Home, "Berkeley 2022 Point in Time Count: Unsheltered & Sheltered Report," accessed February 16, 2024, https://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Berkeley-PIT-2022-Infographic-Report.pdf.

[2] Greg Rosalsky, "How California Homelessness Became A Crisis," NPR, June 8, 2021, https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2021/06/08/ 1003982733/squalor-behind-the-golden-gate-confronting-californias-homelessness-crisis.

[3] Carolina Reid, "On the Edge of Homelessness: The Vulnerability of Extremely Low-Income Households in the Bay Area" (Terner Center for Housing Innovation, December 2021), https://ternercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ELI-Households-Bay-Area-Report-Final-1.pdf.

[4] Christian Leonard and Sriharsha Devulapalli, "Bay Area Real Estate: Where Rent or Mortgages Hurt Residents Most," accessed February 16, 2024, https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/housing-costs-rent-mortgage-18535110.php.

[5] Analysis of 2019 and 2022 PIT data.

[6] EveryOne Home, "Berkeley 2022 Point in Time Count: Unsheltered & Sheltered Report."

6

Unsheltered people are vulnerable to a wide range of harms. They have high rates of chronic health conditions and low access to health care. The trauma of living on the street can cause or exacerbate physical and mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders.[7] They are also highly vulnerable to crime: more than a third of homeless people surveyed in California said that they had been physically victimized while homeless.[8] Between 2018 and 2020, at least 809 people in Alameda County died while experiencing homelessness.[9]

These harms fall disproportionately on people of color. Black residents make up eight percent of Berkeley's population but 45 percent of the sheltered homeless population in the 2022 Point-in-Time Count. Native American and Latine Berkeleyans are also overrepresented.[10] A long history of racist policies such as redlining have made people of color in Berkeley and elsewhere more vulnerable to losing their homes and less able to rely on a safety net when they do.[11]

Unsheltered homelessness also has an impact on the community where it occurs. Some people experiencing homelessness use public services at high rates—for instance, 38 percent of homeless people in California reported that they had made an emergency room visit that did not result in hospitalization in the last six months.[12] A study in Santa Clara County found that the public cost of medical care and justice system involvement for homeless people was $520 million, with just five percent of the homeless population accounting for 47 percent of these costs.[13] Additionally, surveys of Bay Area residents regularly find that unsheltered homelessness impacts their perceptions and feelings of safety in their community.[14]

B. Report background

In July 2021, Berkeley City Council voted to endorse the All Home California Regional Action Plan (RAP), which seeks to reduce the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness across the nine-county Bay Area region by 75 percent.[15]

One central component of the Regional Action Plan is the concept of "system flow." In a functioning homelessness response system, there are adequate *permanent housing* resources to move people out of homelessness, and there are adequate *prevention* resources to prevent people from falling into homeless in the first place—meaning that fewer people end up relying on emergency shelter and other

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[7] Margot Kushel and Tiana Moore, "Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness," June 2023, https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/sites/default/files/2023-06/CASPEH_Report_62023.pdf.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, "Alameda County 2018-2020 Homeless Mortality Report," March 2022, https://www.achch.org/uploads/7/2/5/4/72547769/2018-2020_ac_homeless_mortality_report_final_4.11.2022.pdf.
[10] EveryOne Home, "Berkeley 2022 Point in Time Count: Unsheltered & Sheltered Report."
[11] "Homelessness and Racial Disparities," *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, December 2023, https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/;
Kate Cimini, "Black People Disproportionately Homeless in California," *CalMatters*, October 5, 2019, http://calmatters.org/california-divide/2019/10/black-people-disproportionately-homeless-in-california/.
[12] Kushel and Moore, "Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness."
[13] "Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley," accessed April 1, 2024, https://destinationhomesv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FactSheetDestinationHome.pdf.
[14] For example: Sarah Ravani, "Oaklanders Say Homelessness Is the Most Urgent Issue Facing the City," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 3, 2023, https://www.sfchronicle.com/eastbay/article/oakland-homelessness-survey-priority-17816397.php.
[15] "Item 12: Endorse All Home CA Regional Action," July 13, 2021, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-07-13%20Item%2012%20Endorse%20All%20Home%20CA%20Regional%20Action.pdf.

services. In our current homelessness response system, too many people are entering homelessness and too few are exiting, leading to a bottleneck of people who are currently homeless.

Figure 2: System flow diagram from the All Home Regional Action Plan (RAP)
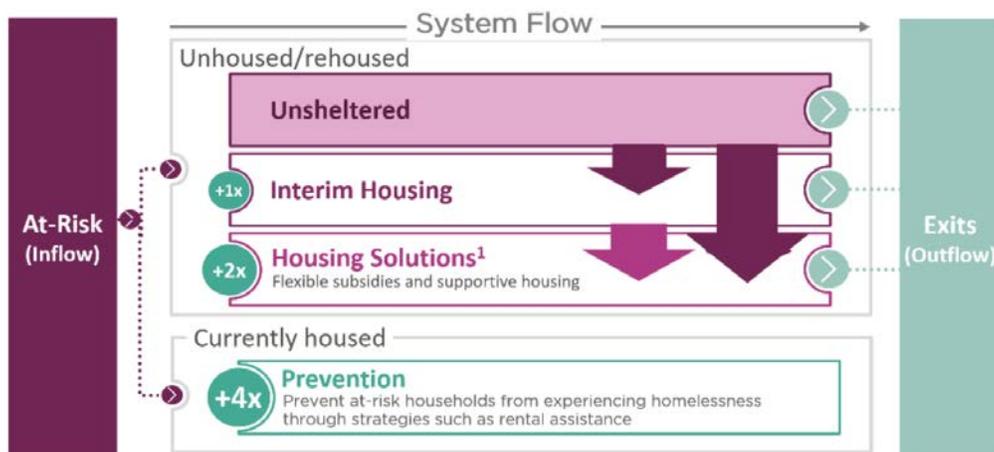
Source: All Home Regional Action Plan

The RAP's 1-2-4 framework encourages local governments to fund homelessness prevention and permanent housing solutions alongside emergency shelter and interim housing. The framework broadly suggests that policymakers fund two units of permanent housing and four slots of homelessness prevention for every additional unit of shelter. That said, the RAP acknowledges that the ideal mix of investments will look different for different localities.

This report makes recommendations for how Berkeley can recalibrate and prioritize its investments to align with the Regional Action Plan. It gives an overview of Berkeley's current homelessness system of care and analyzes the needs and demographics of people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley. Lastly, it describes the results of modeling developed by All Home to project the resources needed over the next ten years to achieve a significant reduction in street homelessness.

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Part II: Berkeley's Current System of Care

This section provides an overview of the homelessness services available to Berkeley residents and contextualizes the City of Berkeley's current investments in these services. I use the HUD Housing Inventory Count (HIC)[16], Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, City of Berkeley budget documentation, shelter capacity reporting, and referrals to the county's Coordinated Entry housing queue to paint a picture of the system as a whole.

A. **Homelessness and affordable housing programs used by Berkeley residents**

Berkeley residents experiencing homelessness receive assistance through a constellation of service providers and governments, paid for by a mix of city, county, state, and federal funds. Berkeley is part of the Alameda County Continuum of Care, meaning that many services are coordinated county-wide and Berkeley residents have access to services outside of the city's borders.[17] That said, this analysis largely focuses on services within Berkeley, given that people tend to stay local when seeking shelter and assistance.

Berkeley's homelessness system of care was dramatically reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, in ways that are reflected in the data in this section. The pandemic response brought unprecedented new resources and new priorities, including increased need for non-congregate shelter and reduced capacity in congregate shelters. As of 2023, the system was adjusting to the new normal in the post-emergency period. Federal funds were rapidly drawing down and the City and County were providing additional services to transition people out of temporary FEMA shelters.

Emergency shelter and transitional housing
Berkeley had nearly 350 shelter beds at the start of 2023, 108 of which were seasonal and open only during the winter months. Over the course of 2023, over 900 individual people used a shelter bed in Berkeley. The city also had about fifty transitional housing beds dedicated for specific populations, including transition-aged youth, people with substance abuse disorders, and veterans.
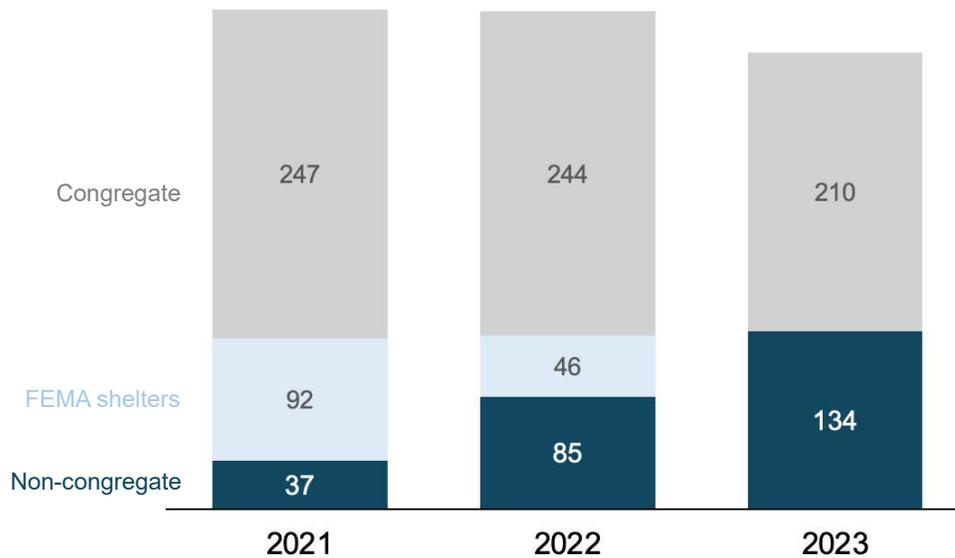
Non-congregate shelter beds have become more common, though most are designated for specific purposes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, new shelter beds in Berkeley are increasingly likely to be in non-congregate settings, meaning that residents have a private room or space rather than sleeping in a dorm-style shelter. When paired with case management and housing navigation on site, this model is sometimes referred to as "interim housing."[18]

More than a third of Berkeley's shelter beds were non-congregate as of the 2023 HIC count, more than triple the number of non-congregate beds available in 2021. Several additional non-congregate shelters opened in Berkeley later in 2023, such as the Dorothy Day House University Community Shelter. This growth has made up for the closure of the FEMA COVID-19 shelters in 2022.

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[16] The HIC includes permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens. It is a point-in-time count at the start of each year and only includes services that are intended solely for homeless people, so the number of beds reported will not include services that opened midyear or services that do not screen for literal homelessness.
[17] Continua of Care, or CoCs, are HUD-mandated regional collaborations of governments and nonprofits that coordinate services, funding, and data across communities.
[18] Gail Gilman, "Strengthening Interim Housing as a Housing First Approach," All Home, March 20, 2023, https://www.allhomeca.org/2023/03/20/strengthening-interim-housing/.

Figure 3: Berkeley now has more non-congregate shelter beds

Congregate

FEMA shelters

Non-congregate

	2021	2022	2023
Congregate	247	244	210
FEMA shelters	92	46	
Non-congregate	37	85	134

Proportion of shelter beds in non-congregate settings.
Source: 2021–2023 HIC

Non-congregate shelters in Berkeley are almost exclusively dedicated to specific populations, with funding streams for particular purposes. For instance, several are intended for people from specific encampments, while others serve populations such as families or SSI recipients. These non-congregate shelters necessarily have lower capacity than congregate shelters, with an average of 22 beds per facility. Nevertheless, during 2023 non-congregate shelters served 317 individual people out of the 900 who accessed shelter.

Congregate shelters have barriers to entry for many homeless people. During January and February of 2024, 82 percent of available shelter beds were occupied each night on average.[19] This rate is slightly below the national average occupancy rate of 88 percent in 2023, though the methodology used to calculate that occupancy rate is slightly different.[20] Non-congregate shelters had higher levels of utilization: 93 percent of beds in non-congregate shelters were full on average, compared to 79 percent of beds in congregate shelters.

Providers and City staff report that matching a person with shelter is more complex than simply finding an empty bed. People have physical limitations or needs that make some shelter beds inappropriate for them—for instance, they cannot physically climb onto a top bunk or need to stay with family members. Restrictive rules such as curfews and pet policies also play a role, though many shelters in Berkeley are moving away from these restrictions. The two shelters in Berkeley with the earliest nightly curfews

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[19] This analysis excluded the Ursula Sherman Village families shelter because of the limitations of using bed counts for family shelters ("How Do I Calculate a Unit Utilization Rate?," HUD Exchange, November 2017, https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/reporting-systems/homelessness-data-exchange-hdx/ahar/understanding-utilization-rates-in-the-ahar/how-do-i-calculate-a-unit-utilization-rate2). It also excludes the HCEB Rodeway to Home Shelter and IH Berkeley Respite Shelter because both are winding down operations and no longer taking new enrollments. For nights where over 100 percent of beds were occupied, I set the rate to 100 percent.

[20] HUD simply divides the number of sheltered homeless people by the number of ES, TH, and SH beds available at the PIT count, a method that captures a much larger variation in settings. *The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report Congress Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023*, December 2023, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf, p. 11.

during this period also had the lowest occupancy rates, with an average of 71 percent occupancy each night.

Street outreach providers report that people are especially skeptical of congregate shelters due to concerns about safety, theft, and past trauma. One outreach team recorded that eighty percent of the people who declined offers of shelter were concerned about the fact that it was a shared space or that it was co-ed. All of these factors make congregate shelter less attractive and less accessible for a large portion of the unhoused population. City's Homelessness Response Team has reported that people living in encampments are far more likely to accept offers of shelter when they are non-congregate than congregate.[21]

Figure 4: Non-congregate shelters consistently have higher utilization rates
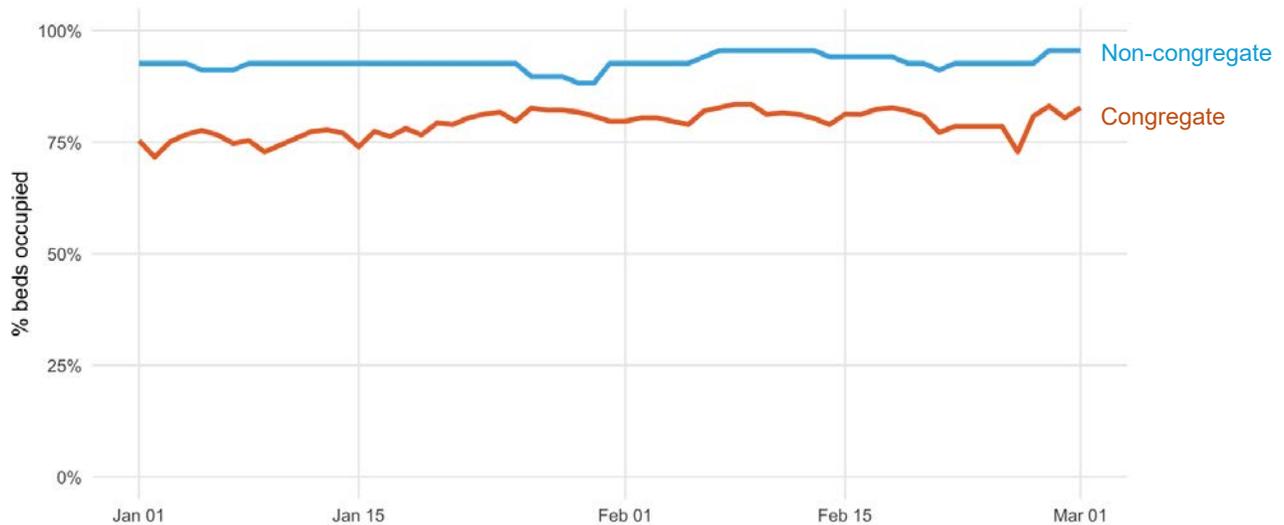
Berkeley shelter utilization rates, January to February 2024.
Source: HMIS weekly housing census

Permanent housing
Berkeley residents have to wait to access permanent housing programs. Berkeley residents experiencing homelessness access permanent housing through the Coordinated Entry queue. Coordinated Entry matches individuals to openings in permanent housing programs based on their level of need and program fit, essentially triaging access to a limited resource. Since mid-2022, people in the north Alameda County area spent an average of 280 days, or more than nine months, on the housing queue before receiving a referral to permanent housing.

Berkeley has a growing inventory of permanent supportive housing (PSH). Berkeley had 592 beds of permanent supportive housing (PSH) in early 2023. These units are intended for formerly homeless people with high needs: they require disability for entry and provide ongoing wrap-around services in addition to a subsidized unit. About ten percent of the PSH units in Berkeley are dedicated to families with children.

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[21] Interview with Markos Gonzalez, Bay Area Community Services; "Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Grant Application and Budget Match, Budget and Finance Policy Committee, January 25, 2024, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-attachments/ITEM%2003%20-%20ENCAMPMENT%20RESOLUTION%20FUNDING%20%28ERF%29%20PRESENTATION% 20%28STAFF%29.pdf

The permanent supportive housing available in 2023 represents an increase of nearly one hundred beds from the 2022 HIC. The city added both the HOPE Center in downtown Berkeley and the Golden Bear Hotel during 2022. There are additional PSH units in the pipeline set to open in the coming years.[22]

Coordinated Entry is intended to triage resources county-wide, so new PSH beds in Berkeley are not guaranteed to go to people experiencing homelessness in the city. The County's current policies allow both PSH programs and individuals waiting on the queue to indicate a geographic preference. Nevertheless, some of the people who move into Berkeley PSH units are from outside the city's borders and some Berkeley residents move into housing elsewhere in the county. Of the approximately 200 people who entered permanent supportive housing in Berkeley from 2021 to 2023, most had some previous connection to Berkeley, but about ten to fifteen percent had last accessed services from elsewhere in Alameda County.

People in PSH tend to stay there: the median person enrolled in PSH in 2023 had spent about five and a half years in their unit. The vast majority, 92 percent, had been enrolled for more than a year. More than half (298) of Berkeley's PSH units are administered as tenant-based vouchers, meaning that residents rent a unit from a private landlord.

Figure 5: Berkeley has expanded its supply of permanent supportive housing
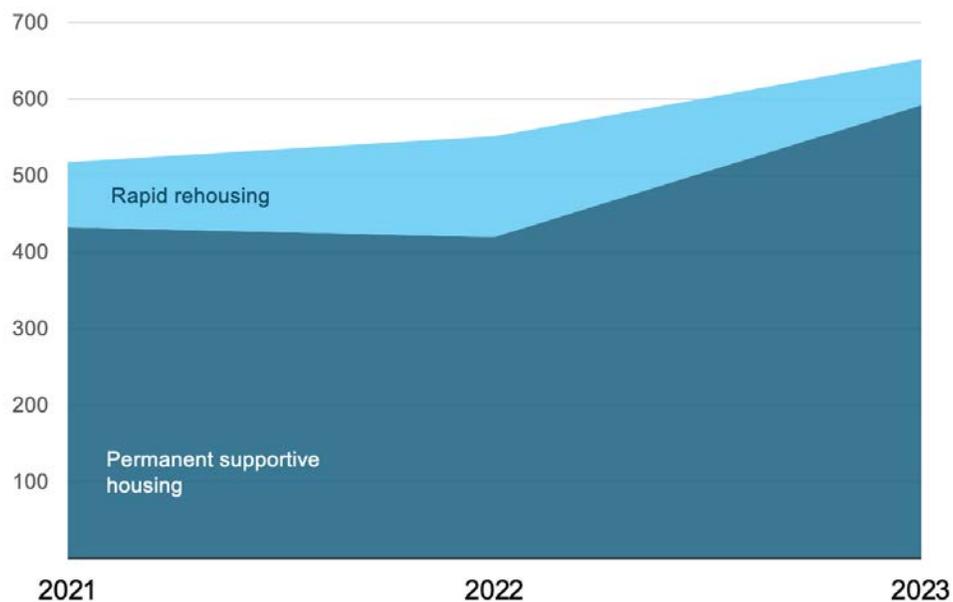
Point-in-time count of permanent housing beds in the last week of January of each year. RRH inventory based on project stays.
Source: 2021–2023 HIC

Rapid rehousing (RRH) serves people for shorter stints. At the start of 2023, Berkeley had 61 rapid rehousing slots, some of which were specifically designated for veterans. RRH provides short-term rental assistance and supports to people exiting homelessness into private rental units. The assistance tapers off after a few months to a year. Because of this difference in service model and focus, each rapid rehousing slot can serve more people over the course of a year. Sixty rapid rehousing slots in 2023

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[22] For instance, the Step-Up Housing Project will provide 39 additional units, and the Maudelle Miller Shirek development will also include some PSH units https://www.self-sufficiency.org/boss-housing-projects; https://rcdhousing.org/maudelle-miller-shirek/

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served over 300 people, and clients enrolled in RRH during 2023 spent a median of 241 days in the program in total.

Berkeley had more than double the rapid rehousing slots available at the 2022 Housing Inventory Count compared to 2023, largely due to a pot of dedicated City and County funding to transition people out of the temporary COVID-era FEMA shelters. The City also continues to fund a few slots of rapid rehousing for residents in a respite shelter for medically vulnerable people.

Figure 6: Berkeley housing and shelter beds capacity, 2023
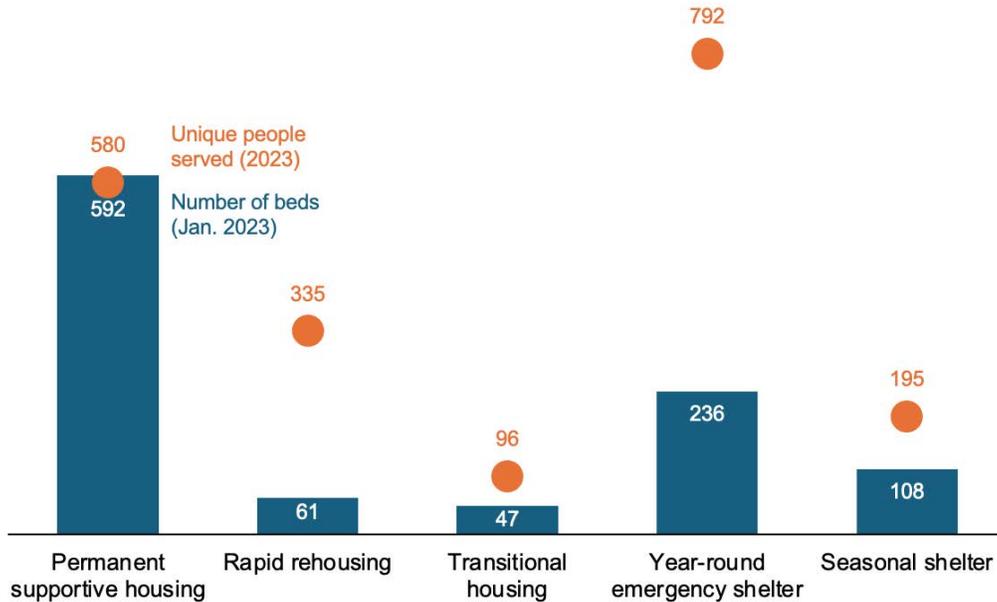
Number of beds/slots in Berkeley vs. number of people served by programs over the course of 2023. For most programs, multiple people cycle in and out of a single bed over the course of a year.
Source: 2023 HIC; HMIS

A small proportion of federal vouchers are designated for people experiencing homelessness. The Berkeley Housing Authority administers the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, sometimes known as Section 8, which is one of the main ways the federal government subsidizes housing for low-income people. As of November 2023, the BHA had authority for 2,110 vouchers, which are distributed to households in Berkeley who make less than fifty percent area median income.[23] The need for these vouchers far outstrips demand: when the BHA opened its waitlist for the first time in over ten years in 2022, over 21,000 households applied.[24]

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[23] Not all of these vouchers were in use: Berkeley's voucher utilization rate was 76 percent as of 2023. "Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Data Dashboard," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), accessed April 14, 2024, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard.

[24] Supriya Yelimeli, "Over 21,000 Applied for Just 2,000 Section 8 Housing Vouchers in Berkeley," *Berkeleyside*, September 8, 2022, http://www.berkeleyside.org/2022/09/08/berkeley-section-8-voucher-lottery-applications.

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Figure 7: Eight percent of Berkeley's vouchers are designated for people experiencing homelessness

Mainstream
121   VASH
          40   EHV
                   51

Proportion of Berkeley Housing Authority voucher awards in Special Purpose Voucher programs, plus one-time EHVs
Source: HUD HCV Data Dashboard

About eight percent of these vouchers are specifically targeted to people experiencing homelessness. These include Veterans Authority Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, which are designated for homeless veterans, and "mainstream" vouchers, which are designated for non-elderly disabled people referred through the Coordinated Entry system. BHA project-based vouchers also fund the operations of two permanent supportive housing SRO buildings, Erna P. Harris Courts and UA Homes.[25] Lastly, HUD issued 51 Emergency Housing Vouchers to Berkeley in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These vouchers were distributed through Coordinated Entry, but they were a one-time expansion and will not continue after current voucher-holders give them up. BHA does not currently prioritize people experiencing homelessness for regular Housing Choice Vouchers, though this is allowed by federal law.[26]

Berkeley is now prioritizing people experiencing homelessness for some other subsidized housing. Berkeley has over 2,000 subsidized or regulated affordable housing units for low-income people, funded by a range of overlapping funding sources and programs. As of 2024, there were 1,537 units in Berkeley that received funding from the City's Housing Trust Fund (HTF), which leverages state and federal sources such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The City also monitors 597 units of regulated below-market-rent (BMR) housing that are required by the City's inclusionary zoning ordinance.[27] Some of these units are designated for people experiencing homelessness—for instance, the HTF supports permanent supportive housing projects, and a portion of BMR units are set aside for permanent supportive housing voucher tenants.

Affordable units that are not specifically dedicated to homeless people are often not accessible to them: competition for these units is steep, and they are often not affordable to people with extremely low or zero income. However, the City recently adopted a preference policy that gives people who have lost or are at risk of losing housing in Berkeley priority for units regulated by the City. One of the preferences

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[25] "Housing for Disabled & Homeless Individuals (SROs)," Berkeley Housing Authority, accessed April 14, 2024, https://bha.berkeleyca.gov/bha-programs/housing-disabled-homeless-individuals-sros.
[26] Under current BHA policy, people on the waitlist are prioritized if they live/work in Berkeley, are a veteran, are elderly or disabled, and are a family with more than two people in the household. *2022 Administrative Plan for Section 8 Programs*, https://bha.berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022%20Administrative%20Plan.pdf.
[27] Correspondence with City staff.

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applies to people who are currently homeless in Berkeley and not eligible for permanent supportive housing, as well as people at risk of homelessness who live in Berkeley.[28]

Prevention, retention, and problem-solving

Flexible funds and housing navigation help people in a variety of circumstances. Berkeley's system of care funds a wide range of services intended to support people along their path to housing, including short-term rental assistance, counseling, legal help, move-in assistance, and housing search assistance.

Figure 8: Most people served by flex funds and navigation come from homelessness
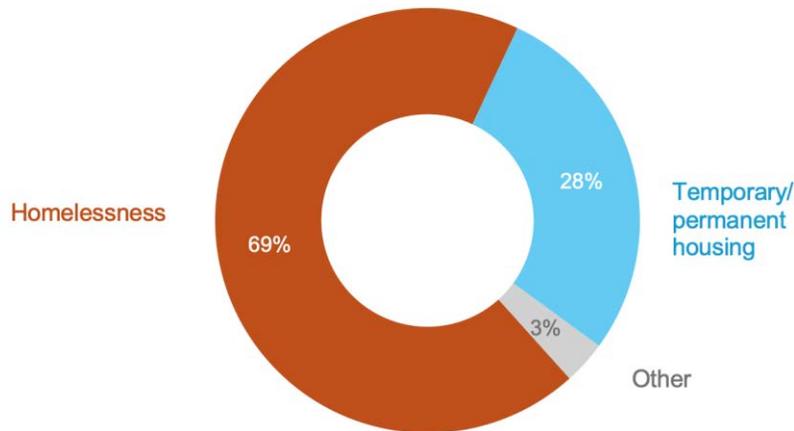
Recorded residence of people served by flex funds and navigation programs during 2023.
Source: HMIS

The purpose of these services can vary, from supporting people who are entering housing, to retaining them once they are there, to preventing vulnerable people from falling into homelessness in the first place. That said, resources in Berkeley generally go first to people who are currently homeless or were recently rehoused—with limited funds, prevention is a lesser priority.

Many of these resources are distributed to service providers as "flex funds," which they can use to support clients with move-in costs, one-time rental assistance, and tenancy supports. The Housing Resource Center also provides problem-solving and navigation services to help people who have recently become homeless regain their footing, for instance by connecting them to a family member willing to take them in. In 2023, 469 unique people were served by flex funds or housing navigation services. More than two-thirds of people enrolling reported that they were literally homeless at the time they enrolled.

Berkeley's eviction prevention programming has expanded in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of Berkeley spent $1.6 million on homelessness prevention services in FY 2022–23, including eviction defense services, rental assistance, and domestic violence survivor advocacy. According to city budget documents, this translated to 460 households served.[29]

Berkeley had an housing retention program prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was transformed by the pandemic-era eviction moratoria and an infusion of federal funds. Berkeley now provides assistance

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[28] "City Council Report: Item 32 Referral Response Affordable Housing Preference Policy for Rental Housing Created Through the Below Market Rate and Housing Trust Fund Programs," July 11, 2023, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023-07-11%20Item%2032%20Referral%20Response%20Affordable.pdf.

[29] Because these enrollments are not recorded in HMIS, this figure may double-count households who accessed multiple services over the course of the fiscal year.

up to a higher dollar amount and can cover expenses such as utilities in addition to rent. [30] Service providers report that these expansions have increased their ability to help people stay housed, though many families simply cannot afford to live in the area for the longer term.[31]

The City's eviction prevention programs are less targeted to those most at risk of homelessness compared to programs in other cities in the area. The City's current housing retention program is primarily intended to prevent eviction and displacement in general rather than homelessness specifically.[32] The program targets resources based on factors such as whether the recipient is a senior citizen, a long-term resident of the city, or very low-income.

In the last few years, more jurisdictions around the Bay Area have used targeted homelessness prevention to direct assistance to the families most at risk. For instance, both Oakland and San Francisco use factors such as past episodes of homelessness, justice system involvement, and living in a vulnerable neighborhood that are predictive of falling into homelessness. San Francisco provides assistance to people without formal leases, a group that is especially vulnerable to falling into homelessness.[33] A randomized control trial (RCT) of Santa Clara County's targeted prevention program found that it was effective at reducing rates of homelessness compared to a control group.[34]

The City's shallow subsidy program is not very shallow. In 2022, the City began funding a rental assistance program that provides up to 36 months of assistance to Berkeley households. The program is part of a larger movement towards medium-term "shallow" subsidies, which offer monthly rental assistance for up to a few years. Alameda County's 2021 *Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design* report identified shallow subsidies as a solution for households paying more than fifty percent of their income on rent and unlikely to increase their income, but without significant disabilities.[35] That year, Oakland launched a shallow subsidy pilot that is focused on preventing homelessness for people with high cost burdens.[36] Cities such as Los Angeles and the Veteran's Authority (VA) have also recently launched shallow subsidy programs.[37]

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[30] "Housing Retention Program," accessed April 25, 2024, https://berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/affordable-housing-berkeley/housing-retention-program.

[31] Interview with Eric Magaña, Eviction Defense Center

[32] "City Council Report: Item 13 Budget Referral Supplemental Funding" (City of Berkeley, November 7, 2023), https://berkeleyca.gov/ sites/default/files/documents/2023-11-07%20Item%2013%20Budget%20Referral%20Supplemental%20Funding.pdf.

[33] "SF ERAP Program Rules," City and County of San Francisco, accessed April 14, 2024, https://www.sf.gov/information/sf-erap-program-rules.

[34] David C. Phillips and James X. Sullivan, "Do Homelessness Prevention Programs Prevent Homelessness? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, May 29, 2023, 1–30, https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_01344.

[35] "Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design" (EveryOne Home, January 2021), https://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-Centering-Racial-Equity-in-Homeless-System-Design-Full-Report-FINAL.pdf.

[36] Oakland Shallow Subsidy Pilot. https://www.oaklandfund.org/oakland-shallow-subsidy-housing-pilot/.

[37] "COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Shallow Rental Subsidies" (HUD Exchange), accessed April 5, 2024, https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Homeless-System-Response-Shallow-Rental-Subsidies.pdf; "Shallow Subsidy Compliance Guide," VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families, November 2021, https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/ Shallow_Subsidy_Compliance_Guide.pdf.

Figure 9: Berkeley's shallow subsidy program is focused on people who are currently homeless

	Berkeley shallow subsidy program	Oakland shallow subsidy pilot	VA shallow subsidy program
Funding limit	Up to $1,800 per month Up to 36 months	Up to $800 per month Up to 18 months	Up to 50 percent of "reasonable" rent Up to two years
Target population	Currently homeless people without significant disabilities	People at risk of homelessness (must be housed to be eligible)	Veteran households with sufficient income to pay, often after participating in RRH
Wrap-around services	Tenancy sustaining services, housing navigation, employment services	Referrals to other service providers	Light case management services

Source: Oakland shallow subsidy pilot; VA Shallow Subsidy Compliance Guide; Berkeley shallow subsidy program documentation

That said, Berkeley's program differs from other programs in some important respects. Unlike Oakland, Berkeley chose to target its program to people who are currently homeless. This difference in prioritization means that the program must provide more wrap-around services and a much deeper subsidy, up to $1,800 per month as opposed to $800 in Oakland.[38] It has also served as a bridge for some people transitioning out of rapid rehousing. The program is relatively small, serving 49 people over the course of 2023.

Basic needs and outreach

There are several day shelters and drop-in centers in Berkeley that provide storage space, shower services, hot meals, and other daily needs for unsheltered people. The drop-in centers that record enrollments in HMIS served nearly 2,000 unique people over the course of 2023, though this total probably include people who are not homeless or live outside of Berkeley.[39] There are also a range of services that address the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness, including medical care, laundry trucks, and hot meals.

The City and nonprofit service providers also conduct street outreach to people who are unsheltered. Some of this outreach is associated with facilities such as the STAIR Center that also provide shelter and case management. In 2023, nearly 600 unduplicated people were enrolled with a street outreach program. There are also several street outreach programs that do not report their data in HMIS, such as an outreach worker employed by the Downtown Business Association.

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[38] "Measure P: Contract No. 31900273 Amendment- Bay Area Community Services (BACS) North County Housing Resource Center – Shallow Subsidy Program," November 15, 2022, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11-15%20Item%2008%20Measure%20P%20Contract%20No.%2031900273.pdf; interview with Logan McDonnell and Kelsey Knutson.

[39] The Dorothy Day House drop-in center and the Network of Mental Health Clients drop-in center do not record enrollments in HMIS. In general, drop-in center data should be interpreted with caution.

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B. The City of Berkeley's current investments in homelessness

The City of Berkeley allocated approximately $35 million in expenditures related to homelessness, housing insecurity, and affordable housing in FY 2023–24. While this was an unusually high level of expenditure, Berkeley generally spends more on housing and homelessness than many other area cities. Fremont, for instance, allocated about $15 million to affordable housing and homelessness in FY 2023–24 despite having about the same number of people experiencing homelessness.[40]

Measure P is the largest source of funding for homelessness services. Voters approved Measure P in 2018, increasing the real estate transfer tax on high-value properties, and City Council dedicated those revenues to services related to homelessness. The measure largely funds community nonprofits to provide services such as shelter, housing assistance, and basic needs, but also pays the salaries of City staff who work in program administration and outreach.

Figure 10: Measure P is the dominant funding source for homelessness services

Measure P revenues, FY 2020 through 2025   *Homelessness services fund sources, FY 2024*
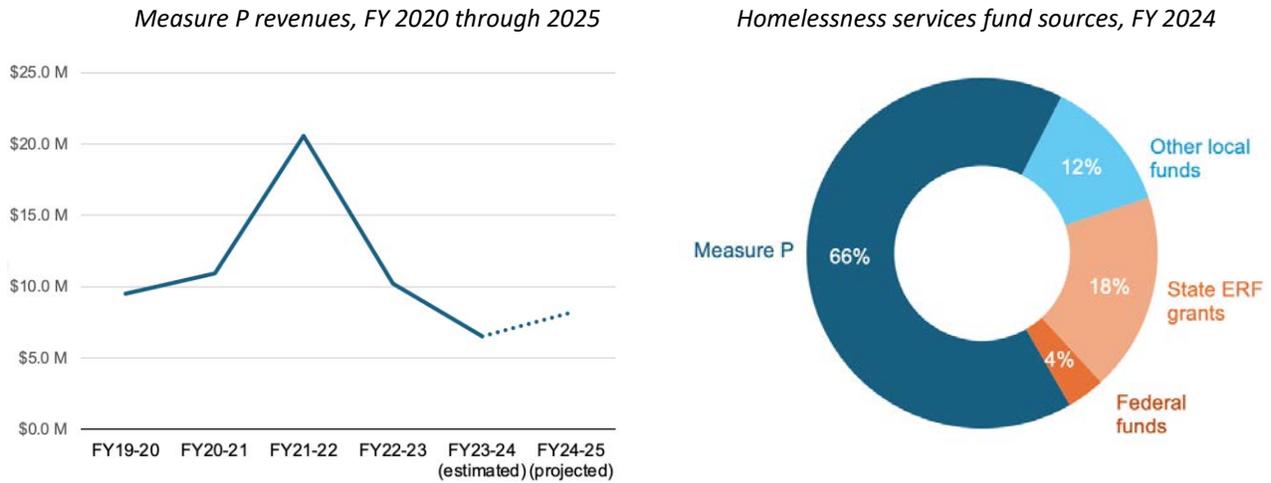
Source: City budget documents

Measure P made up the largest part of the more than $35 million the City allocated to affordable housing, homelessness services, and tenant supports in the 2023–24 fiscal year. In addition to Measure P, the City uses its Housing Trust Fund and a general obligation bond passed by voters in 2018 to contribute to capital costs for housing that serves homeless people.[41] It also allocates funds from Measure U1, a gross receipts tax on certain rental unit owners, to pay for affordable housing development and homelessness prevention services such as eviction defense.

Berkeley has received multiple rounds of state Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grants for non-congregate hotel/motel shelters targeted to people living in specific encampments. The City committed a local one-to-one match for future years of operation for these shelters. The City also allocates federal

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[40] City of Fremont adopted operating budget, FY 2023–24: https://www.fremont.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13972/638295969592101680; City of Fremont PIT Count, 2022: https://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Fremont-PIT-2022-Infographic-Report.pdf
[41] "City Council Report: Item 14 Measure O Bond Impacts on Affordable Housing Development in Berkeley" (City of Berkeley, November 21, 2023), https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023-11-21%20Item%2014%20Measure%20O%20Bond% 20Impacts.pdf.

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Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) funds to homelessness services.

The City acts as the lead agency on some projects that it does not fund, such as the Winter Respite Shelter funded by the County. These projects are not included in this analysis.

Measure P revenues are not guaranteed in the future. Since its passage, Measure P has generally brought in around $10 million per year, though revenues spiked in FY 2021–22 due to an unusual number of high-value real estate transactions. City staff have estimated that revenues will be lower going forward: $6.5 million in the 2023–24 fiscal year and between $8 million and $9 million in the following years.[42]

Real estate transfer taxes are often highly volatile because they depend on the strength of the real estate market. Revenues are more likely to fall during times of economic strain, when there may be more need for the services that Measure P funds. In addition, Measure P sunsets in 2029 and will need to be renewed by voters.

In 2022, Berkeley voters passed Measure M, a vacancy tax that will tax residential property that is unoccupied for more than half the year. The City estimates that the tax will generate between $3.9 and $5.9 million dollars per year.[43] These revenues will go to the General Fund, though backers have described building and preserving affordable housing as their intended purpose.

The City funds a full range of services, with a plurality of funding going towards permanent housing. City-funded services include permanent housing, emergency shelter, housing navigation, outreach, and basic needs such as medical care and hygiene services.

Figure 11: The City funds a wide range of homelessness services

City homelessness budget allocations from Measure P, CDBG, and other local funds. "Other" includes street outreach, basic needs such as storage lockers and street medicine, and administrative costs.
Source: City budget documents

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[42] "Measure P: FY25 Recommendations" (Homeless Services Panel of Experts, April 10, 2024), https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-agendas/Draft%20Agenda%20Package%20-%2004.10.24%20.pdf.
[43] "Measure M - November 8, 2022 Election," accessed April 15, 2024, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Measure%20M%20-%20November%208%2C%202022%20Election.pdf.

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Housing makes up the largest proportion of City homelessness funding. In the FY 2024–25 budget, programs such as permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and housing navigation were about a third of City allocations, with prevention and shelter making up about 20 percent apiece.

Figure 12: City permanent housing expenditures include PSH, RRH, and other supports

City homelessness budget allocations for permanent housing-related services from Measure P, CDBG, and other local funds..
"Housing supports" include housing retention services, case management, and housing navigation.
Source: City budget documents

As described above, the City put dedicated funding into rapid rehousing in FY 2021–22 as part of a temporary program to transition people out of FEMA-funded shelters. Starting in FY 2022–23, the City has expanded its investment in permanent supportive housing projects such as the Step Up Housing project. The City also began funding a shallow subsidies program in 2023.[44]

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[44] This allocation was not fully expended during the 2022–23 fiscal year and was rolled over to the following fiscal year.
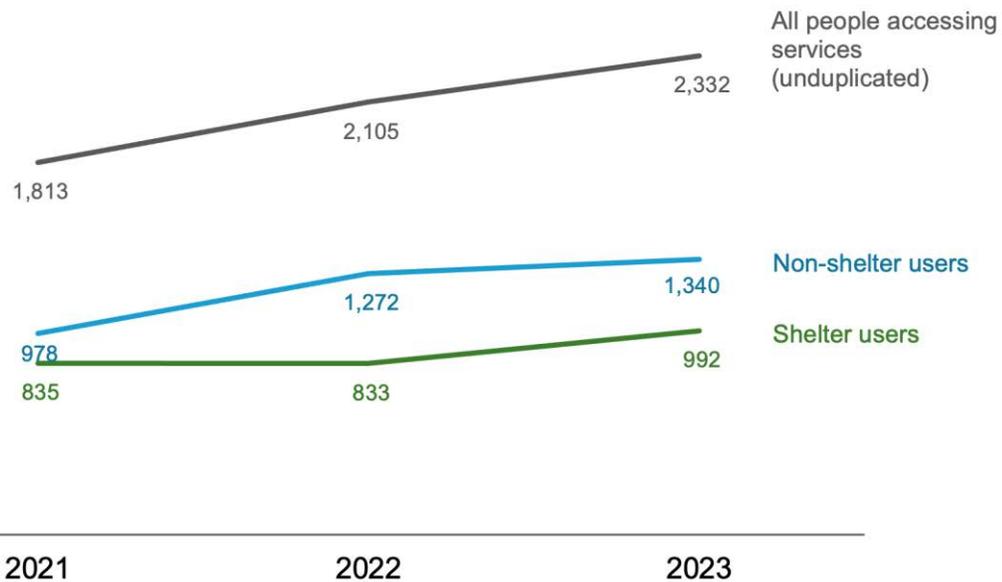
Part III: Homelessness in Berkeley

The purpose of this section is to outline who is homeless in Berkeley and how they interact with the system of care. I use service enrollment data from Alameda County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which tracks people across multiple enrollments and includes demographic information. For the most part, this section focuses on people homeless in Berkeley during 2023, but where feasible I make comparisons to 2021 and 2022.

A. Overview of homelessness in Berkeley

More than 2,000 people in Berkeley accessed services while homeless during 2023. Using HMIS data, I estimate that about 2,300 people experienced literal homelessness in Berkeley during calendar year 2023. This number represents the unduplicated count of people who accessed services located in Berkeley, excluding those enrolled in permanent housing for the entire year and those who did not report that they are homeless.[45] This number translates to about two percent of the city's population experiencing some form of literal homelessness over the course of the year.

Figure 13: More literally homeless people are accessing services in Berkeley

All people accessing services (unduplicated)
2,332
2,105
1,813

Non-shelter users
1,340
1,272
978

Shelter users
992
835   833

2021   2022   2023

Unduplicated count of literally homeless people accessing services in Berkeley
Source: HMIS

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[45] This methodology mirrors the approach used by the State of California's Homelessness Data Integration System, which uses a the following definition of homelessness: "*People are considered to be "experiencing homelessness" at any point in the selected time frame if they: 1) accessed lodging services through Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and/or Safe Haven projects: 2) entered into a permanent housing project from homelessness (i.e., Permanent Supportive Housing, Housing Only, Housing with Services, Rapid Re-Housing); or 3) reported living in a homeless situation (e.g., they are living in a place not meant for habitation, such as a vehicle) at the time they accessed other services.*" I also tried an alternative methodology used by Alameda County's Home Together 2026 Strategic Plan to estimate the number of people homeless over the course of the year. This methodology uses the percentage of respondents in the PIT count who reported that they had been homeless for seven days or less and assumes that this is the weekly inflow rate for people experiencing homelessness. In the 2022 PIT Count, 2.4 percent of Berkeley respondents reported being homeless for less than seven days, meaning that about 25 people become homeless in Berkeley every week and 2,385 experienced homelessness over the course of 12 months. This number is slightly higher than the number of literally homeless people in HMIS during 2022 (2,105).

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This number is another way of understanding the extent of homelessness in Berkeley, in addition to the more commonly cited Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. The most recent PIT count reported that 1,053 people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2022. However, a count at a single point in time do not capture the full impact of homelessness because people cycle in and out of homelessness during the course of the year. The 2024 PIT report is set to be released later this year, but the County used a different methodology for this year's count, which may limit the comparability between 2022 and 2024.

Ultimately, both of these estimates are imperfect. The PIT count is generally understood to be an undercount, especially of unsheltered people, and it is highly dependent on the methodology used and on factors such as weather.[46] HMIS data, on the other hand, may include people who live outside of Berkeley but access services in the city, since HMIS data does not generally include place of residence. It does not include Berkeley residents who experience homelessness but do not access services, a group that we know very little about. Changes how and whether people enroll in services—for instance, due to weather, increased outreach, or provider data practices—can also affect estimates based on HMIS data.

The number of people accessing homelessness services is trending upwards, but a larger proportion is accessing shelter. The number of people accessing services in 2023 represents about an 11 percent increase over 2022. A larger proportion of those people accessed shelter, probably reflecting increased shelter capacity: providers have opened new shelters such as the Inclement Weather Shelter and loosened COVID-era capacity restrictions in congregate shelters. Still, the raw number of people who were homeless and did not access shelter in Berkeley during the year was higher in 2023 than in 2022.

People experiencing homelessness in Berkeley are disproportionately Black and Indigenous. More than six in ten of the people who experienced homelessness during 2023 identified as Black, while Berkeley's general population is less than ten percent Black. Seven percent of people who experienced homelessness during 2023 identified as Indigenous or Native American, a larger proportion than their representation in the general population.

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[46] For instance: Darrell Stanley, "Don't Count On It: How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates the Homelessness Crisis in America" (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2017), https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HUD-PIT-report2017.pdf; Alistair Boone, "Why Couldn't I Find Any Homeless People in Oakland?," *Bloomberg.Com*, March 4, 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-04/the-problem-with-hud-s-point-in-time-homeless-count.

Figure 14: Black and Indigenous people are overrepresented in Berkeley's homelessness system of care
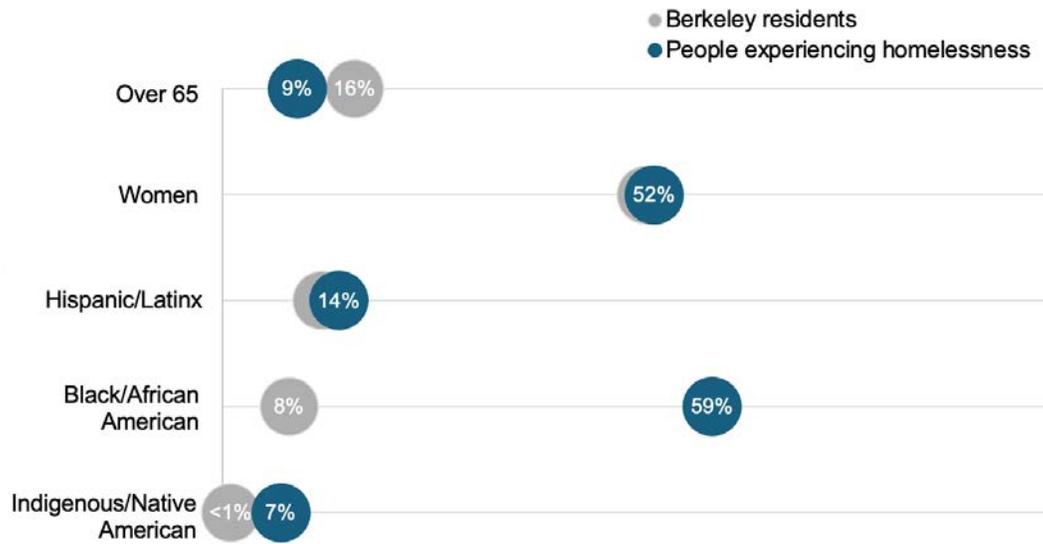
Demographics of people experiencing homelessness during 2023, compared to Berkeley residents in the 2023 ACS
Source: HMIS; US Census Bureau American Community Survey

These disparities reflect historical and present institutional racist policies—including redlining and other forms of housing segregation—that make Black and Indigenous people more vulnerable to losing their homes and less able to find help from their networks when they do.[47]

The proportion of people with a disability appears to be trending up over time. Over eight in ten people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley had some type of disability in 2023, including severe mental illnesses (62 percent of all people reporting), physical disabilities (37 percent), and substance abuse disorders (39 percent). The proportion of people with disabilities and the proportion of people who are chronically homeless has increased from 2021 to 2023.[48]

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[47] "Homelessness and Racial Disparities," National Alliance to End Homelessness, December 2023, https://endhomelessness.org/ homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/; Kate Cimini, "Black People Disproportionately Homeless in California," *CalMatters*, October 5, 2019, http://calmatters.org/california-divide/2019/10/black-people-disproportionately-homeless-in-california/.

[48] A chronically homeless person is defined by HUD someone who has a disability and has been literally homeless for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years.

23

Figure 15: Slightly more have a disability or are categorized as chronically homeless

Rate of disability and chronic homelessness among people experiencing homelessness over the course of year
Source: HMIS
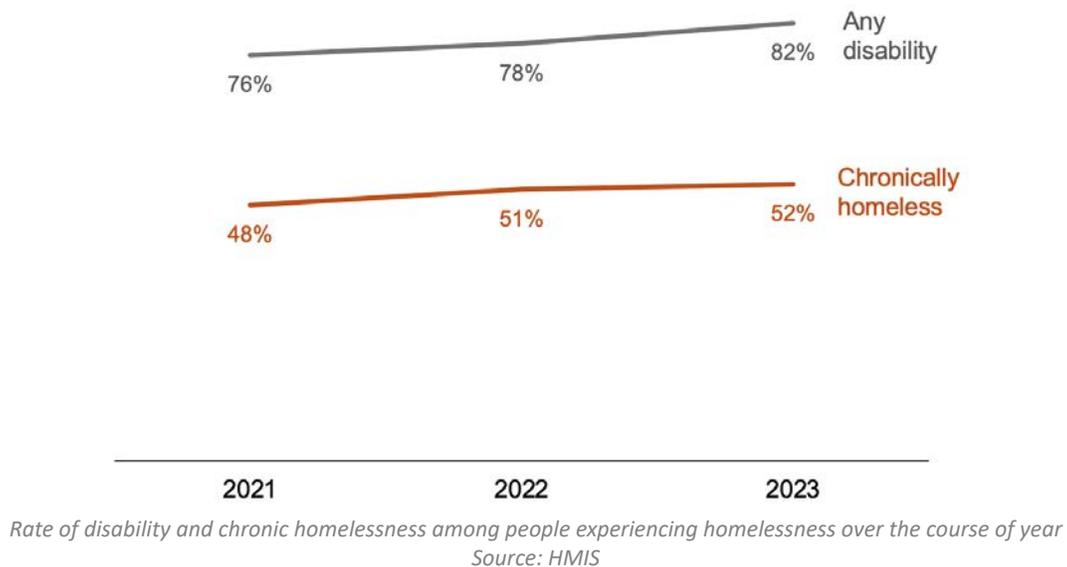
Among people who have been assessed for referral to permanent housing, vulnerability scores also trended up. These assessments evaluate risk factors such as disability, past trauma, and past homelessness to match people with permanent housing programs. Higher scores corresponding to higher vulnerability and a greater need for services. The average assessment score of people experiencing homelessness in 2021 was 53.9, which increased to 59.1 among people who experienced homelessness in 2023.[49]

Most people have been homeless for five years or less. About eleven percent of the people homeless during 2023 reported that their episode of homelessness started that year. More than half (54 percent) reported that their episode of homelessness had started at some point since January of 2019. A small number of people in Berkeley have been homeless for decades.

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[49] For people who have been assessed multiple times, this analysis uses the average of their scores.

24

Figure 16: Most people report that their homelessness started five years ago or less
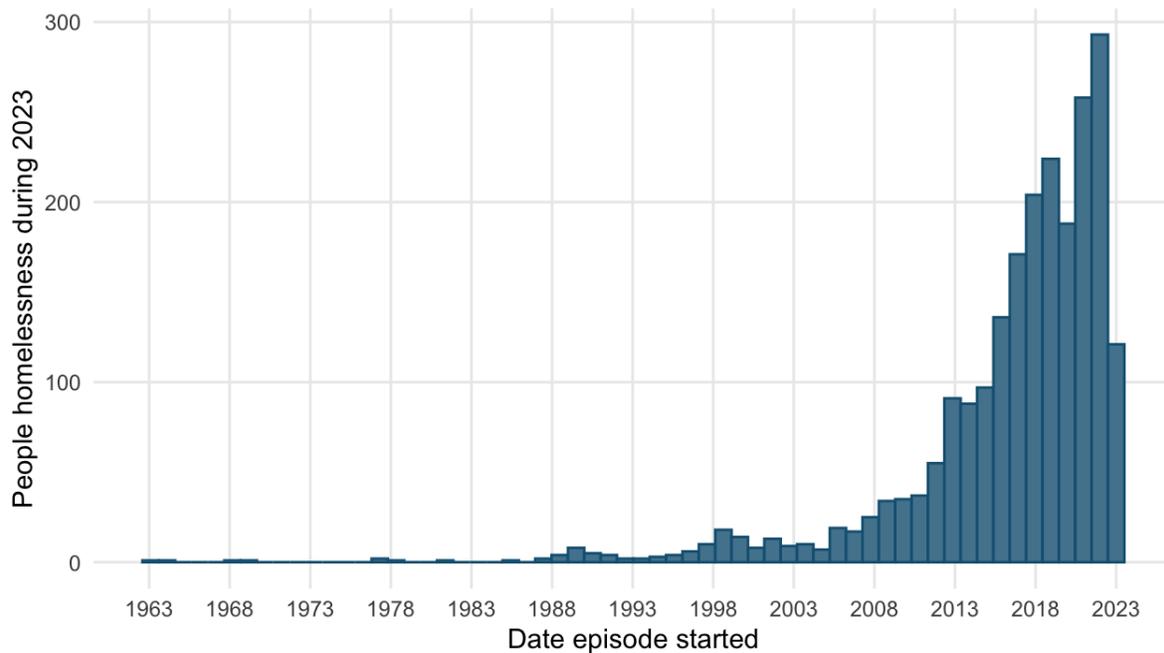
Year episode of homelessness started among people homeless during 2023.
Source: HMIS

The number of people who reported becoming homeless in 2020 is lower than the number of reported becoming homeless in 2019 or 2021, possibly reflecting COVID-era shelter-in-place orders and policies that prevented evictions.

Most people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley are single adults. About 76 percent of people accessing services in Berkeley during this period were in single-person households, and an additional nine percent were in two-person households. Nearly nine in ten households were single adults.

Many people have only brief connections to the homelessness system of care. Most people—about 66 percent—enrolled in services only once between January 2021 and December 2023. More than a third of people experiencing homelessness during this period appeared at a day shelters or drop-in centers, where people access basic needs during the day and eat a hot meal. About 24 percent of people counted appeared only once at a drop-in center.

25

Figure 17: Service access among people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley

Proportion enrolled in service during 2023 | *Average days enrolled during 2023*
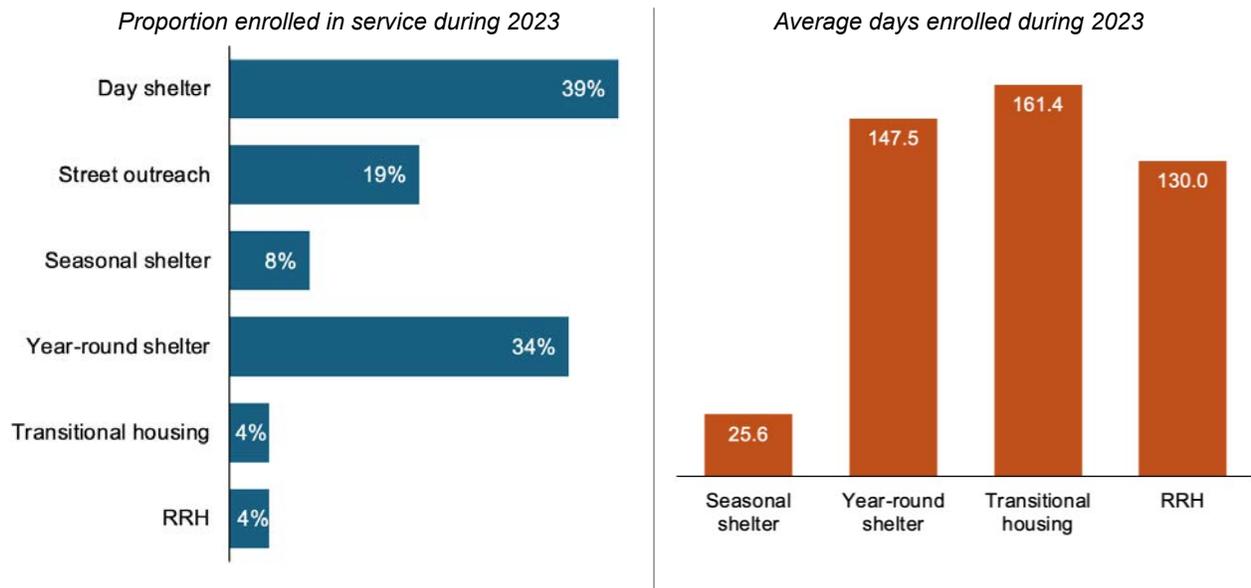
Left: Proportion of people experiencing literal homelessness during 2023 who enrolled in program type.
Right: Average days enrolled in program type during 2023 among people who enrolled.
Source: HMIS

That said, enrollments in shelter tend to be lengthier: the average person who enrolled in year-round emergency shelter during 2023 spent nearly five months there.

B. Unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley

Many people who access shelter also spend time unsheltered. Of the 2,300 people who accessed services in the City of Berkeley in 2023, 992 accessed emergency shelter or transitional housing at some point over the course of the year—about 42 percent. The remaining 58 percent of people captured by the data may have accessed services such as case management, street outreach, or drop-in centers while unsheltered, or may have entered a permanent housing program directly from unsheltered homelessness. Some may have accessed services and shelter outside of Berkeley's borders.

Many of the people who *did* enroll in shelter or transitional housing at some point during the year also spent time unsheltered. Of year-round shelter enrollments during 2021–2023, seventy percent came from unsheltered homelessness and 17 percent exited to unsheltered homelessness. Including seasonal shelters, more than a third of the emergency shelter exits during 2021–2023 were to unsheltered homelessness.

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Figure 18: Many people move between sheltered and unsheltered homelessness

Residence before entering shelter   *Exit destination from shelter*
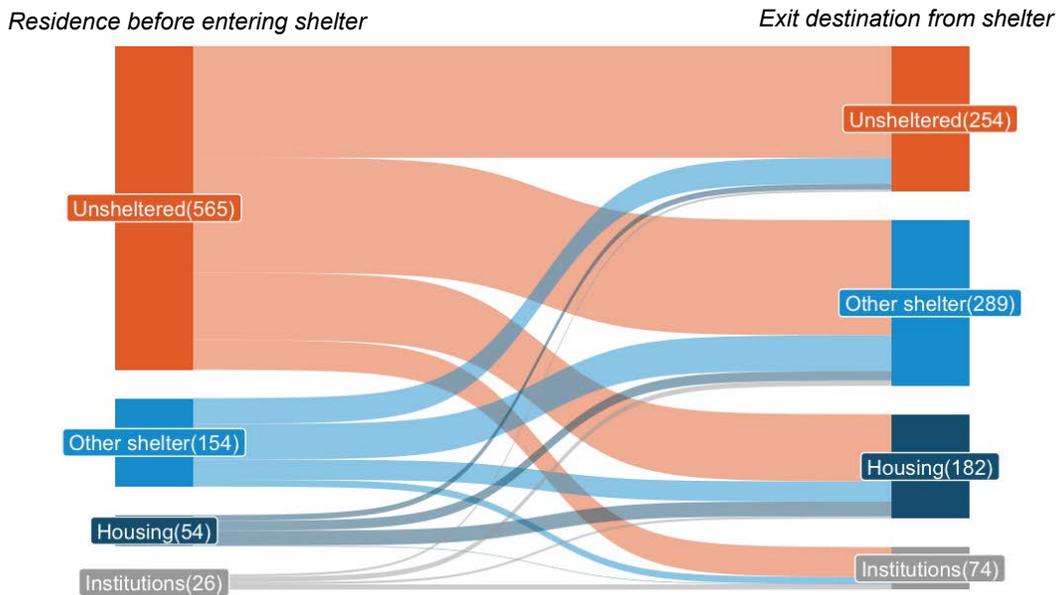
Prior residence and exit destination of shelter enrollments, 2021–2023 (year-round shelters only)
Source: HMIS

Unsheltered people in street outreach programs are more likely to be over thirty, male, and white. It is challenging to get accurate data about people who are unsheltered, since they are by definition less connected to services. People enrolled in street outreach programs is one imperfect approximation of the population that spends significant time unsheltered, though they probably do not capture people who spend only a short amount of time on the street before entering shelter or self-resolving.

Figure 19: Street outreach enrollees are more likely to be over thirty and male
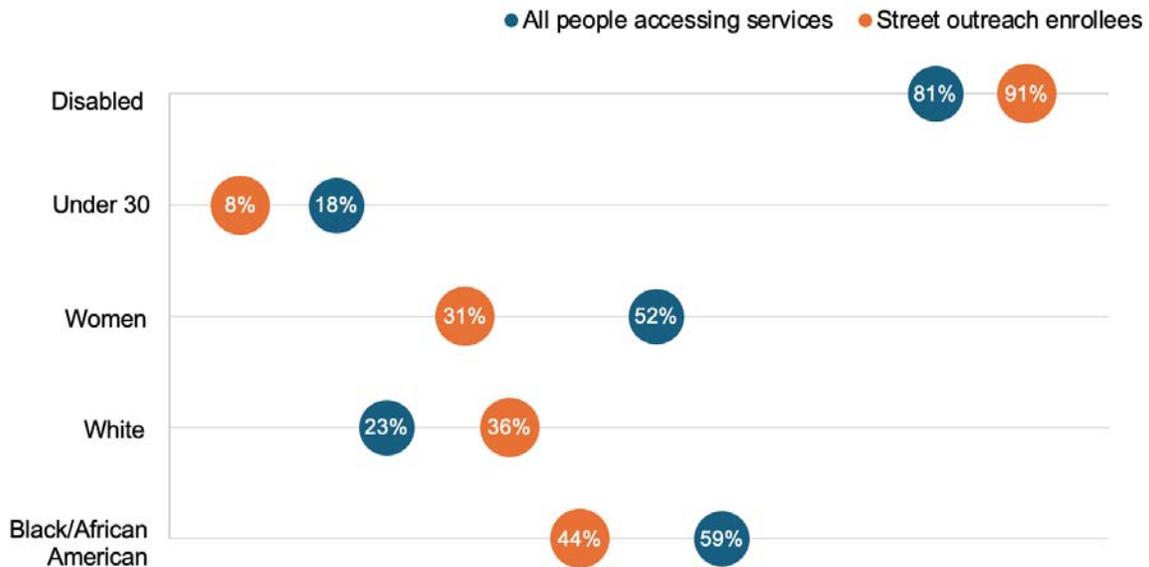
All people accessing services during 2023 vs. people enrolled in a street outreach program during 2023
Source: HMIS

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More than nine in ten people enrolled in street outreach programs reported having some kind of disability. This group was also older on average and more likely to be white and male. They were more likely to spend time in seasonal shelter, probably reflecting that they are more vulnerable to weather.

Part IV: Inflows and Outflows

The purpose of this section is to examine homelessness in Berkeley at the system level. Largely using service data from HMIS, I estimate the rate of inflow into homelessness, the rate of exits to housing, and the number of people who fall back into homelessness soon after exiting. Where possible, I explore the demographics and needs of the people in Berkeley moving between homelessness and housing using both HMIS and PIT data.

Figure 20: More are entering or returning to homelessness than exiting, according to HMIS data

Estimated inflows to and outflows from homelessness in Berkeley during calendar year 2023
Source: HMIS

Figure 20 shows estimates of the number of people over the course of 2023 who entered homelessness, exited homelessness, and returned to homelessness within a year. These numbers should be thought of as very rough approximations due to the limitations of HMIS and PIT data, but give a sense of the scale movement in and out of homelessness over the course of the year in Berkeley.[50]

A. Inflows to homelessness

About a quarter to a third of the people who experienced homelessness during 2023 had been out of the homelessness system for at least five years. Of the approximately 2,300 people who were enrolled in a Berkeley program during 2023, 26 percent had not been enrolled in homelessness services in Alameda County at any point since 2018. 201 had never been recorded in an Alameda County homelessness program before—translating to about nine percent of people accessing services in 2023.

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[50] The number of newly homeless people is the number of people enrolling in services during 2023 who had not previously been enrolled in Alameda County since 2021. The number of people exiting to housing is the number who are recorded existing from Berkeley programs, plus an estimated ten percent who self-resolve or leave the area every year. The number of people who return to homelessness within a year is twenty percent of those who exit, based on the numbers in Part IV (C).

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Figure 21: A quarter of people enrolled in 2023 had not accessed services for at least five years
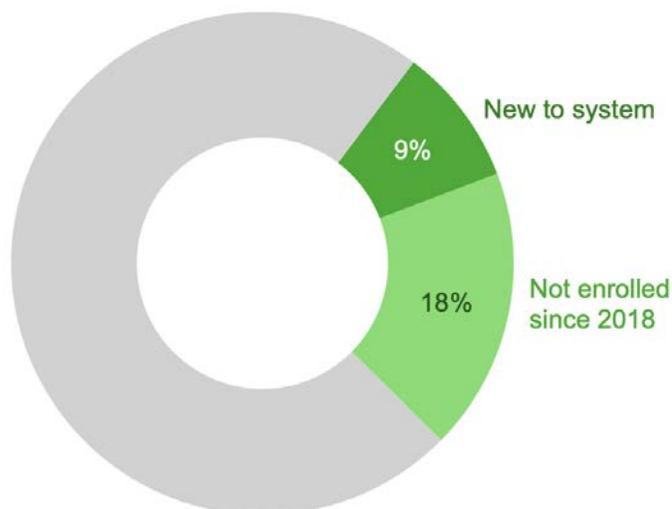
Among literally homeless people enrolled in services during 2023, .
Source: HMIS

It should be noted that availability and daily needs affect how people access services. For instance, the number of people returning to services in Berkeley after time away increased notably during the winter months in 2022 and 2023, when weather may have driven more people indoors.

The homelessness response system doesn't always catch people early in their episode of homelessness. People who were new to the system often reported that their episode of homelessness started well before they first enrolled in a program—a median of 268 days for people who first enrolled in 2023. About four in ten of the people new to the system in 2023 were designated as chronically homeless.[51] This means that there are limitations to using this measure as an up-to-date indicator of inflows into homelessness, and that people are spending weeks or months unsheltered before accessing services.

Hispanic people are especially likely to be new to homelessness. More than six in ten Hispanic/Latine people experiencing homelessness during 2023 reported that their episode of homelessness had started sometime since January 2021, compared to about a third of people experiencing homelessness overall.[52]

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[51] A chronically homeless person is defined by HUD someone who has a disability and has been literally homeless for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years. Some of the delay in enrollment can be explained by the data practices used by providers. For instance, street outreach teams often spend months building relationships with unsheltered people before enrolling them in their programs.

[52] There are also disparities when it comes to people who have been homeless for a long time. Nearly three in ten of white people accessing services during 2023 reported that their episode of homelessness started ten or more years ago, as opposed to 19 percent of people of color. Older people, people with disabilities, and people who identify as a gender other than male or female are also more likely to have been homeless for more than ten years.

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Figure 22: The median episode of homelessness is shorter among people of color

Median length of time in years between self-reported date episode started and Jan.1, 2024, among people accessing services during 2023
Source: HMIS
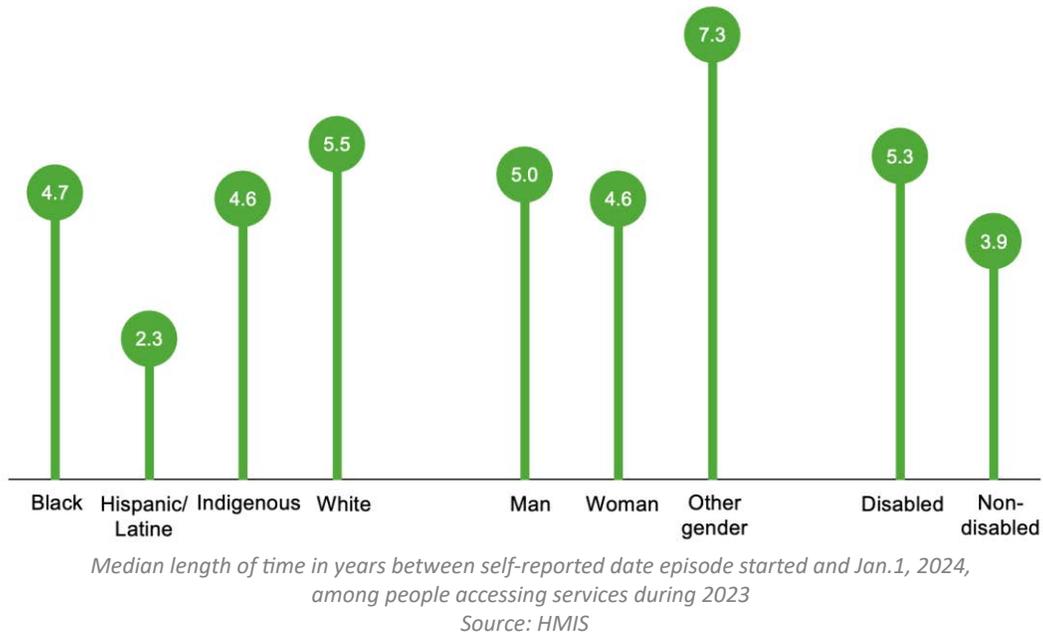
The racial disparities in Berkeley's homeless system of care reflect racial disparities in the population of people most at risk of falling into homelessness in the Bay Area. For instance, more than a quarter of Bay Area residents who are Black live in a household with an extremely low income, meaning that they make less than 30 percent of area median income (AMI).[53]

Most people experiencing homelessness were living with friends and relatives before becoming homeless. Nearly six in ten people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley in the 2022 PIT count reported that their most recent residence before becoming homeless was a home owned or rented by friends or relatives.[54] Less than a quarter had lived in a home they themselves owned or rented, where they were likely to have lease or other formal protections. This reflects that many people do not immediately enter a shelter or live on the street after being evicted or losing formal housing. Instead, they first double up with friends and family, then exhaust other options in a "gradual descent" towards literal homelessness.[55]

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[53] Reid, "On the Edge of Homelessness: The Vulnerability of Extremely Low-Income Households in the Bay Area."
[54] "2022 Homeless Survey Findings by County and Jurisdiction" (ASR), accessed April 25, 2024,
https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/asr1451/viz/TableauAlamedaCounty-HDXandSurveyData/CityHDX.
[55] Kushel and Moore, "Toward a New Understanding," p. 19.

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Figure 23: Most homeless people in Berkeley report that they last lived with friends and family
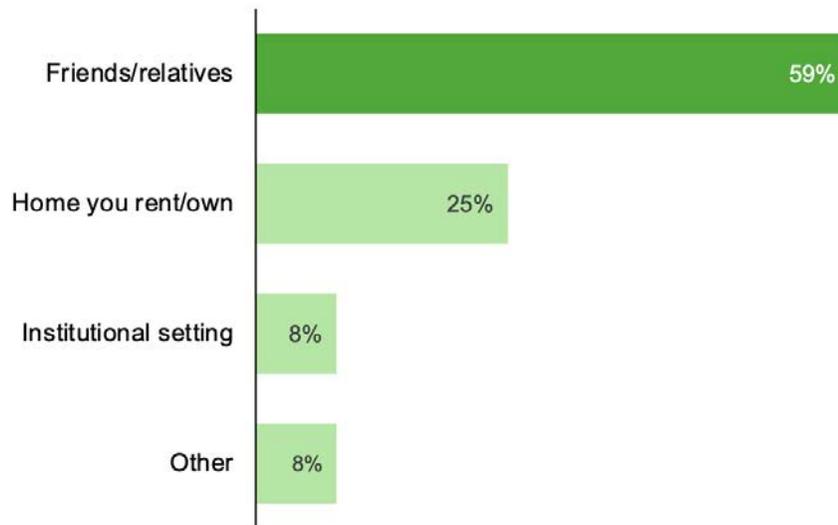
Reported last residence before becoming homeless among Berkeley respondents
Source: 2022 PIT Count

About two-thirds of the people homeless in Berkeley surveyed in the 2022 PIT count reported that they had last lived in Alameda County before coming homeless. This figure is somewhat lower than among the County overall (82 percent), possibly reflecting that Berkeley is close to the border with Contra Costa County. [56]

B. Exits from homelessness

About 300 people exited Berkeley's homelessness programs to housing during 2023. During 2023, 215 people exited from Berkeley programs to permanent housing, and an additional 85 people exited to temporary housing situations.[57]

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[56] "2022 Homeless Survey Findings by County and Jurisdiction" (ASR).
[57] This figure includes exits from year-round emergency shelter, temporary housing, and rapid rehousing programs. It excludes exits that are purely administrative, such as transitioning a shelter from one provider to another. For people with multiple exits during 2023, it counts only the last exit during the year.

Figure 24: Most exits are to subsidized housing or friends and family
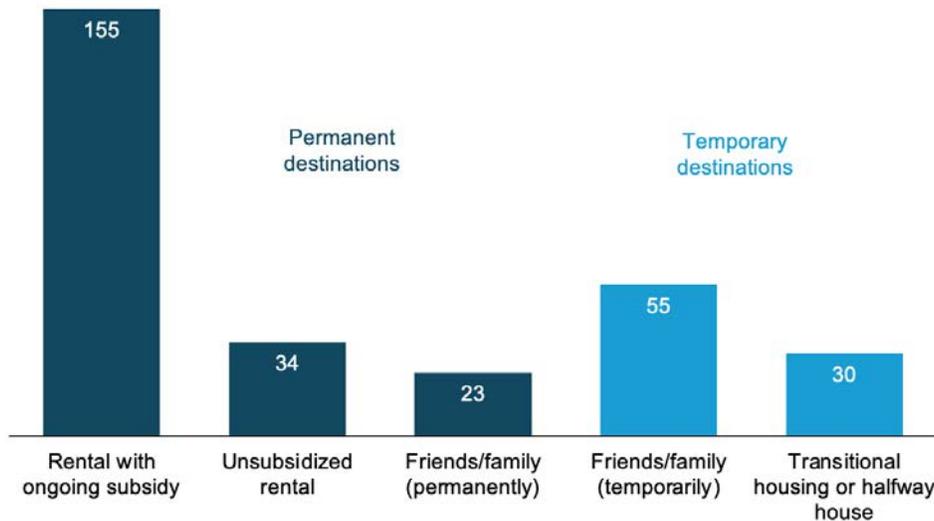
Housing destinations of exits from shelter, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing homelessness during 2023
Source: HMIS

The vast majority of the permanent housing exits were to a rental with an ongoing housing subsidy (72 percent), which could include short-term subsidies, permanent supportive housing, below-market-rent housing, or a federal Housing Choice Voucher. About 16 percent exited to a rental with no ongoing subsidy, and 11 percent were planning to stay with family or friends.

In addition to the exits represented in these figures, there may be additional people who "self-resolve," or exit homelessness without assistance from a program. These exits are often not captured by HMIS enrollment data because people who self-resolve may spend little or no time enrolled in programs.

Berkeley is moving more people into permanent housing compared to before the pandemic. Of all of the exits from year-round shelter, transitional housing, or rapid rehousing between 2021 and 2023, 28 percent were to homelessness and 32 percent were to permanent housing. In 2017, about half of exits were to homelessness.[58]

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[58] "City Council Report: Item 24 Referral Response: 1000 Person Plan," March 26, 2019, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/ files/documents/2019-03-26%20Item%2024%20Referral%20Response%20%201000%20Person%20Plan.pdf. The numbers reported here are slightly different than the numbers included in the original report. I removed exits from seasonal shelters and counted only the last exit per client per year so that the numbers would be comparable across years.

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Figure 25: Fewer exits from Berkeley programs are to homelessness compared to pre-pandemic...
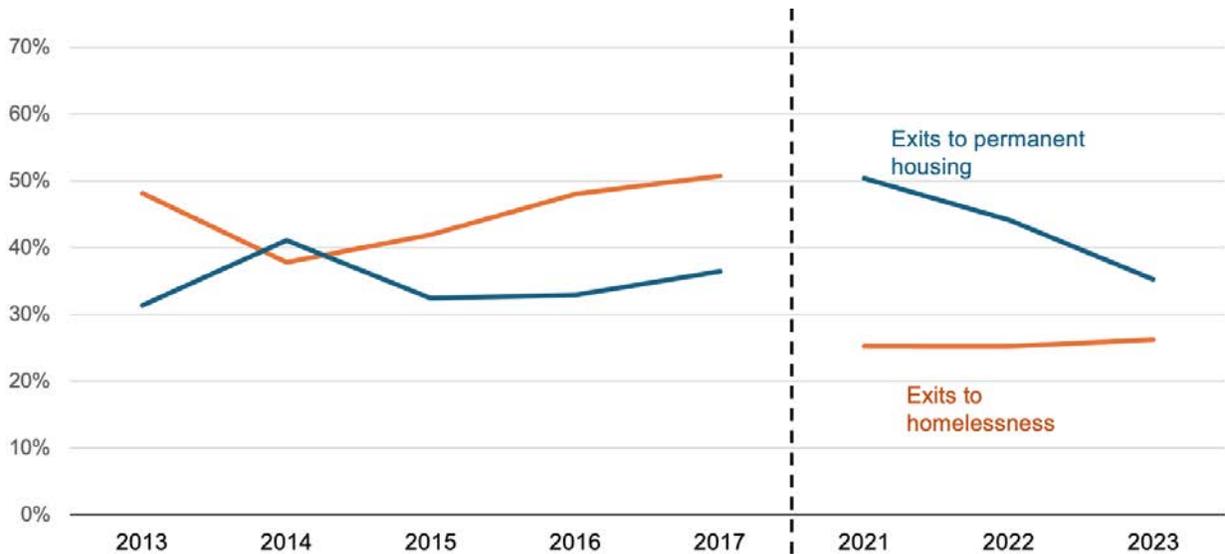
Percentage of exits from year-round ES, RRH, and TH to homelessness and permanent housing destinations.
For clients with multiple exits per year, counts the last exit only.
Source: HMIS

Fewer people are exiting to housing compared to 2021 or 2022, but it's unclear whether more are exiting to homelessness from Berkeley programs. Nearly half of exits were to permanent housing in 2021, but this rate fell to about a third in 2023. This reduction was partially driven by the end of the temporary program intended to transition people out of FEMA emergency shelters, which lasted through 2021 and 2022. That said, there also more people exiting from emergency shelter without providing information about where they were going, which may also represent more people exiting to homelessness.

Figure 26: ...but fewer people are exiting to permanent housing over last two years
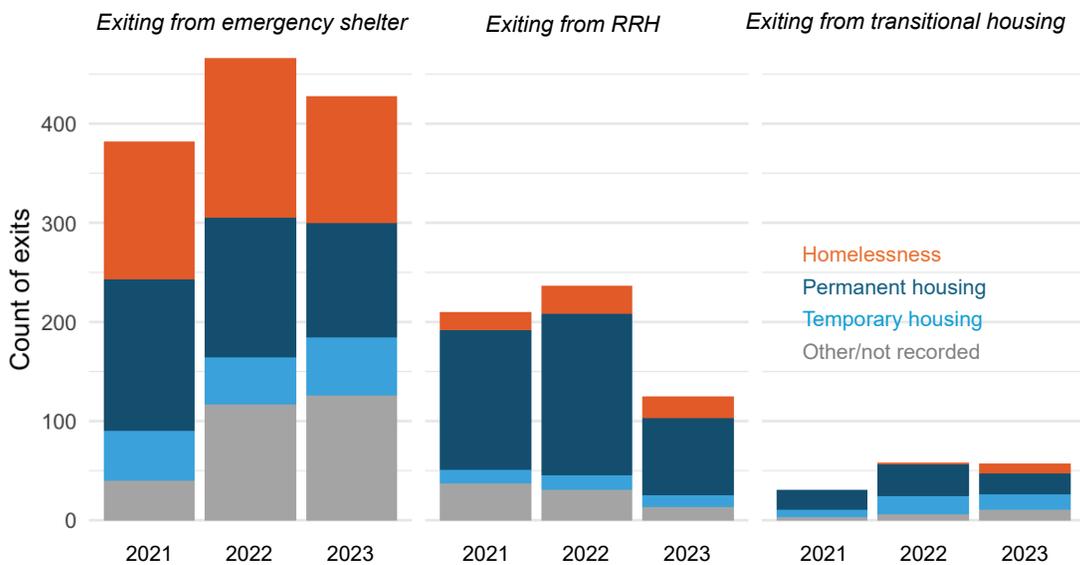
Counts of exits from year-round ES, RRH, and TH to homelessness and housing destinations, 2021–2023.
For clients with multiple exits per year, counts the last exit only.
Source: HMIS

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Non-disabled people are more likely to exit to housing. The people exiting to permanent housing from Berkeley programs are less vulnerable on average compared to people exiting to homelessness. They are less likely to have a disability and less likely to be chronically homeless, though these figures are still 75 percent and 50 percent, respectively. People exiting to housing are also more likely to be Black (64 percent). This pattern is likely related to the fact that rapid rehousing has the most exits to housing and also serves people with fewer vulnerabilities.

People wait more than nine months on average before they get into permanent housing programs. Berkeley residents experiencing homelessness access permanent housing programs through the county-wide Coordinated Entry system. Once a household joins the housing queue, the system matches them to openings based on their level of need and likelihood of success in the program. Many people exit homelessness without ever going through Coordinated Entry, but it is the sole entry point to programs such as rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing.

Since July 2022, people in the north Alameda County region who were referred into a permanent housing program spent an average of 280 days, or about nine months, on the housing queue.[59] One year after their initial referral to the queue, less than a quarter of had been housed, while about seven in ten were pending or had their referral expire.[60]

Figure 27: Less than a quarter are housed after a year on the queue

Status 365 days after referral was made, July 2022 – March 2024
Source: HMIS
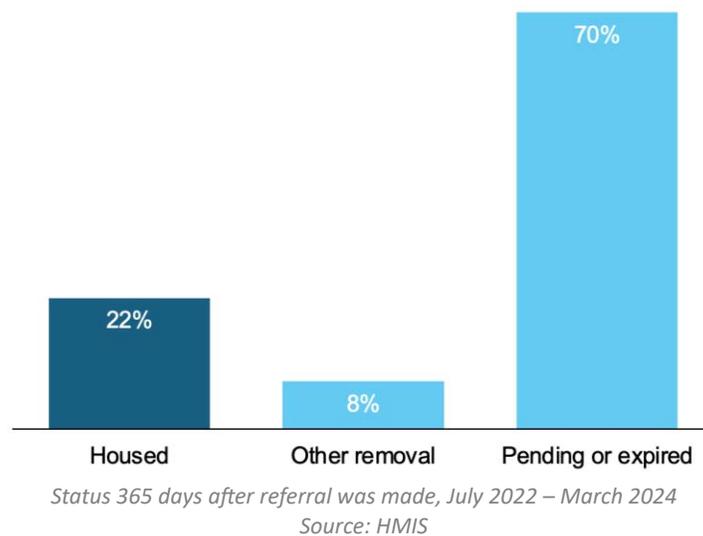
Vulnerable people on the housing queue are stuck in a bottleneck. Over nine in ten people who spent time on the housing queue between July 2022 and March 2024 reported having some type of disability,

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[59] The North County region includes Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. I excluded people who were housed before July 2022 because the Coordinated Entry system changed its assessment methodology in July of 2021, which required staff to re-refer people to the housing queue and artificially reduced wait times.

[60] Referrals expire if the person is inactive with the system for six months, often because they are out of contact with providers. People in the "other removal" category were removed from the queue for some other reason, including passing away, moving out of the area, or finding their own housing.

and 70 percent were chronically homeless. About seven in ten had a vulnerability score above 80, which is the current threshold of eligibility for permanent supportive housing.[61]

People with higher vulnerability scores spend more time on the housing queue on average. Between July 2022 and March 2024, a person housed from the queue with a vulnerability score above 80 waited an average of 295 days, or about ten months, while a person with a score below 80 waited 237 days. This disparity is more extreme taking into account the fact that people with lower vulnerability scores may have other paths off of the housing queue. They are more likely to be removed from the queue for reasons like moving out of the area or self-resolving, or because their referral lapses.

Figure 28: People with higher needs tend to wait longer on the housing queue

Average wait time in months for people removed from queue during quarter (calendar years)
Source: HMIS
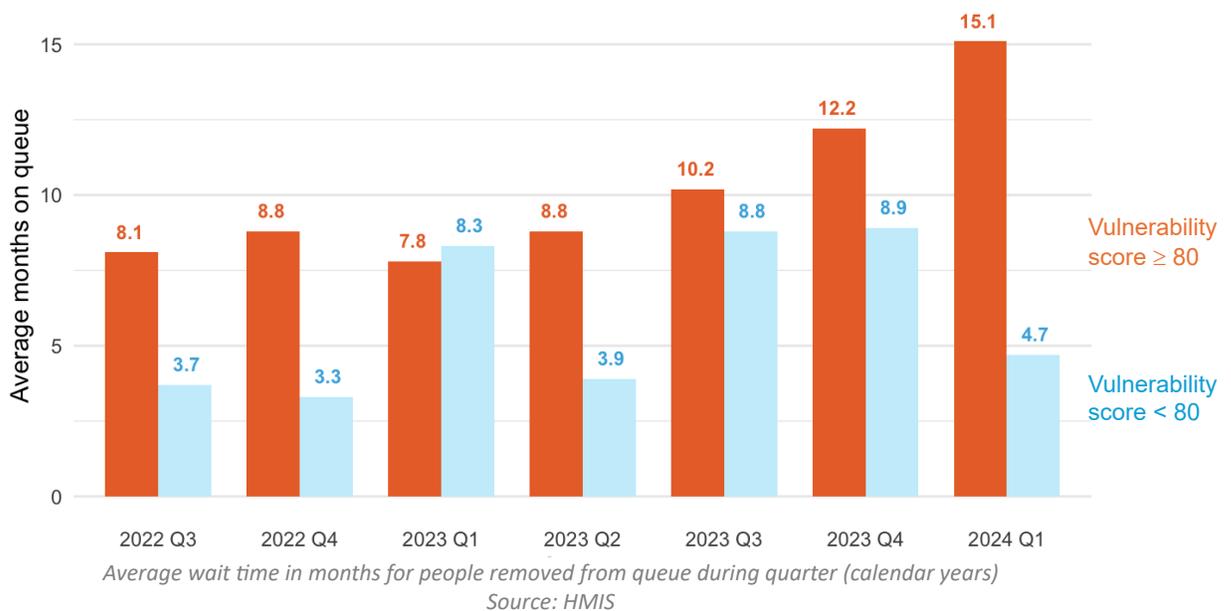
Paperwork challenges also contribute to wait times. Providers report that there are also logistical roadblocks to moving through the queue. Many permanent housing programs require documentation of income, identity, and chronic homelessness status—all of which are challenging to obtain, especially for someone who is unsheltered. The barrier of being "doc ready" may contribute to the longer wait times for high-need people who are less able to manage the process of obtaining documentation. They may also contribute to the number of lower-needs people who become frustrated and disengage with the process, leading to expired referrals.

Taken together, these factors mean that the housing queue is largely composed of people with high needs, pointing to a serious lack of resources appropriate to this population. Of the 632 people with pending referrals as of the date of this analysis, 96 percent had a disability and 77 percent were chronically homeless.

There are racial and gender differences in how people move through the housing queue. People with vulnerability scores over 80 were more likely to identify as male (64 percent), more likely to be white (33 percent) and less likely to be Black (49 percent). Black women made up nearly a third of people in the lowest quartile of vulnerability scores (below 75).

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[61] People can be assessed multiple times over the course of their time in the queue. This analysis uses the most recent acuity score associated with the referral.

Based on street outreach data, people who are long-term unsheltered in Berkeley are also more likely to be white and male than the general population of people experiencing homelessness. It may be the case that Berkeley residents of color have less of a safety net and are more vulnerable to homelessness even when their needs are not as acute, while white people must experience more serious problems before they end up on the streets. Researchers have found racial bias in one assessment used by Continua of Care to match people with resources, though a 2020 analysis as part of the County's *Centering Racial Equity* report found no racial disparities in their custom prioritization tool. [62]

In the context of Berkeley's homelessness system of care, people who receive lower assessment scores may get off of the housing queue faster—but they receive short-term housing resources with less support than the permanent supportive housing that people with higher scores are waiting for.

C. Returns to homelessness

About one in five exits return to homelessness within a year. Of the people who exited to permanent housing during 2021 and 2022, 19 percent came back to homelessness services in Alameda County within a year. About ten to fifteen percent return within six months across the years covered in the data.[63]

Figure 29: About one in five who exited homelessness during 2021 returned within a year
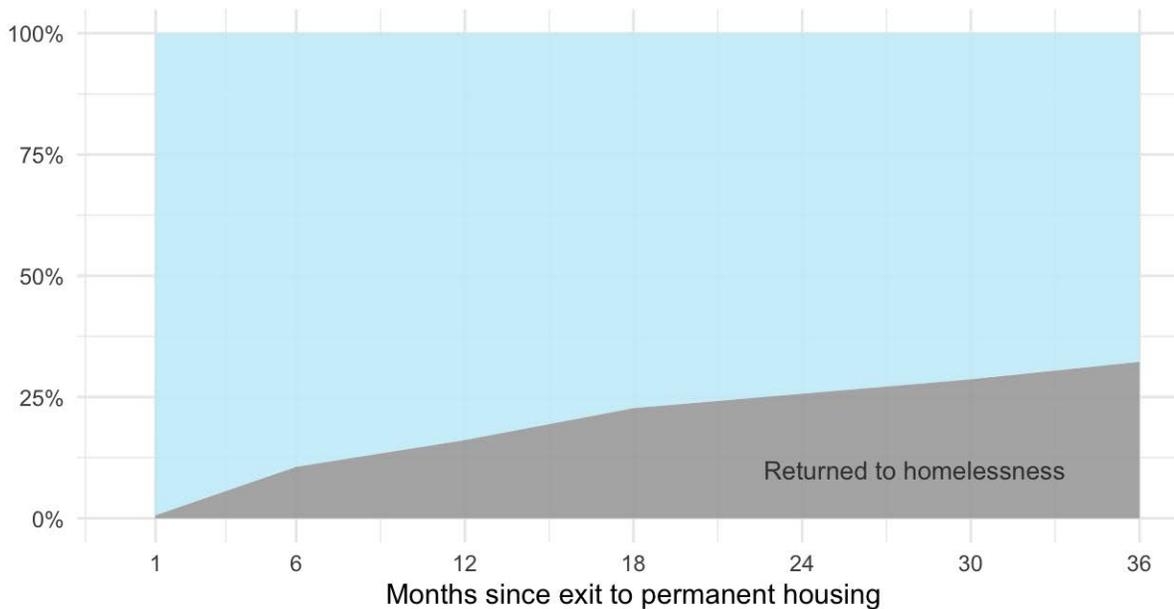
Proportion of people who exited during 2021 who had returned to homelessness services at each time period
Source: HMIS

Older people and people with disabilities are more likely to return to homelessness. People with disabilities were also more likely to return to homelessness, especially people with substance abuse

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[62] Catriona Wilkey et al., "Coordinated Entry Systems: Racial Equity Analysis of Assessment Data" (C4 Innovations, October 2019), https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CES_Racial_Equity_Analysis_2019-.pdf; "Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design," p. 12.
[63] HUD's system performance measures do not count returns to projects other than emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe havens, and permanent housing, so these numbers are not totally comparable to those reported in other communities.

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disorders (28 percent). Of the people who returned to homelessness within a year, six in ten were chronically homeless.

People exiting to rapid rehousing were most likely to return to homelessness. People exiting to unsubsidized housing, or to family and friends, were about as likely to return to homelessness as people with some kind of subsidy.[64] There was variation in the rate of return among different types of subsidy. More than a third of people who exited to rapid rehousing or equivalent subsidies returned to homelessness within a year, compared to just two percent of people who received a Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) voucher.

Figure 30: A third who exit to RRH return within a year

Rate of return from all permanent housing exits

Rate of return from subsidized housing

Proportion of people who exited during 2021 and 2022 to each destination who had returned to homelessness services within 365 days. Excludes people who exited to housing that they own (n < 10).
Source: HMIS

The higher rate of returns among RRH recipients is partially related to pandemic-related programs. The City and County ran a short-term RRH program to transition people out of FEMA shelters opened during the pandemic. However, even when excluding people who were exiting from FEMA shelters, the rate of return for RRH was 29 percent.

That said, these numbers should be interpreted with caution. Providers have different standards for how they categorize exit destinations and generally have no way of verifying that the person who reports exiting to a subsidized housing program actually enrolls. More research would be needed to determine why people who are recorded as exiting to rapid rehousing appear to be returning at higher rates.

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[64] About three-quarters of exits to permanent housing were to a subsidized rental unit.

Part V: Modeling Future Investments

The following section describes modeling that projects what it will take for Berkeley to achieve a rapid reduction street homelessness. The model, which was developed by All Home, estimates the number of additional interim housing units, permanent housing solutions, and prevention interventions required to reduce unsheltered homelessness by 75 percent in five years, and to maintain those reductions for an additional five years. More detail about model methodology can be found in Appendix B.

Berkeley will need sustained investments across prevention, permanent housing, and interim shelter to reduce unsheltered homelessness. Figure 31 shows that Berkeley will need significant expansions in the capacity of the homelessness system of care in order to achieve reductions in unsheltered homelessness.[65]

Figure 31: Projected capacity requirements to achieve 75 percent reduction
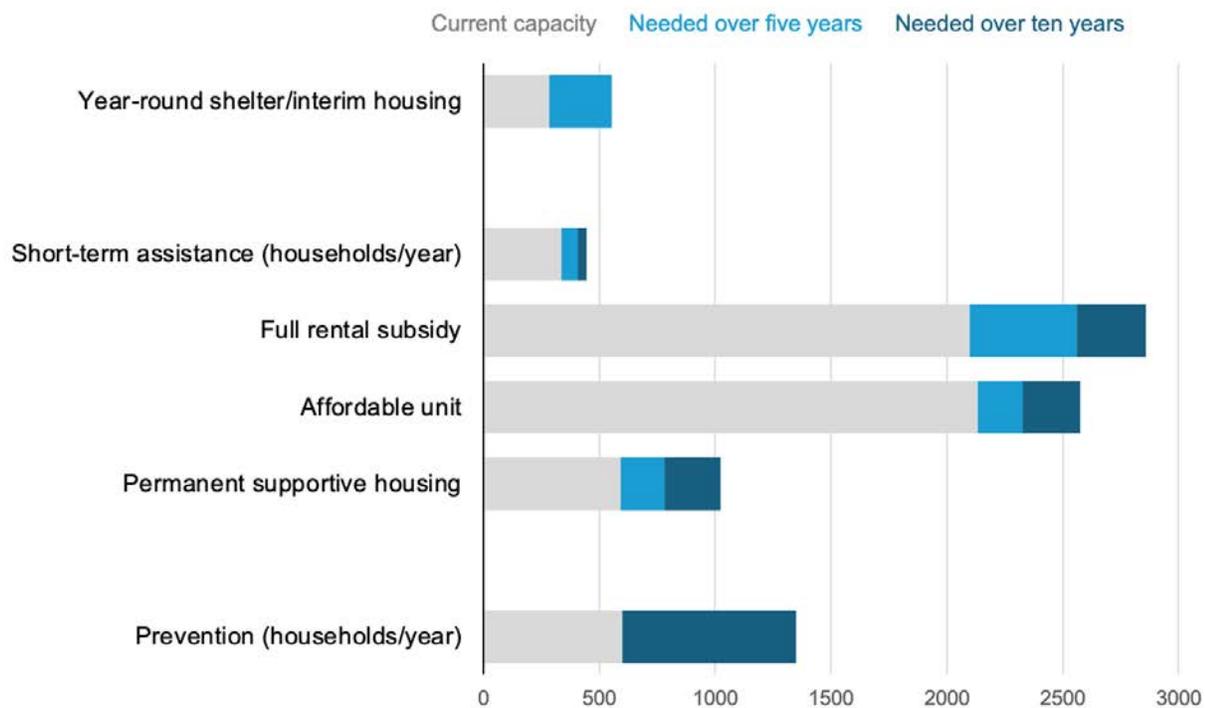
Projected expansions within five years (light blue), and additional expansions over the following five years (dark blue), to achieve and maintain a 75 percent reduction in unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley. Prevention and short-term assistance numbers represent the additional people served each year for the entirety of the period.
Source: All Home Housing Gap Analysis; 2023 HIC; HMIS; City budget documents

These investments are interrelated. Without including expanded prevention services in the modeling, substantially more interim and permanent housing would be required to reach the same unsheltered reduction goals. Shelter and interim housing play a larger role during the first five years, given the time required to build affordable housing, but they are less necessary as permanent housing solutions come

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[65] The model projections are intended to provide a general sense of costs and do not map perfectly onto Berkeley's existing programs. The "current capacity" numbers in Figure 31 reflect the number of year-round ES, TH, and SH beds in the 2023 HIC; the number of RRH slots and PSH beds in the 2023 HIC; the number of Housing Choice Vouchers allocated to the Berkeley Housing Authority; the number of HTF and BMR units in Berkeley; and the number of households served by prevention services in FY 2023 plus the number of households served by flex funds/navigation that were housed at the time they enrolled.

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online. In the long term, permanent housing investments are necessary to maintain reductions in unsheltered homelessness. This dynamic can be seen in Berkeley's present: while the city is sheltering a larger proportion of the homeless population than in years past, the number of unsheltered people continues to grow because of the overall increase in people experiencing homelessness. More detail about projected needs can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 32: Expansions in permanent housing allow decommissioning shelter beds
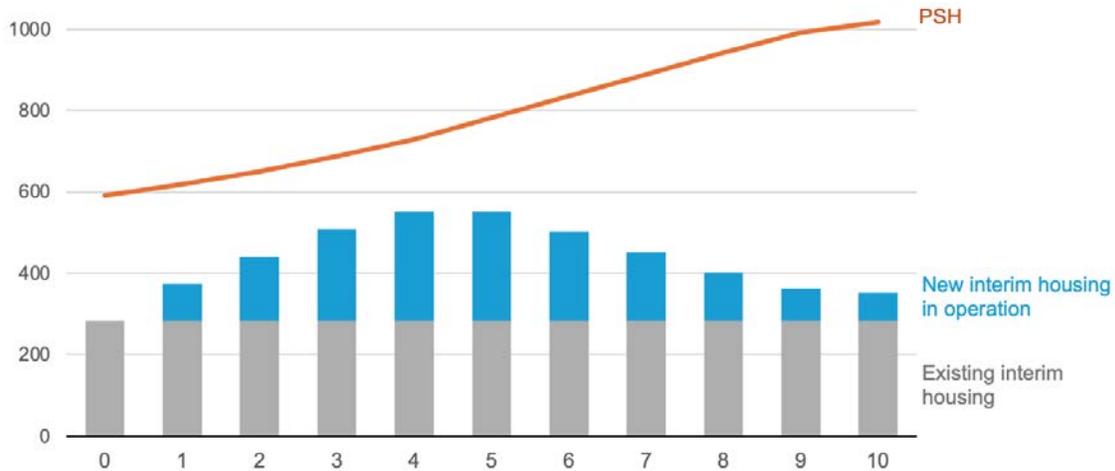
Projected shelter bed/IH unit needs and permanent supportive housing supply
Source: All Home Housing Gap Analysis; 2023 HIC

Preventing people from falling into homelessness is key to limiting the number of people who need other types of interventions. Berkeley served about 450 households with eviction prevention services in FY 2022–23 and served an additional 150 housed people with flex funds and housing navigation. All Home's model estimates that Berkeley will need to more than double this capacity, serving 750 additional households with targeted prevention each year in order to limit inflow and minimize the pressure on shelter and permanent housing resources. This estimate takes into account the challenges of targeting homelessness prevention: not everyone who receives assistance would have otherwise become homeless, but it is impossible to predict who is most vulnerable with complete accuracy.

The model anticipates costs of about $300 million over five years. This expansion in services would require significant new resources in addition to what the city, county, state, and federal governments are currently spending on homelessness services and housing. Berkeley allocated over $30 million for homelessness services and capital expenditures in FY 2023–24, a record level of spending that is unlikely to be sustained with current revenues. The projected need would require an additional $75 million per year on average, though this spending would not solely come from City coffers.

Figure 33: Most spending over ten years would be on permanent housing solutions
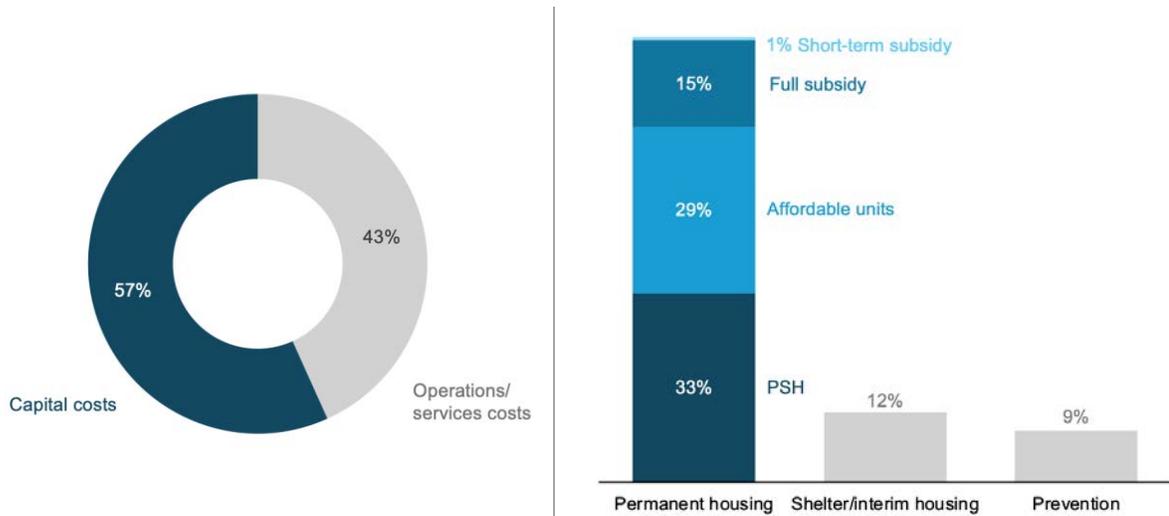
Percentage of projected spending over ten years
Source: All Home Housing Gap Analysis

About eighty percent of the funds spent over ten years would be for permanent housing and a majority would go to capital costs. The model includes only the development costs typically borne by local governments in development, subtracting out the funding that these projects typically receive from LIHTC and other sources.

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Part VI: Discussion

By signing on to the All Home Regional Action Plan, the City has already committed to an "all of the above" strategy, acknowledging that addressing unsheltered homelessness requires investments in shelter, prevention, and permanent housing solutions simultaneously.

Reducing unsheltered homelessness will require more investments than what the City can fund with current resources. According to All Home's system modeling, reducing unsheltered homelessness by 75 percent will require about $300 million in additional spending over five years and over $750 million over ten years, corresponding to about $75 million each year. If the City took on all of the additional spending to achieve this reduction, that would translate to more than tripling the amount the City spent on housing, shelter, and services in FY 2023–24, or redirecting about ten percent of the City's budget that year.

More urgently, there is a real risk that Berkeley will not be able to maintain its current momentum with existing funding sources. Berkeley has made enormous strides in expanding its homelessness system of care in the past few years, in partnership with new programs at the state level and a robust federal COVID response. However, the City is now bumping against the limitations of local funding sources, the end of pandemic-era programs, and state budget woes.

In the following section, I discuss the likely effects of allowing present trends to continue and analyze potential investments Berkeley could make to tackle unsheltered homelessness. To evaluate these alternatives, I use the following criteria:

- **Effectiveness at reducing unsheltered homelessness.** Reduces the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the city of Berkeley.
- **Effectiveness at reducing homelessness overall.** Reduces the number of people experiencing homelessness, whether sheltered or unsheltered.
- **Equity, especially racial equity.** Does not leave the people with the greatest needs behind and addresses racial disparities in homelessness.
- **Fiscal sustainability.** Can be sustained in the long term with resources realistically available to the City; aligns with funding and priorities at the state and federal level.

A. Impacts of maintaining current trends

Without additional action, Berkeley's response to unsheltered homelessness over the next five years will likely be characterized by an increasing, but still inadequate, supply of permanent supportive housing (PSH) and a shelter system slowly moving towards more non-congregate beds.

That said, this outlook is far from assured. Much of Berkeley's current progress in opening new non-congregate shelter has been paid for through state Encampment Resolution Fund grants, a program that is at risk as the state legislature considers cuts to homelessness services.[66] With Measure P revenues

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[66] State leaders have considered cuts to homelessness programs during this year's early budget negotiations process. Jeannie Nguyen, "Housing advocates call for no budget cuts toward solving homeless crisis in California," April 4, 2024, https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/sacramento/california-budget-homeless-crisis/103-95d0f191-9cb8-4149-9ad4-c8fcfc215924

falling, temporary COVID-related eviction prevention funding could be among the services cut to balance the budget.

Effectiveness. Berkeley has seen more people enter homelessness than leave it over the last several years, pointing to a system that is not keeping up with the need. Without further action, the city will continue to see the number of people experiencing homelessness increase. These trends could accelerate if Berkeley pulls back on funding for homelessness prevention.

Berkeley's recent expansions in shelter capacity have increased the proportion of homeless people in Berkeley who access shelter. However, the raw number of non-shelter users has increased as the number of people experiencing homelessness has continued to grow. Without addressing inflow into and outflow from the homelessness system of care, these strides in shelter capacity will be inadequate to address the problem of unsheltered homelessness.

Equity. People experiencing homelessness in Berkeley are disproportionately Black and Indigenous, and people with the greatest needs wait the longest for permanent housing resources in Berkeley's current system of care. Without further action, these facts are unlikely to change.

Fiscal sustainability. As discussed above, some of the progress Berkeley has made in recent years is contingent on resources that may not be maintained for the long term.

B.   Alternative: Focus on permanent supportive housing (PSH)

Berkeley added nearly one hundred beds of permanent supportive housing between 2022 and 2023. However, the city will need sustained increases over the next several years just to meet the needs of people currently experiencing homelessness, as discussed in Part V. This alternative would require the City to focus its investments in PSH, possibly at the expense of other services if there is not additional funding.

Effectiveness. Permanent supportive housing serves people with some of the most acute needs—often, though not always, a population that is most visible and vulnerable on the street. In addition to directly moving people from street homelessness indoors, PSH has the potential to reduce demand pressure on shelters and services for people who are homeless. When implemented to its full extent, PSH is effective at ending homelessness for individuals, with 80 to 90 percent success and retention rates.[67] That said, focusing resources on PSH might reduce the system's ability to serve people with lower needs—possibly resulting in serving fewer people experiencing homelessness overall.

As discussed in Part IV, there are barriers to moving people into PSH other than supply. Many people, especially those who are unsheltered or have significant disabilities, struggle to obtain documentation that is required before enrollment. These delays do not appear to be creating slack in the system: the utilization rate of these beds was above ninety percent across 2021–2023, despite a large number of new beds to be filled during this period.[68] Even so, these types of barriers are costly to individuals, and they may disproportionately affect people with higher needs. While Berkeley does not control the

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[67] Maria C. Raven, Matthew J. Niedzwiecki, and Margot Kushel, "A Randomized Trial of Permanent Supportive Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with High Use of Publicly Funded Services," *Health Services Research* 55, no. S2 (2020): 797–806, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13553.

[68] As recorded in January of each year in the Housing Inventory Count. By comparison, the utilization rate of Housing Choice Vouchers in Berkeley is 76 percent.

federal documentation requirements or Coordinated Entry policies, the City could concentrate resources on intensive supports to help Berkeley residents get "doc ready" to make a PSH-focused strategy more effective.

Another factor that complicates this alternative is the county-wide nature of the Coordinated Entry system. As noted in Part II, not everyone who moves into a Berkeley PSH unit will be coming from Berkeley's streets. City staff described a local preference policy as one solution to this mismatch—in other words, giving Berkeley residents priority in the Coordinated Entry queue for units that the City contributes to. However, this policy would have major equity considerations and may interfere with regional coordination between Berkeley and other cities.

Equity. PSH serves people with mental and physical disabilities that would make sustainably living indoors difficult or impossible without assistance. As discussed in Part III, people with disabilities are more likely to exit programs to homelessness and more likely to return from homelessness to housing in Berkeley's current system of care. There are different levels of need within the group of people who are eligible for PSH; if the City chooses to invest in helping Berkeley residents get "doc ready," that may make it more likely that people with the greatest barriers to housing make it through the queue.

Concentrating on PSH does come with tradeoffs. The population eligible for PSH is more white and more male compared to people experiencing homelessness overall; people who are not eligible for these higher-intensity services are especially likely to be Black women. Deprioritizing lighter-touch services might disproportionately harm people of color who have less of an existing safety net and are more vulnerable to homelessness even without significant disabilities.

Fiscal sustainability. Permanent supportive housing is expensive compared to other interventions. High-quality PSH requires skilled staff to provide wrap-around services and ensure residents are successful in housing, and residents are typically unable to pay much in rent to offset costs. All Home estimates the yearly cost of operations for a permanent supportive housing unit (including a housing subsidy and services) to be $40,000 to $50,000, not including capital costs.[69]

That said, policymakers around the state have recognized the barriers to constructing and operating PSH, and sources such as LIHTC and state Multifamily Housing Program funds increasingly prioritize these types of projects. The City can play an important role alongside these sources by providing gap funding, as it has done for projects like the HOPE Center.[70] Operating costs are more challenging, but state policymakers have explored making it easier for operators to access Medicaid dollars to cover the ongoing cost of care for people in PSH.[71] The City is not alone in tackling this problem, and City funding has a role to play in accelerating these types of projects.

C. Alternative: Accelerate the transition to non-congregate interim housing

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Berkeley has made strides towards providing more shelter with a non-congregate, or interim housing, model. However, most shelter beds in the city are still in congregate settings, and the city's non-congregate shelters largely focus on specific populations and rely on special funding sources. The City could take a more aggressive approach working with providers to identify

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[69] Based on estimates by the Corporation for Supportive Housing.
[70] "City Council Report: Item 14 Measure O Bond Impacts on Affordable Housing Development in Berkeley."
[71] Carolina Reid, "Permanent Supportive Housing as a Solution to Homelessness: The Critical Role of Long-Term Operating Subsidies" (Terner Center, July 2023), https://ternercenter.berkeley.edu/research-and-policy/psh-homelessness-cost/.

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potential non-congregate sites and fund their operations by moving money away from beds that are currently in congregate settings. These sites could include additional hotel/motel sites, but could also include cabins or tiny homes.

Effectiveness. This alternative has the potential to make a dent in unsheltered homelessness by simply moving more people indoors. Congregate shelter beds are not well-suited for many people experiencing homelessness due to medical needs and safety concerns. Street outreach providers report that unsheltered people are often more willing to come inside to a hotel room than a dorm-style shelter.

Sheltering people can also reduce logistical barriers to moving people into housing. According to reporting from other jurisdictions and anecdotal evidence from Berkeley providers, interim housing that includes case management and housing navigation has been more successful at moving people towards permanent housing compared to congregate shelters.[72] That said, shelter alone will not solve homelessness. Without increasing the supply of housing for people to move into, navigation and shelter connections can only have a limited impact on the central problem.

Equity. Like PSH, non-congregate shelter has the potential to serve a population that is highly vulnerable and currently underserved by Berkeley's shelter system. However, this strategy does potentially come with a tradeoff. It may result in a system with fewer shelter beds overall, and one that is more targeted to people with severe disabilities, who are more likely to be white and male.

Fiscal sustainability. Operating interim housing is more expensive than congregate shelters due to their larger footprint and the staffing costs of housing navigation and case management. Operations for "tiny home" interim housing programs elsewhere in the Bay Area have cost between $27,000 to $48,000 per unit per year.[73] Berkeley's current interim housing hosted in hotels and motels is generally more expensive due to the costs of renting rooms and serving a more vulnerable population. By way of comparison, Alameda County estimated that the cost to operate a congregate shelter bed was about $18,000 annually in 2021.[74]

These increased costs could create a tradeoff for effectiveness: transitioning more shelter beds to non-congregate may reduce Berkeley's overall capacity to shelter people. The fact that interim housing requires more square footage per occupant than congregate shelter also creates capacity challenges. Even so, increasing the number of non-congregate beds may bring a different population inside, including people with high needs who may represent a higher burden on other City services such as environmental remediation and emergency response.

In addition, non-congregate shelter facilities have the potential to transition to permanent housing in the future, as with the Rodeway to Home shelter in Berkeley—meaning that investing in shelter now could have long-term benefits.

D. Alternative: Expand medium-term subsides

Berkeley's "shallow subsidies" program provides up to $1,800 per month for 36 months of rental assistance for people exiting homelessness with high rent burdens. The current program is relatively small, serving 49 people in 2023. Berkeley could consider expanding this program to serve a larger pool

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[72] Gilman, "Strengthening Interim Housing as a Housing First Approach."
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design" (EveryOne Home, January 2021).

of people who are not eligible for permanent supportive housing, but who are not well-served by the short-term subsidies provided by rapid rehousing.

Effectiveness. Berkeley's current program targets people with less acute needs, who may be homeless largely for economic reasons and are able to live independently without supports. Rapid rehousing is the current service model for this population, but there are indications that it is not working for everyone, given relatively high rates of exits and returns to homelessness. Alameda County's 2021 *Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design* report identified people who are unlikely to increase their income on the timeline required by RRH as a target population for ongoing shallow subsidies.[75] Making exits to housing for this population stick has the potential to reduce overall homelessness.

That said, it is not clear whether medium-term subsidies without additional services would make a large dent in the problem Berkeley faces. About four in five people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley have some form of disability. BACS, the nonprofit that runs Berkeley's current medium-term subsidies program, found that smaller subsidies and lighter-touch casework would not be appropriate for most of the people waiting on the housing queue.[76]

Expanding medium-term subsidies would not directly make a large impact on unsheltered homelessness in the short term, since it is less targeted to people who have been living outside for long periods. However, by reducing the number of people returning to or entering homelessness this strategy could decrease the number of people who are homeless and reduce the demand pressure on other resources such as shelter.

Equity. Medium-term subsidies do not directly serve the needs of the people in Berkeley's homelessness system who have the greatest vulnerabilities. However, there are longer-term equity considerations to consider. The experience of homelessness itself can cause trauma and harm; people who are less vulnerable today may become more so if their needs are not addressed now. This population is younger and are more likely to be Black compared to the population of homeless people overall. Neglecting the needs of this population has the potential to exacerbate existing inequities.

Fiscal sustainability. The shallow subsidy program has lower fixed costs compared to building housing. It also has the potential to make existing dollars stretch more effectively by supporting people tapering off of rapid rehousing. That said, the program as it has been implemented in Berkeley is more expensive than existing interventions. The service provider that operates the shallow subsidy program has estimated that they will be able to serve 53 households with the $2.25 million the City has allocated so far, corresponding to $42,000 per household—costs that are partially driven by staffing needs to serve people with vulnerabilities.

E.   Alternative: Invest in homelessness prevention services

As discussed in Part IV, many people enter homelessness after living with friends or relatives without a formal lease, and a sizeable minority of people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley were last housed outside of the city. Berkeley's Housing Retention Program expanded during the COVID-19 emergency period and became more flexible. However, the program currently focuses primarily on formal tenancies,

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[75] Ibid.

[76] "City Council Report: Item 08 Measure P Contract No. 31900273 Amendment," November 15, 2022, https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/ default/files/documents/2022-11-15%20Item%2008%20Measure%20P%20Contract%20No.%2031900273.pdf.

only applies within city limits, and does not target people based on their risk of falling into homelessness. Berkeley does have flexible funding and navigation help allocated through the Housing Resource Center and other service providers, but these resources are largely dedicated to helping people who are homeless move into housing.

Berkeley could strengthen its prevention programming by funding programs dedicated to homelessness prevention that target people most at risk. One way of doing this would be investing in prevention through the City's existing pots of flex funds—increasing funding so that providers have more flexibility to serve people who are not currently homeless and conduct outreach to people who are precariously housed. Berkeley could also ensure that the Housing Retention Program is as effective as possible by maintaining the flexibilities implemented during the COVID-19 emergency period, such as reducing documentation requirements and covering costs other than rent. The City would target these resources to the people most at risk of homelessness using evidence-based prioritization, like the programs already in place in San Francisco, Oakland, and Santa Clara County.

The City cannot directly control what happens in neighboring cities, but City leadership could also advocate for a county-wide or multi-county regional homelessness prevention programming, similar to the program currently in place in Santa Clara County.

Effectiveness. Like the previous alternative, making prevention more effective would not have a direct impact on unsheltered homelessness in the short term. That said, effective prevention reduces the demand for shelter or permanent housing solutions. System modeling suggests that Berkeley will need to serve 750 additional households per year with prevention resources or problem-solving in order to reduce unsheltered homelessness by 75 percent. In other words, preventing people from falling into homelessness is a necessary condition to reduce inflows and prevent increases in the homeless population in Berkeley.

Equity. Prevention programs would most help the population in Berkeley that is housed but vulnerable to homelessness, which is disproportionately Black, Indigenous and Hispanic/Latine. While this population has fewer support needs than the population likely to live in permanent supportive housing, they are still vulnerable. As described above, preventing people in these communities from experiencing homelessness in the first place can prevent trauma, loss of income, and physical and mental harm. The City could consider targeting assistance to specific neighborhoods where people are especially at risk of losing housing in order to ensure that these resources are being distributed to the communities who need them the most.

Fiscal sustainability. Prevention is relatively low-cost compared to many other investments and has the effect of reducing the need for higher-cost interventions such as shelter and housing supports. All Home estimates a cost of $8,000 to $9,000 per intervention based on existing prevention programming. Targeting Berkeley's existing housing retention services more tightly to the goal of preventing homelessness will also allow the City to get more bang for its buck, especially if the City is unable to maintain higher levels of spending in future years.

Figure 34: Policy alternatives trade-off matrix

	Effectiveness: Unsheltered	Effectiveness: Overall	Equity	Fiscal sustainability
Maintain current trends	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
Focus on PSH	High	High	Moderate	Low
Move to non-congregate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Expand medium-term subsidy	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Reinforce prevention services	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High

Source: Author illustration

Part VII: Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on Berkeley's existing resources and projected needs, I recommend that the City prioritize the following investments:

- **Accelerating the transition to non-congregate shelter.** Berkeley's non-congregate shelters have been effective at sheltering people and streamlining their access to permanent housing. Extending these opportunities to a larger population experiencing homelessness could bring more people inside.

- **Funding permanent supportive housing.** Permanent supportive housing serves people with the highest needs—often, though not always, a population that is most visible and vulnerable on the street. While expensive compared to other interventions, PSH is the most urgent permanent housing need in the system, and it is highly effective at housing people and retaining them in housing. As part of this recommendation, the City should explore strategies to reduce documentation barriers for people with high vulnerabilities.

- **Investing in homelessness prevention.** Targeting prevention programs to the people most at risk can cost-effectively prevent Berkeley residents from experiencing the harm of homelessness and reduce pressure on shelter and permanent housing services. As part of this recommendation, the City should consider:
  a. *Maintaining expanded rules that make the Housing Retention Program more effective,* such as more flexible documentation requirements and the ability to pay costs other than rent.
  b. *Targeting scarce resources to people most at risk of homelessness* by using evidence-based homelessness prevention, including factors such as past episodes of homelessness and living in an at-risk neighborhoods.
  c. *Explore increasing investments in flex funds* to allow providers to serve more people who are precariously housed, especially those without a formal lease.
  d. *Advocating for regional homelessness prevention,* which could serve people in neighboring cities without the same resources as Berkeley.

In addition, the City should consider the following actions:

- **Look for opportunities to increase funding and keep up the momentum.** A truly "all of the above" strategy will require more resources from every level of government. As pandemic-era federal support recedes and one-time resources are spent down, Berkeley must retain its dedication to long-term solutions to the homelessness crisis and work with its neighbors to ensure that the region makes these investments together.

- **Do additional research into rapid rehousing and the needs of people with lower levels of acuity.** While Berkeley's current medium-term subsidy program may fill in gaps for this population, more research is needed to understand how best to serve them.

In addition to the above actions, the City should consider how else it can reduce the burden on the systems that serve homeless people in Berkeley. Homelessness is downstream of housing, health, and labor policy, and the City has a role to play in making it easier to build new housing, supporting mental health investments, and supporting living-wage jobs. The roots of our homelessness crisis are long and deep. It will require sustained investment and dedication from policy leaders to get ourselves out of it.

Appendix A: Interviews

Stacey Burmaster, Insight Housing

Laurie Flores, City of Fremont

Markos Gonzalez, Bay Area Community Services (BACS)

Kelsey Knutson, Bay Area Community Services (BACS)

Jennifer Lucky, Alameda County

Eric Magaña, Eviction Defense Center

Logan McDonnell, Bay Area Community Services (BACS)

Appendix B: Model Methodology[77]

The Housing Gap Analysis uses an illustrative modeling technique to estimate the number of additional interim housing units, permanent housing solutions, and prevention interventions required to rapidly reach designated goals in reducing unsheltered homelessness. Reporting outcomes for alternate investment strategies for reaching these goals illustrates the relationship between each of these three program types and the efficacy of investing in all three concurrently.

While comparable in many ways to alternative approaches to homelessness response system modeling, three key distinguishing characteristics of the Housing Gap Analysis should be noted:

- **Linking prevention and inflow**: in our analysis, the estimate for the number of individuals becoming homeless in a given year ("inflow") may be reduced through increased investment in prevention. In nearly all other system modeling approaches, the association between inflow and prevention programming is typically unaddressed. Revealing the importance of prevention programming in a well-balanced homelessness system (especially its potential to reduce the need for more intensive housing-based interventions) requires establishing inflow as a dynamic variable determined in part by scaling new preventative measures.
- **Acknowledging annual housing production limits**: the production of new affordable housing is notoriously slow in the Bay Area, and the most informative modeling–even that investigating ambitious, aspirational change–must acknowledge that we cannot build all the homes we would need in the short-term to sufficiently address homelessness. In our modeling, we set baseline production limits based on recent trends, which we then allow to increase incrementally over time.
- **Allowing system performance flexibility**: Traditional approaches to homeless system modeling use HMIS data to establish system *pathways* (the percent of people moving from transitional housing to PSH, for example, or from emergency shelter back to unsheltered settings) which are then used to determine the additional inventory required to reach homelessness reduction goals. While useful for understanding the impact of incremental change, this approach is more likely to distort estimates for scenarios involving significantly expanding investment, especially when many more permanent housing solutions are made available. For the *new inventory added*, we expect a notably higher rate of successful exits from interim housing to permanent solutions given the assumed expanded availability of such housing.

These characteristics allow the analysis to remain constrained to realistic housing production limits while envisioning the efficiencies and synergies likely resulting from significantly expanded new investment.

Figure B1 visualizes the basic logic of the Housing Gap Analysis. It depicts the major interventions and new inventory required to reach unsheltered reduction targets, and portrays the pathways along which households experiencing homelessness are expected to progress toward permanent housing. Though the process of calculating the housing needs does not exactly align with the process of people progressing through the envisioned system, it is a useful reference for conveying how the analysis is conducted. The description of the modeling strategy—divided into four broad steps below—references this schematic throughout. Data sources, per-unit costs, and key assumptions can be modified in collaboration with local administrative staff to reflect newly available or revised data, to refine expectations, or to investigate alternate scenarios.

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[77] This model methodology was developed and written up by David Amaral of All Home.

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Figure B1: Basic structure of the Housing Gap Analysis model

Population at risk of homelessness

Targeted Prevention — A

New Homelessness
Existing Unsheltered Homeless Population — B

Current Response System Capacity — C

New Interim Housing
Shorter Duration of Stay
Longer Duration of Stay — D

Short-term | Ongoing Subsidy | New AH Unit | New PSH Unit
New Permanent Housing Solutions

Unmet Need for AH/PSH
Prioritized for new housing following year — E

Household prevented from homelessness
Household provided prevention assistance (but may not have become homeless without it)
Pathways of households through response system & newly added inventory

A	Increased prevention assistance can reduce inflow. "Efficiency" determines # of interventions required to reduce inflow by one.
B	*Population to house* to reach annual unsheltered goals = currently homeless population + projected inflow (after prevention)
C	Current homelessness response system capacity = average # of households successfully exited to permanent housing in recent years.
D	Short-term stays in new IH accommodate those connecting with permanent housing in a given year. Longer stays are required when need for newly developed housing is not met.
E	To reach unsheltered reduction goals, all households are assigned to one of four permanent housing solutions.

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Step 1: **Establishing the total population to house to reach unsheltered reduction goals**
The RAP sets a goal of reducing unsheltered homelessness by 75 percent, and this goal ultimately determines how many people need to be housed and how much added housing inventory is needed to do so. Annual progress toward achieving this overarching goal is assigned for each of the first five years, and is assumed to hold steady for the remainder of the modeled time span.

The model incorporates a dynamic estimate of the population of people experiencing homelessness that includes both those currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness as well as the total number of people expected to become homeless in a given year. This latter group, in turn, includes both people expected to engage with the homelessness response system for the first time (a rough proxy for "first time" homelessness) along with those expected to return to homelessness after ending a previous experience of it. (See model diagram section B.)

The number of individuals expected to become homeless (combining both first-time and returns to homelessness) may be reduced through increased homelessness prevention interventions (as is represented in model diagram section A). The model sets a target for reducing inflow by a percentage of current baseline estimates and calculates the number of individuals who would need to be prevented from falling into homelessness to reach this goal. The number of actual prevention interventions required to reach this goal depends on the assumption for how *efficiently* prevention programming can be targeted; in other words, how many prevention interventions are required to reduce inflow by one? A targeting efficiency of twenty percent would mean that putting out five prevention interventions would reduce inflow by one. In the diagram section A, empty circles represent prevention services provided to those deemed at risk of homelessness but who would not have become homeless even in the absence of prevention services. Full circles represent individuals/households who would have become homeless without prevention services. Red arrows represent individuals or households becoming homeless in a given year who did not receive prevention assistance.

The ultimate number of individuals requiring housing interventions in a given year (the "population to house") equals the difference between the expected number of unsheltered individuals (currently unsheltered plus annual inflow after prevention) and the particular year's target total unsheltered population.

Step 2: **Determining the number and type of permanent housing solutions required**
With the "population to house" calculated for a given year, the next step is to determine how many individuals can likely be assisted by the current homelessness response system and then how much additional inventory is required to fill the gap. Current system capacity is based on a three-year average for the number of individuals exiting the homelessness response system to permanent housing destinations. (See diagram section C.)

New permanent housing inventory is added for all individuals in the "population to house" remaining after accounting for current system capacity. Individuals served through this added inventory are assigned to one of the following four categories of permanent housing solutions:
1. Short-term assistance: a general category including one-time or time-limited financial or rental assistance. Operations/Services costs only.
2. Ongoing rental subsidy: comparable to Housing Choice Vouchers which persist and accumulate across the modeling time horizon. Operations/Services costs only.
3. New affordable housing unit: newly developed affordable housing units. Capital costs are calculated for the year new units become available. Operations/Services costs are calculated for

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the year new units become available and all following years included in the modeling time horizon.
4. <u>New permanent supportive housing (PSH) unit</u>: like new affordable housing units but with higher annual operating/service costs.

The number of currently unsheltered individuals assigned new PSH units is directly determined by the number estimated to be experiencing chronic homelessness. For the population becoming newly homeless, the expected need for PSH units can be reduced. Assignment to the remaining three housing types aims to match the varied level of need expected among those experiencing homelessness while acknowledging that new construction (and not just rental subsidies) will be a crucial component to any effective and ambitious homelessness reduction strategy.

While the first two permanent housing solution types (neither involving any new construction) are added to meet the estimated need in a year, annual production limits are set for the cumulative number of newly added affordable housing units and PSH units. The baseline threshold is tied to recent trends in very-low income (VLI) housing production. In the primary modeled scenario, the production limit is allowed to grow incrementally over the course of the first five years included in the modeling. Though the cumulative projected need for new affordable and PSH units is often higher than the new production threshold, the total number of newly constructed units is constrained to a given year's production limit. (See diagram section E.)

Step 3: Estimating the need for additional Interim Housing (IH)
Total need for additional interim housing units is calculated to accommodate two distinct needs (See diagram section D):
1. <u>Shorter duration needs</u>: While a portion of all individuals/households assigned to each of the four permanent housing solutions are expected to move directly into housing from unsheltered settings (or at least without requiring an interim housing stay), a majority are expected to spend a short duration of time (2–3 months) in a new interim housing unit prior to their housing placement. Each new IH unit is expected to accommodate multiple individuals/households over the course of a year.
2. <u>Longer-stay durations</u>: In years for which the newly produced affordable and PSH units do not fully meet the level of need for these housing types (due to production limit constraints), additional new IH units are added equivalent to the gap between the number of needed new units and the number actually produced. Use of new IH for these longer-stay durations allows unsheltered reduction goals to be achieved despite production constraints. The expectation is that the individuals/households accommodated by longer-stay IH units are prioritized for newly produced units coming online in the following year.

The model assumes that the full need for new IH can be produced and utilized each year (i.e., there are no IH production thresholds imposed as they are for new affordable and PSH units in the model). Units produced in one year become available for use in the following year, and capacity is only expanded if need for new IH increases. As need for new IH units decreases, the new units are decommissioned in increments of ten units, while maintaining a limited buffer between need and capacity.

Step 4: **Calculating costs**
Average cost per unit/intervention is established for each of the interventions. For all *one-time* costs (including capital costs for all new IH, affordable, and PSH units; all short-term assistance permanent housing solutions; and prevention interventions) the full costs are tied to the year in which unit/intervention is first provided. For all ongoing costs (operations/services costs for all rental

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subsidies, new affordable and PSH units) annual projected expenditures include both the cost of providing the units/support added in a given year while also covering all those added in previous years. In other words, subsidies and operations/services for new units persist and accumulate over the years included in the modeling. Operations/services costs for IH include only units in operation in a given year.

Capital costs for new affordable and PSH units included in the modeling are not the full costs of development, but rather represent the average portion of the overall capital stack funded by local governmental entities after accounting for tax credits, loans, etc.

All baseline costs increase by an established inflation rate of three percent in each year of the modeling.

Appendix C: Model Projections

The following tables provide estimates the bed capacity and funds needed for Berkeley to achieve a 75 percent reduction in unsheltered homelessness, based on All Home's modeling.

Figure C1: All Home model capacity projections

	Five-year total	Ten-year total
Permanent housing		
Short-term assistance*	70	110
Full subsidy	460	760
AH units	190	450
Permanent supportive housing	190	430
Interim housing	270	270
Prevention*	750	750

* Households served per year

Figure C2: All Home model funding projections

	Five years	10 year total
Permanent housing	$195 M	$607 M
Short-term assistance	$3 M	$5 M
Full subsidy	$31 M	$117 M
AH units	$76 M	$227 M
Permanent supportive housing	$84 M	$257 M
Interim housing	$67 M	$95 M
Prevention	$32 M	$70 M
Total Cost	**$294 M**	**$772 M**
Total Capital	$153 M	$334 M
Total Operations/Services	$141 M	$438 M

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Figure C3: Model projections over ten years (households served and costs)

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Permanent housing solutions											
Short-term assistance	Total households	50	70	80	80	70	50	50	40	40	40
	Cost	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K	$436 K
Full rental subsidy	New households	70	90	100	110	90	70	60	60	60	50
	Total households	70	160	260	370	460	530	590	650	710	760
	Cost	$1.5 M	$3.5 M	$6.0 M	$8.6 M	$11.2 M	$13.2 M	$15.2 M	$17.3 M	$19.3 M	$21.3 M
New affordable units	New households	30	30	40	40	50	50	50	50	50	40
	Total households	30	60	100	140	190	240	300	350	400	450
	Units added	30	30	40	40	50	50	50	50	50	40
	Capital Costs	$8.2 M	$10.0 M	$11.9 M	$13.9 M	$18.1 M	$18.6 M	$19.2 M	$19.5 M	$20.8 M	$16.4 M
	Operating Costs	$685 K	$1.6 M	$2.7 M	$3.9 M	$5.6 M	$7.4 M	$9.3 M	$11.2 M	$13.3 M	$15.2 M
Permanent supportive housing (PSH)	New households	30	30	40	50	60	60	60	70	70	50
	Total households	30	60	100	140	190	240	300	350	400	430
	Units added	30	30	40	40	50	50	50	50	50	30
	Capital costs	$8.2 M	$10.0 M	$11.9 M	$13.9 M	$18.1 M	$18.6 M	$19.2 M	$19.8 M	$19.1 M	$10.3 M
	Operating costs	$1.1 M	$2.5 M	$4.1 M	$6.1 M	$8.7 M	$11.4 M	$14.3 M	$17.4 M	$20.4 M	$22.4 M
Interim housing											
	Total households	90	160	230	270	250	190	140	90	40	30
	Units added	90	70	70	40	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Capital costs	$9.5 M	$7.1 M	$7.1 M	$4.9 M	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Operating costs	$3.3 M	$5.8 M	$8.4 M	$10.4 M	$10.7 M	$9.0 M	$7.1 M	$5.2 M	$3.6 M	$3.2 M
Prevention											
	Households served	730	750	760	760	760	760	760	760	760	760
	Cost	$6.0 M	$6.0 M	$6.0 M	$7.0 M	$7.0 M	$7.0 M	$7.0 M	$7.0 M	$8.0 M	$8.0 M

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ACTION CALENDAR
July 29, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Jenny Wong, City Auditor

Subject: Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend City Council request that the City Manager report back during the audit follow-up period in Fall 2026, and annually thereafter, regarding the status of our audit recommendations until reported fully implemented by the Homelessness Response Team and the City Manager's Office. The audit includes six recommendations to improve coordination with service providers, strengthen data procedures, expand and standardize outcome reporting, enhance public transparency, and assess staffing resources needed to support these efforts. The City Manager's Office agreed to our findings and recommendations. Please see our report for their complete response.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION
Implementing the audit recommendations will help the City better measure the impact of the Homeless Response Team's work and enhance transparency around the use of public resources. Improving coordination with service providers, as recommended in the audit, may require continued staff time to maintain regular meetings and implement shared tools like the HMIS Outreach module. The HRT stated that limited administrative resources constrained their ability to support data and reporting efforts, and a 2024 staffing study recommended additional administrative support, though funding was not provided. Additional resources may be needed to sustain improvements to coordination, data sharing, and public reporting.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
The Homeless Response Team (HRT) is an interdepartmental team that conducts both outreach and enforcement at encampments in Berkeley. To help move encampment residents indoors, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited shelter and housing resources, most of which are managed by the Alameda County Continuum of Care. According to the Point-In-Time Count and Berkeley shelter data from the audit period, there were more than twice as many people experiencing homelessness as there were shelter beds in Berkeley.

The HRT paused some coordination meetings with service providers for over a year, which one provider said resulted in clients being lost after encampment actions. Although the meetings have resumed, the team did not have written procedures for ongoing communication or formal coordination structures. The HRT also had limited access to shared information systems and could not conduct Coordinated Entry assessments – the entry point to access Alameda County shelter and resources – until September 2024, which hindered their ability to connect residents to services.

While the HRT tracked some outcomes related to its goals—such as shelter offers, encampment closures, and trash removal—it did not report on other meaningful outcomes like shelter enrollments or Coordinated Entry assessments until after the audit period. Reports were cumulative and not broken down by time period, which limited the ability to assess progress. Reports were also difficult to locate on the City's website. HRT staff stated that limited administrative resources impacted their ability to analyze and report data.

BACKGROUND
The Berkeley City Council established the Homeless Response Team in 2021 to respond to encampments by conducting outreach and reducing health and safety threats without citation or arrest. Between 2022 and 2024, unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley decreased by 45 percent—the largest decrease among the five largest cities in Alameda County. During this time, the City expanded its shelter and housing programs through local funding and state grants. The HRT is responsible for coordinating with other departments and providers but has limited authority over most shelter and housing placements. The team's work is further shaped by legal constraints, including recent litigation and federal rulings on encampment actions. Local lawsuits, administrative regulations, and the City's September 2024 Encampment Policy Resolution also affect how the HRT plans and conducts encampment interventions.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION
The audit identified opportunities for the HRT to improve coordination with service providers, develop stronger procedures for internal data collection and reporting, and improve public transparency. Implementing the recommendations will strengthen the City's ability to track progress toward its goals of reducing unsheltered homelessness, mitigating hazardous encampments, and maintaining a clean city.

CONTACT PERSON
Jenny Wong, City Auditor, City Auditor's Office, 510-981-6750

Attachments:
1: Audit Report: Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

Audit Report
July 16, 2025

Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

BERKELEY CITY AUDITOR

Jenny Wong, City Auditor

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Promoting transparency and accountability in Berkeley government

# Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

Report Highlights

🔍 Findings

1. The Homeless Response Team (HRT) acts in both outreach and enforcement roles and is impacted by resource constraints in the City as well as regionally. To help move encampment residents indoors, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited shelter and housing resources.

The number of people experiencing homelessness far exceeded the number of shelter beds in Berkeley in 2024.
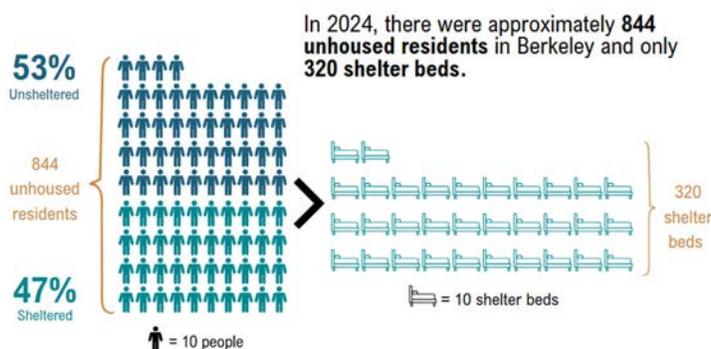
Source: Auditor analysis of Alameda County 2024 PIT count and Berkeley shelter data

2. The HRT paused some coordination meetings with service providers due to legal action which resulted in one provider losing track of clients after encampment actions. The HRT also had limited access to county information systems shared by other providers and did not have procedures for collecting encampment data.

3. The HRT tracked some outcomes related to their program goals during the audit period, but did not report on other meaningful outcomes, such as Coordinated Entry assessments or number of shelter enrollments. The team's public reports were also difficult to access on the City's website.

☑ Recommendations

To improve coordination and address data inconsistencies, we recommend the HRT document procedures for coordination with service providers and data collection, as well as use a shared mapping tool to assist with coordination. To more effectively measure the HRT's impact and enhance transparency, we recommend they expand on their reported outcomes, consider sharing public reports in a more accessible format and assess staffing resources needed to make these improvements.

Objectives

1. What role does the Homeless Response Team have in responding to encampments?

2. How does the Homeless Response Team coordinate with other organizations to respond to encampments?

3. How does the Homeless Response Team use data to measure progress toward goals, and how is this communicated to the public and decision makers?

Why This Audit Is Important

We initiated an audit of the HRT because it is an important touchpoint for encampment residents in Berkeley and a key component of the City's approach to addressing unsheltered homelessness. The HRT works alongside organizations providing outreach and services to encampments, and effective coordination is important to meet the needs of encampment residents. The Berkeley community has committed to addressing this issue through multiple tax measures, and consistent reporting with more outcomes can better communicate progress toward the HRT's goals.

BERKELEY CITY AUDITOR

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Homelessness is a major crisis in the Bay Area and throughout the United States. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) acknowledges that no local government alone has the ability or the resources to completely solve the problem of homelessness. Though the City of Berkeley cannot end homelessness by itself, meaningfully and sustainably addressing this crisis requires systems to work together, and for communities to acknowledge their role in contributing to and solving homelessness. In recent years, Berkeley residents have committed to addressing this issue through tax measures such as Measure P, Measure O, and Measure W, that allocate resources for purposes including new permanent housing and shelter. Berkeley's unsheltered population decreased by 45 percent between February 2022 and January 2024, the largest decrease among the five largest cities in Alameda County.

We identified the City's response to homeless encampments as an area for independent analysis due to community concerns over this issue. We focused on Berkeley's Homeless Response Team (HRT) because they are an important touchpoint for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley. While Alameda County manages and controls access to many homeless resources, the HRT is the interdepartmental city team that responds to homeless encampments in Berkeley. This audit focuses on the HRT's operations, data, and reporting; it does not make any recommendations regarding the City's encampment response policies.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to answer the following questions:

1) What role does the Homeless Response Team have in responding to encampments?
2) How does the Homeless Response Team coordinate with other organizations to respond to encampments?
3) How does the Homeless Response Team use data to measure progress toward goals and how is this communicated to the public and decision makers?

We evaluated the HRT's operations between July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024 (fiscal years 2022 – 2024). We also reviewed the HRT's policies, data, outcomes, and public reporting. Additionally, we compared data and outcomes to best practices from research organizations and other jurisdictions. Lastly, we interviewed city and county officials, third-party outreach providers and homeless advocates to understand collaboration on encampment response efforts.

Background

The Berkeley City Council established the HRT in June 2021, and the City Manager's Office launched the team in September 2021. The HRT's initial stated purpose was to respond to homeless encampments in Berkeley by performing sustained outreach to move people indoors, simultaneously reducing the impact of encampments on the City with actions such as cleanings or closures that reduce health and safety threats while avoiding citation and arrest.

Unsheltered homelessness is the result of the nationwide affordable housing crisis that stems from a combination of increasing rates of deep poverty and a lack of affordable housing.[1] Berkeley uses the federally required point-in-time (PIT) counts to estimate the homeless population, which includes unsheltered and sheltered individuals.[2] Every two years, communities conduct counts of people experiencing homelessness to measure its prevalence locally. In the January 2024 PIT count in Berkeley, the primary reported causes of homelessness were related to housing loss (33 percent) and job loss (39 percent) among those surveyed (Figure 1).

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[1] According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a person is considered to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness when they are living in a place not meant for human habitation, including in a tent or impermanent structure within an encampment.

[2] To measure the sheltered homeless population, Alameda County uses reported occupancy data to count the number of individuals in emergency shelter or transitional housing within Alameda County on the night of the PIT count.

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Figure 1. Primary Causes of Homelessness Among Berkeley's Homeless Population, 2024

Source: Alameda County 2024 PIT Count

Structural racism also contributes to homelessness, as Black/African American and Hispanic & Latino/e/a individuals are overrepresented among the homeless population nationwide. In Berkeley's PIT count, Black/African American residents were 43.8 percent of the homeless population surveyed, compared to only 7.8 percent of Berkeley's total population (Figure 2).

Encampments refer to individuals or households who are involuntarily unhoused and use temporary shelters, such as tents, or accumulate large objects on public or City property, according to the HRT's working definition.[3] People experiencing homelessness may choose to live in encampments for a variety of reasons, including limited shelter availability or barriers such as shelter rules or conditions that may not meet their needs. For example, some shelters may have strict entry or exit times, or sobriety requirements. Additionally, some individuals may have concerns about personal health and safety in shelters, or value the autonomy, privacy, and sense of community in encampments.[4]

However, life in encampments also presents significant risks, including hunger, disease, extreme weather, and violence. Many people living in encampments experience disabling conditions, such as mental or physical health conditions, or substance use disorders. Among those surveyed as part of Berkeley's most recent PIT count, 43 percent of people reported having a serious mental illness and 26 percent reported having a substance use disorder (Figure 2).[5]

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[3] The definition for encampments varies by jurisdiction, as HUD does not have a standard definition for encampments.

[4] A February 2025 investigation by CalMatters found allegations of abuse and dangerous conditions in some California homeless shelters ('A volunteer jail': Inside the scandals and abuse pushing California's homeless out of shelters).

[5] While some homeless Berkeleyans live in encampments, others may live in other sheltered or unsheltered situations. Berkeley's total encampment population is unknown.

Figure 2. Characteristics of Berkeley's Homeless Population, 2024

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Chronic Homelessness	Veterans	Survivors of Domestic Violence	HIV/Aids Related Illness	Serious Mental Illness	Substance Use Disorder
42%	4%	8%	3%	43%	26%

AGE RANGES

- UNDER 18: 4.1%
- AGE 18-24: 3%
- AGE 25-34: 19.9%
- AGE 35-44: 24.2%
- AGE 45-54: 16.2%
- AGE 55-64: 20.4%
- AGE 65+: 12.2%

RACE IDENTITIES COMPARED TO GENERAL POPULATION

Legend: PIT, General Population

	American Indian / Native Alaskan	Asian or Asian American	Black / African American	Hispanic & Latino/e/a	Middle Eastern or North African	Multiple Races- Not Latino/e/a*	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White
PIT	2.6%	3.2%	43.8%	13.7%	0%	6.8%	1.1%	34.2%
General Population	0.7%	20.8%	7.8%	12.1%	0%	9.8%	0.2%	55.5%

*Census data does not currently differentiate between Hispanic/Latino/a/e status for Multiple Races

Source: Alameda County 2024 PIT Count

A 2023 statewide study of homelessness in California conducted by the University of California San Francisco acknowledges that for individuals, housing solves homelessness. Interview subjects experiencing homelessness expressed a high level of interest in obtaining permanent housing. As one participant explained:

> I just want to get in a place. This pain that I'm feeling, emotional and physical pain, you know. If I can just get beyond that, most of it would be solved by getting in a place. I'd be so happy to be in my own place.

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Participants in the study explained that permanent housing would provide the stability they need to find employment and address physical and behavioral health challenges.[6] These findings highlight that access to affordable housing is crucial in reducing homelessness.

The HRT is a key component of the City's approach to addressing unsheltered homelessness, though it is only one piece of a larger regional system. While the HRT's role is to respond to encampments, encampments will continue to exist unless sufficient resources are available to prevent people from losing their housing and permanently house those already experiencing homelessness. Although homelessness prevention is not the focus of the HRT's work, it is part of the City's broader homelessness strategy. By focusing on encampments, the HRT addresses the visible symptoms of a problem that is much larger than Berkeley itself. The team does not have the resources to solve homelessness on its own.

Berkeley's unsheltered population decreased by 45 percent between 2022 and 2024.

Unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley decreased by 45 percent from February 2022 to January 2024 according to the Alameda County PIT count, which was the largest decrease compared to the five largest cities in Alameda County (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Change in Number of Unsheltered Individuals in Alameda County's Five Largest Cities, 2022 to 2024

City	2022	2024	Change in Number of Unsheltered Individuals	Percent Change
Berkeley	**803**	**445**	**-358**	**-45%**
Fremont	866	612	-254	-29%
San Leandro	312	228	-84	-27%
Hayward	267	278	+11	+4%
Oakland	3,337	3,659	+322	+10%

Source: Auditor analysis of Alameda County 2024 PIT Count

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[6] [Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#) (UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative)

Berkeley's reduction in the number of unsheltered individuals coincides with increased funding to address homelessness. As a result, Berkeley has been able to open new facilities providing shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing. The City has also used tax measure funding to apply for and receive state grants to address homelessness.

The recent reduction in unsheltered homelessness is significant, especially considering that the City does not exist in a vacuum—regional conditions affect the City's ability to completely eradicate homelessness. For example, the needs of unsheltered residents in other Bay Area cities impact Berkeley, as many resources are shared regionally and predominantly allocated at the county level.

HRT Staff and Funding

The HRT operates within the Neighborhood Services Division of the City Manager's Office and is overseen by an Assistant to the City Manager, who also manages the Animal Services, Code Enforcement, and Special Events units, and oversees homeless policy for the City. The HRT includes a Homeless Response Team Coordinator, two Social Services Specialists, and a Homeless Services Coordinator (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Homeless Response Team Organization Chart

Source: City Manager's Office

The HRT also coordinates with other departments to respond to encampments, including Health, Housing and Community Services; Parks, Recreation and Waterfront; Public Works; Police; Fire; and the City Attorney's Office.

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According to HRT staff, they learn about encampments and related issues through multiple channels, including HRT outreach staff, referrals from other city departments, and public calls to 311. The number of cases assigned to the HRT from 311 increased from 880 cases in fiscal year 2022 to 1,090 cases in fiscal year 2024 (Figure 5).[7] This audit did not explore why 311 calls increased while the number of unsheltered individuals in Berkeley decreased.

Figure 5. 311 Cases Assigned to the Homeless Response Team per Fiscal Year


Source: Auditor analysis of 311 cases from Berkeley Department of Information Technology

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[7] These figures reflect only the cases reported through the 311 system, which does not capture the team's entire workload. Additionally, some of these cases may represent multiple reports for the same issue.

According to the City Manager's Office, the City spent $35 million on homelessness-related activities in fiscal year 2024.[8] This total included homelessness prevention, establishing new permanent housing, addressing street conditions and hygiene at encampments, and providing shelter. Measure P is the largest source of funding for homelessness programs, while other funding comes from federal, state or other local funds (Figure 6).[9] The HRT had $1.1 million in total budgeted Measure P expenses in 2024, based on the City's adopted budget, and includes expenses in the City Manager's Office as well as the Police, Public Works, and Parks departments.[10] This made up just 3 percent of the $35 million total.

Figure 6. Fiscal Year 2024 Spending by Dedicated Homeless Service Funding Source in the City of Berkeley, in Millions
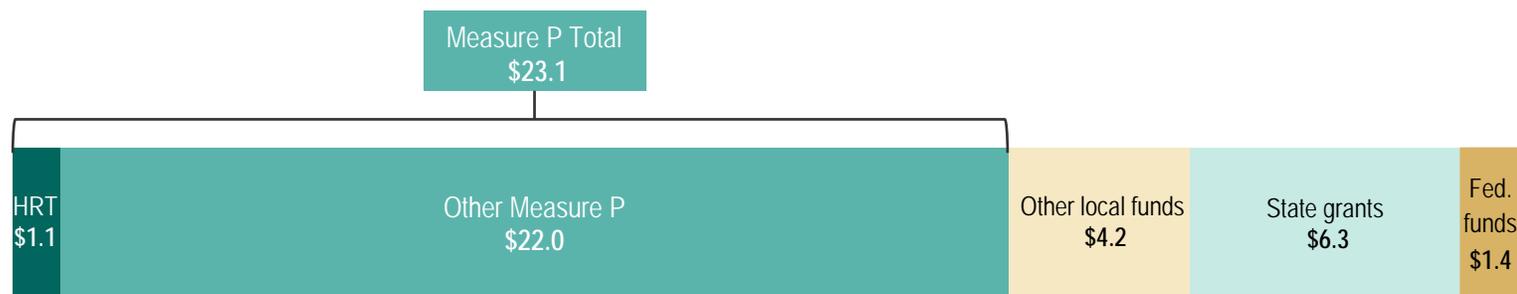
Note: The $1.1 million HRT total refers to the HRT's total Measure P expenditures for fiscal year 2024. This figure does not include HRT salaries not paid through Measure P.

Source: City Manager's Office

The City of Berkeley also receives funding from the State. For example, Berkeley was awarded $5.4 million in Encampment Resolution Funding in October 2024. Berkeley received three rounds of this funding between 2022 and 2024, totaling approximately $15 million. Outside of Berkeley's funding sources, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has provided funding for homeless services that flows through local Continuums of Care (CoCs). Berkeley belongs to the Alameda County Continuum of Care.[11]

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[8] Most HRT salaries were paid through the General Fund and are not included in $35 million total. We did not assess the extent to which there are additional homelessness-related costs outside of this total.

[9] The 2018 ballot Measure P increased the City's tax on high-value real property transfers from 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent in order to fund general municipal services including shelters, navigation centers, physical and mental health supports, rehousing, and other services for people experiencing homelessness. In 2024, Measure W made the tax permanent and introduced tiered rates to ensure future funding for homeless services.

[10] Measure P is a general tax, meaning it was approved by a simple majority of voters and its revenues can be used on any programs or services. In the City's 2024 budget, Measure P revenues were included in the General Fund revenue projections but are removed from the General Fund baseline to reflect their policy-directed use. Although Measure P revenues were part of the City's overall General Fund, they were tracked separately for policy purposes.

[11] A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body required by HUD to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing. CoC refers to the system for coordinating programs that address and prevent homelessness within a geographical region.

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The legal landscape shapes the City's encampment actions.

The HRT's work is also informed by laws, legal precedents, and court orders, along with City ordinances and policies (Figure 7). The legal landscape that the City operates under includes:

Figure 7. Legal Landscape for Encampment Actions

Laws, Legal Precedents, and Court Orders	City Ordinances and Policies

• U.S. Constitution and statutes
• California Constitution and statutes
• *Martin v. Boise* (overruled by *Grants Pass*)
• *City of Grants Pass v. Gloria Johnson et al.*
• Lawsuits against the City:
    o *2019 - Sullivan v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2021 - Dominguez v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2022 - Galtney v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2023 - Prado v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2023 - Parnell v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2024 - Dennison v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2024 - Fisher v. City of Berkeley*
    o *2025 - Berkeley Homeless Union v. City of Berkeley (Harrison Corridor)*
    o *2025 - Berkeley Homeless Union v. City of Berkeley (Ohlone Park)*
	• Berkeley Homeless Response Team's internal policy
	• Berkeley City Council Encampment Policy Resolution
	• Berkeley Administrative Regulations 10.1 and 10.2
	• Berkeley Municipal Code

Source: Auditor analysis of relevant laws, legal precedents, court orders, city ordinances and policies; information on lawsuits provided by the City Attorney's Office

The HRT's internal policy guiding their efforts emphasizes eliminating the worst health and safety impacts with non-criminal interventions. This policy was developed within the framework of the Ninth Circuit *Martin v. Boise* decision (2018), which required jurisdictions to offer shelter to residents before closing encampments.[12]

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[12] This policy also referenced the USICH guidance available at the time, which provides strategies for addressing encampments; updated federal guidance has since been released.

In June 2024, the Supreme Court altered the legal landscape with its ruling in *City of Grants Pass v. Gloria Johnson et al.*, which upheld a city's ability to enforce public camping bans without providing shelter. Following this decision, the Berkeley City Council adopted an Encampment Policy Resolution in September 2024. This policy affirmed Berkeley's continued commitment to offer interim shelter when closing an encampment, but allowed for exceptions in six specific situations, such as environmental, fire or safety hazards.

All encampment actions must still adhere to federal and state constitutional protections. This includes the Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the Fourteenth Amendment, which ensures due process before the government may deprive any person of life, liberty or property. Encampment actions must also comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Local legal challenges have also affected the City's encampment operations. The City has been sued multiple times over their encampment actions. In some of those cases, Temporary Restraining Orders were filed against the City, which delayed the HRT's planned encampment actions.

City policies and ordinances also impact how the HRT responds to encampments. For example, Administrative Regulation 10.1 requires city staff to store property for at least 14 days, with a longer retention period of 45 days for shelter-related items such as tents and sleeping bags. The regulation also requires city staff to provide at least 24 hours' notice before removing unattended property. Administrative Regulation 10.2 provides guidance around objects placed on sidewalks or parklets. Berkeley Municipal Code ordinances additionally impact the HRT's work in encampments (see page 14).

Together, these policies and legal cases influence how the HRT plans and carries out encampment actions.

The Homeless Response Team conducts outreach and enforcement with limited city and county resources.

The HRT works in partnership with other city departments and divisions to respond to encampments, operating in both an outreach and enforcement role. The HRT works within a complex regional system, with limited control over shelter and housing referrals managed by the Alameda County CoC. Their efforts are impacted by resource limitations at both the county and city levels.

The Homeless Response Team acts in both outreach and enforcement roles.

The HRT carries out a range of actions to respond to encampments, operating in both an outreach and enforcement role (Figure 8). The HRT works with other departments and divisions across the City to address encampments.

Figure 8. Homeless Response Team Encampment Interventions

Intervention		Description
Outreach	Shelter Referrals	• Refer individuals to shelter based on availability • Perform Coordinated Entry assessments
	Health and Hygiene	• Provide dumpsters and voluntary trash removal, toilets and wash stations, mobile showers and laundry
Enforcement	Public Noticing	• Provide Berkeley Municipal Code notices • Encourage individuals to voluntarily relocate or comply with rules
	Deep Cleaning	• Remove excess debris, trash and/or hazardous materials • Provide pest control treatments • Perform street sweeping • Pressure wash sidewalks • Provide belongings storage
	Closure	• Remove debris, tents, and/or other items • Require relocation of individuals and their possessions • Provide belongings storage

Note: The HRT works in partnership with other departments and divisions to perform this work, including the Environmental Health Division, Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, and others.

Source: Homeless Response Team, City Policy

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According to the HRT's internal policy, the HRT evaluates encampments and categorizes their encampment interventions into low, medium, and high priority levels. The policy does not specify the types of interventions – such as health and hygiene interventions, public noticing, deep cleanings or closures – used for each priority level. The highest priority encampments for intervention contain severe hazards such as fire risks or raw sewage, according to the policy. The HRT has stated that limited staff resources across partner departments affect the number of operations they can conduct.

Per HRT staff, the team provides outreach to encampments by visiting encampment sites and trying to connect people to services, sometimes coordinating with other service providers to do this work. The team can also refer people to available shelter beds or provide other support such as transportation assistance.

The team follows Berkeley Municipal Code for enforcement actions, according to the HRT. These ordinances specify that residents cannot be in city parks after a certain hour or have a large structure in a park without a city permit. Other ordinances ban residents from camping on a roadway median, or obstructing sidewalks with belongings or other items.[13]

Given the scope of the HRT's work, they face challenges balancing the interests of the Berkeley community, as their outreach efforts may conflict with their role as an enforcement team. For example, people who work with the unsheltered population have stated that closing encampments can be destabilizing for encampment residents and interrupt their care. As one health professional stated:

> Displacement is a huge barrier in continuity of care. It's traumatic to move people around a lot. To get people into housing when they match [with an available housing spot], you need to be able to find them.

At the same time, other groups in Berkeley have advocated for encampment closures due to concerns including health and safety hazards or business impacts. The tension between these different public interests has played out in multiple court filings. In 2023, the City of Berkeley was sued over an encampment on Harrison Street, where the plaintiffs made several allegations against the City including that the City's attempt to close the encampment violated their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (*Prado v. City of Berkeley*). That same encampment was also the subject of a separate lawsuit in 2024 filed by a group of businesses and property owners, claiming the City failed to address nuisances at the encampment and close it in a timely manner (*Dennison et al v. City of Berkeley*).[14]

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[13] The Berkeley Municipal Code ordinances guiding the HRT's encampment enforcement are BMC 6.32.030 (Park Rules), BMC 14.32.040 (Medians), BMC 14.48.020 (Sidewalks), and BMC 14.48.120 (Objects).

[14] For a complete list of lawsuits affecting the City's encampment actions, see Figure 7 on page 11.

To access most shelter and housing resources, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited resources.

Despite the significant responsibility the HRT has over city encampments, they have limited control over referrals for shelter and housing resources, most of which are overseen by the Alameda County Continuum of Care (CoC). The process to access shelter or resources through the CoC is complex: to access resources, individuals must undergo a Coordinated Entry assessment through one of the CoC-designated access points (Figure 9). These assessments evaluate factors like age, homeless status, and health to develop an assessment score and prioritize services and resources. Individuals who meet a certain threshold score can be placed in either the interim housing queue for emergency shelters or transitional housing, or the permanent housing queue. Individuals who do not meet the threshold score may be referred to other resources such as affordable housing waitlists or funds for move-in costs. This scoring system attempts to allocate limited resources equitably in the CoC.

**Figure 9. Alameda County Coordinated Entry Workflow**
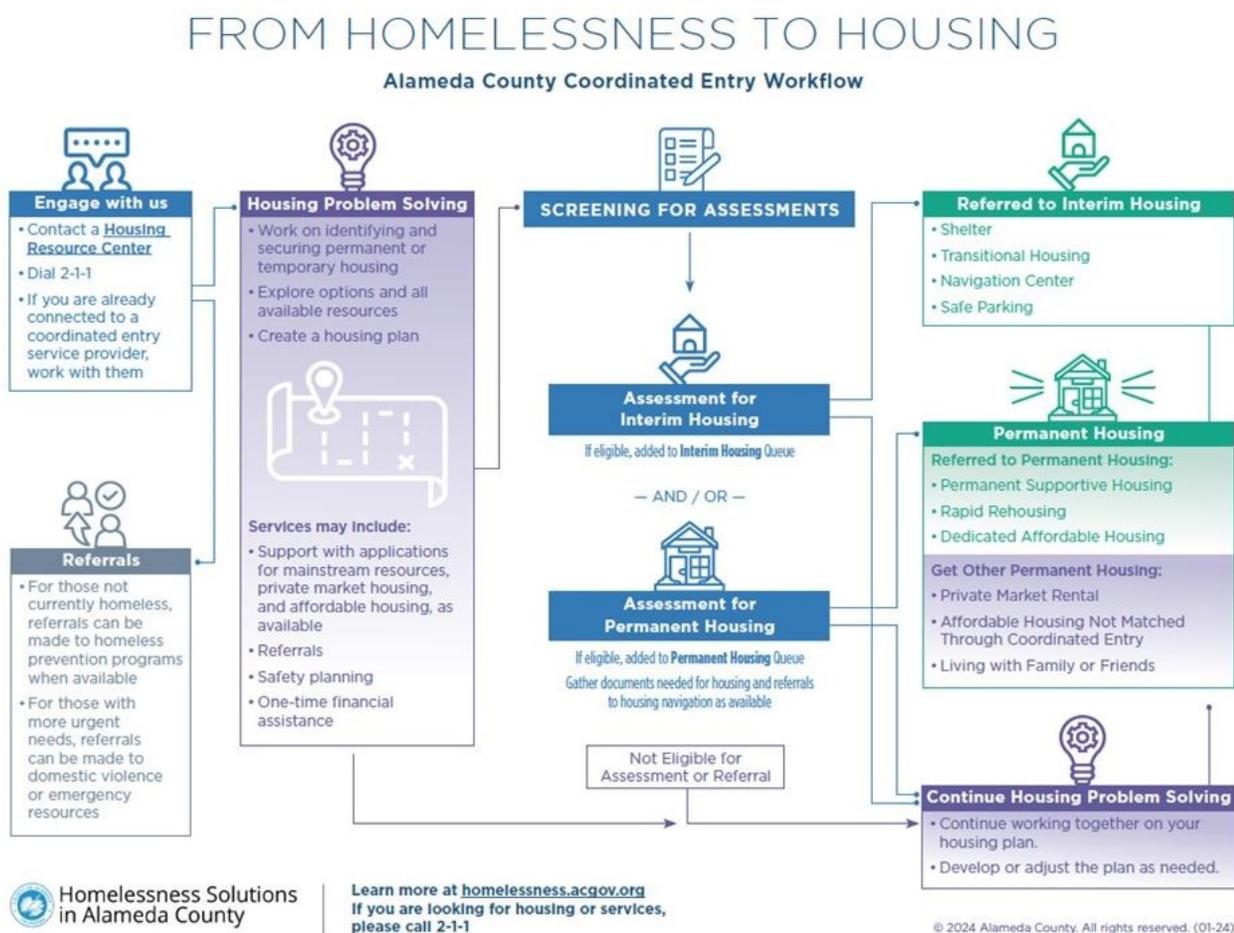
Source: Alameda County Continuum of Care website

However, a 2022 report by the Alameda County CoC noted that limited shelter and housing caused long wait times and made it harder for people to get connected to the help they need through Coordinated Entry. A consultant report for the City of Berkeley reported that people referred to a permanent housing program in the north Alameda County region, which includes Berkeley, spent an average of nine months in the permanent housing queue between July 2022 and March 2024. Only 22 percent were housed after one year in the queue. Interim housing in Alameda County, including shelters, has an estimated average wait time of 70 days according to the CoC's analysis. The lack of resources can be a frustrating experience, as one unhoused person explained in an evaluation of Alameda County CoC:

> There's no resources out here…And what about the people who have already gone through all the resources and don't qualify? …I am at the end of my rope. I don't know what to do anymore.

The City of Berkeley's homeless encampment response extends beyond the HRT and other departments and divisions supporting their work. The HRT works alongside other organizations providing outreach and services to encampments, including contracted service providers and additional organizations providing services to encampments that are not funded by the City of Berkeley or the Alameda County CoC (Figure 10).

Figure 10. City of Berkeley Street Outreach and Shelter Referral System
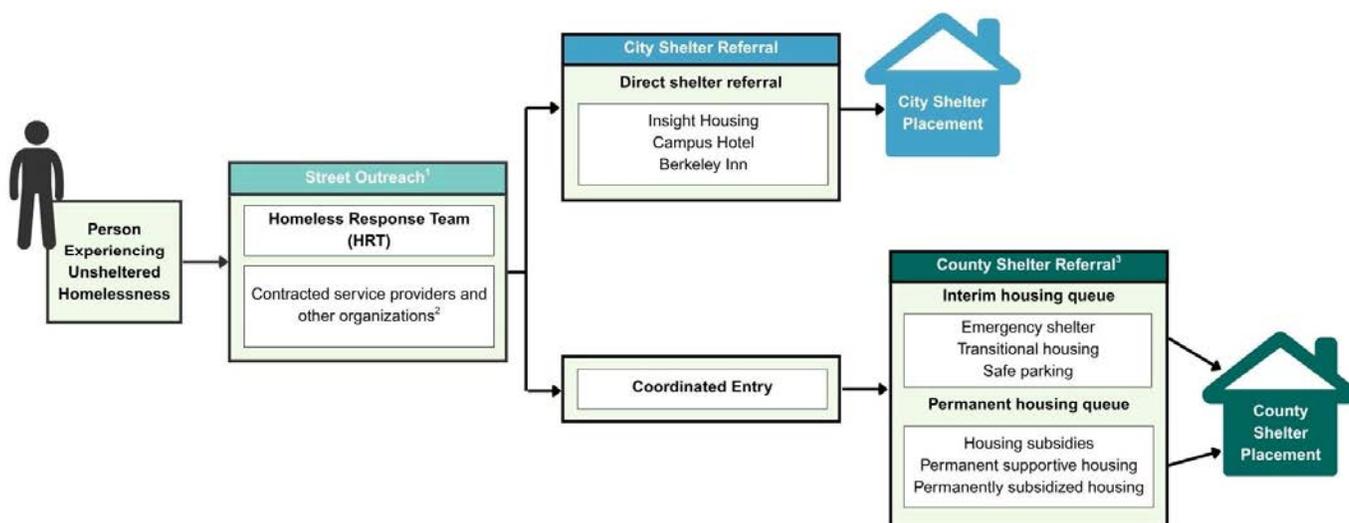
1. Street outreach is one method of reaching unsheltered individuals. Outreach workers can provide services and/or connect individuals to shelter resources.

2. Along with the HRT, Berkeley contracts with other organizations that provide services to encampments, including Bay Area Community Services (BACS) and Options Recovery Services. These organizations receive full or partial funding from the City. There are other organizations providing street outreach in Berkeley that are not affiliated with the City.

3. Once entered into Coordinated Entry, eligible participants are placed into the Interim Housing Queue and/or the Permanent Housing Queue. Alameda County CoC uses these queues to refer people to available resources.

Source: Auditor analysis of City of Berkeley and Alameda County resources

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Both the CoC and the HRT make shelter referrals based on the availability of shelter beds. According to the PIT count, there were 844 people experiencing homelessness in Berkeley on one night in January 2024, and 445 of those people were unsheltered. In August 2024, there were only 320 shelter beds in Berkeley, meaning there were more than two times as many people experiencing homelessness on any one night as there were shelter beds in Berkeley (Figure 11). These limited resources impact the HRT's ability to help get unsheltered residents inside.

Figure 11. The Number of People Experiencing Homelessness Far Exceeded the Number of Shelter Beds in Berkeley in 2024.

In 2024, there were approximately **844 unhoused residents** in Berkeley and only **320 shelter beds.**

53% Unsheltered

844 unhoused residents

47% Sheltered

= 10 people

320 shelter beds

= 10 shelter beds
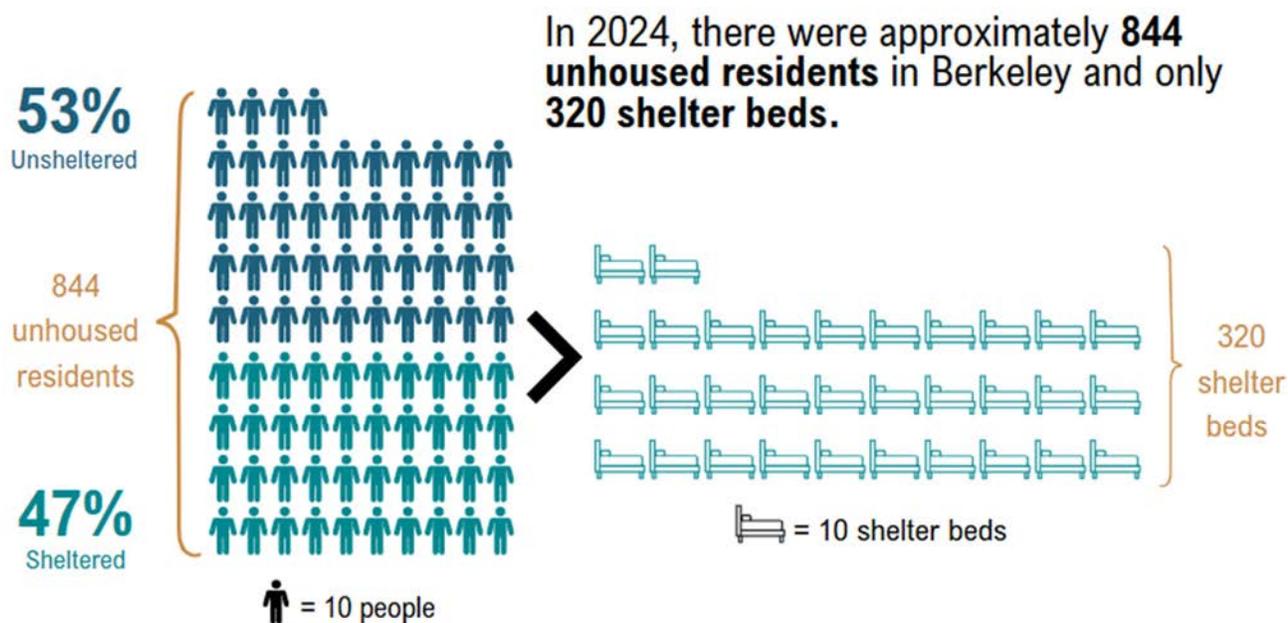
Note: The number of people experiencing homelessness comes from the PIT count and is a snapshot in time from a single night. It does not reflect the total number of people experiencing homelessness throughout the year. These bed numbers provided by the HRT are from August 2024 and do not include the City's 40 inclement weather shelter beds. We did not assess shelter utilization rates, which can change daily as residents move in and out of shelters. A consultant report for the City of Berkeley indicated that Berkeley shelters operated at an average capacity of 82% between January and February 2024.

Source: Auditor analysis of Alameda County 2024 PIT count and Berkeley shelter data

As of August 2024, of the 320 shelter beds in Berkeley, the HRT had direct referral authority for 56 beds managed by the City, funded by a combination of state Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) grants and Measure P funds. Berkeley also shares access to 264 shelter beds managed by the Alameda County CoC, but referrals for those beds are outside the HRT's direct control (Figure 12).

Figure 12. The Alameda County CoC controls referrals for most shelter beds in Berkeley.

Note: These numbers provided by the HRT are from August 2024 and do not include the City's 40 inclement weather shelter beds.

Source: Berkeley shelter data

Berkeley has made strides in increasing the amount of available shelter. According to the 2024 consultant report, the City more than tripled the supply of non-congregate (private) shelter beds since 2021. The same report noted the City increased its permanent housing supply by nearly one hundred beds between 2022 and 2023.

Still, due to system-wide limited bed availability and the HRT's lack of control over most shelter and permanent housing referrals, the HRT must rely heavily on the CoC's prioritization policies for housing and shelter resources. According to the HRT, these do not always align with Berkeley's local needs. In a memo to Alameda County, the HRT requested the CoC prioritize housing resources for some residents of an encampment the HRT flagged as posing health and safety risks, but the CoC denied that request. This example shows that the HRT has limited flexibility in targeting housing resources to specific encampments in Berkeley.

Limited city resources and legal issues also impact the HRT's work in encampments.

In addition to the CoC's limitations in connecting unsheltered Berkeley residents to shelter and housing resources, resource constraints within the City also impact the HRT's ability to address encampments.

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The HRT works with other departments and divisions in the City to respond to encampments and the availability of resources like staff and equipment can impact the HRT's ability to conduct encampment interventions. Berkeley does not have staff dedicated to addressing encampments in every department, and staff in other departments and divisions balance encampment work with their regular workloads and other priority operations within the City. According to the Public Works Department, staff help with clearing, picking up and removing waste at encampments and use large equipment, like trucks, street sweepers, and backhoes to do this work. Since equipment is used to address various operational and service needs throughout the City, the availability of equipment – like a backhoe being used for street repair or vector truck being used for sewer line cleaning – can impact encampment operations.

The rise in encampment-related lawsuits also affects staff time, based on estimates provided in May 2025. The HRT states that staff spend an estimated 10-15 percent of the work week responding to legal issues, which impacts their ability to conduct work in encampments. This also impacts staff outside of the HRT. According to the City Attorney's Office, their staff spend an average of 1o to 40 hours a week per attorney responding to encampment-related legal matters.

The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.

During the audit period, the HRT paused some coordination meetings with service providers due to legal action over one encampment. The meetings were paused for over a year and have since resumed. According to one provider, without these meetings, they lost track of clients after encampment actions. Further, the full team had delayed access to countywide information systems which hindered their ability to connect encampment residents to shelter and resulted in challenges sharing information with other providers. The HRT also lacked internal procedures on encampment data collection. There are opportunities to improve coordination through use of a shared encampment mapping tool with service providers.

The HRT paused some coordination meetings with service providers for one year during the audit period and did not have written procedures for ongoing communication.

The HRT paused weekly case conference meetings with service providers for over a year, from October 2023 to September 2024. The HRT claimed the meetings were tied to a location-specific encampment closure, and that encampment closure was suspended when a lawsuit was filed against the City in 2023. However, data shows that encampment interventions took place at other sites during that time. These weekly case conference meetings included medical providers, behavioral health providers, homeless advocates, shelter staff, and other homeless service organizations. According to one medical provider, these meetings were helpful to coordinate care across multiple agencies for encampment residents around the City.

According to the HRT, there were opportunities to coordinate care through other departments such as HHCS. However, during the pause in these case conference meetings, one provider reported not receiving enough information about the City's planned encampment actions. According to this provider, there were instances where they lost track of their clients after the City's encampment actions. When there are pauses in coordination, important information about residents' needs can be missed. Providers such as street medicine teams and harm-reduction workers often have key insights that can improve service connections.

These case conference meetings have since resumed, though the HRT does not have written procedures that could ensure continued communication with service providers. There is no standardized process for this communication or any formal coordination structure defining roles and responsibilities. This conflicts with guidance from USICH, which recommends having protocols and establishing clear communication strategies when multiple agencies are involved. USICH highlights specific strategies for coordination, which include:

- Empowering outreach teams and health providers to lead efforts and including a broad range of outreach and provider teams in planning and decisions.
- Identifying the key organizations and decision makers to convene and communicate with regularly.

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Restarting regular case conference meetings with service providers is one step the HRT has taken that aligns with recommended strategies. However, given the number of organizations working to support unhoused residents in Berkeley, stronger coordination could help ensure no providers are left out of planning and that services are better aligned with residents' needs.

While outside the scope of our audit, data-sharing limitations are a broader issue within the region's homelessness response. Though federal HIPAA laws allow providers to share some information about clients to help coordinate care, California state law has more restrictions on that information. California state law prohibits exchanging information about clients' substance use or mental health issues without a signed release and can therefore be a barrier to providing appropriate services. In 2017, California law AB 210 passed which allows counties to establish multidisciplinary teams to share client-level data under privacy obligations. Establishing a memorandum of understanding for information sharing would allow providers involved in different stages of the homeless response system to develop a specific treatment plan for unhoused individuals and connect them with the right services and housing. San Mateo and Sonoma Counties have both implemented a protocol along these lines that could serve as useful models for Alameda County. Since Berkeley operates its own health department independently from the County, the City has advocated amending state law to let cities, in addition to counties, adopt similar memorandums.

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The HRT had limited access to information systems through the County, hindering their ability to effectively coordinate services.

During the audit period, the HRT had limited access to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is critical for securely sharing information across organizations.[15] Organizations connected to the Alameda CoC use HMIS as mandated by HUD, which oversees CoCs across the country. Providers with the ability to conduct Coordinated Entry assessments for clients input these assessments into HMIS, which is the data system used for all Coordinated Entry activities in Alameda County. However, the HRT stated the team did not gain entry to HMIS until December 2022. Before then, HRT staff stated they could not access key client data, such as Coordinated Entry assessments, past program enrollments, and notes from care providers. According to the HRT, not having access to HMIS made it difficult for staff to connect clients to the appropriate resources.

Instead, the HRT stored most of their data in Excel sheets, which were not readily accessible to other providers. We observed some gaps in the HRT's internal data, including the number of tents and structures in encampments, the number of people in encampments, and the number of Coordinated Entry referrals. The HRT has transitioned most of its client-level data into HMIS and has developed procedures for how staff should track interactions with encampment residents. However, we did not review any procedures that detail what information the HRT will collect on encampments, or how they will maintain data accuracy. Internal procedures on what data should be collected could help guide the HRT's efforts in coordinating with providers.

Even after gaining access to HMIS, the system lacked a reliable tool to track or map encampments. According to the HRT, a new tool – the Outreach module – was still in testing and unreliable during the audit period. The Outreach module is a map-based program that allows providers to record and view location information about individuals and encampments in HMIS. The module allows providers to add location and encampment data to client profiles. San Mateo County reported that using the Outreach module allows them to keep track of the number of people at each encampment as well as their willingness to work with outreach teams. While the Alameda County CoC does not use the Outreach module widely, San Mateo County has successfully configured it to track encampment-level information. Berkeley has access to the Outreach module and started using it for some encampments in 2022 according to the HRT.

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[15] The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to individuals and families at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Each CoC is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards.

Without a shared mapping tool for providers, it may have been difficult for providers to locate encampments and provide targeted outreach. According to one contracted outreach provider, it was sometimes difficult to locate clients after a referral from the HRT. The provider indicated a map system would be helpful to identify people for services. Clear standards can also help ensure client data is reliable with many different providers using HMIS and the Outreach module across the CoC. USICH best practices recommend setting standards across outreach teams for the kind of data that needs to be collected, as well as using mapping tools to identify outreach coverage and gaps.[16] While the transient nature of the population means there can be difficulties locating people, a mapping tool and shared protocols can mitigate some of these effects.

Alameda County also did not grant the HRT or other teams the ability to conduct Coordinated Entry assessments – the entry point into Alameda County services and shelters – until September 2024 (Figure 13).[17] This meant they had to contact another organization with Coordinated Entry access to do these assessments. As a result, the HRT could not take the first step needed to connect individuals to CoC services, including the 264 county-run shelter beds located in Berkeley.

Figure 13. Data Access Timeline
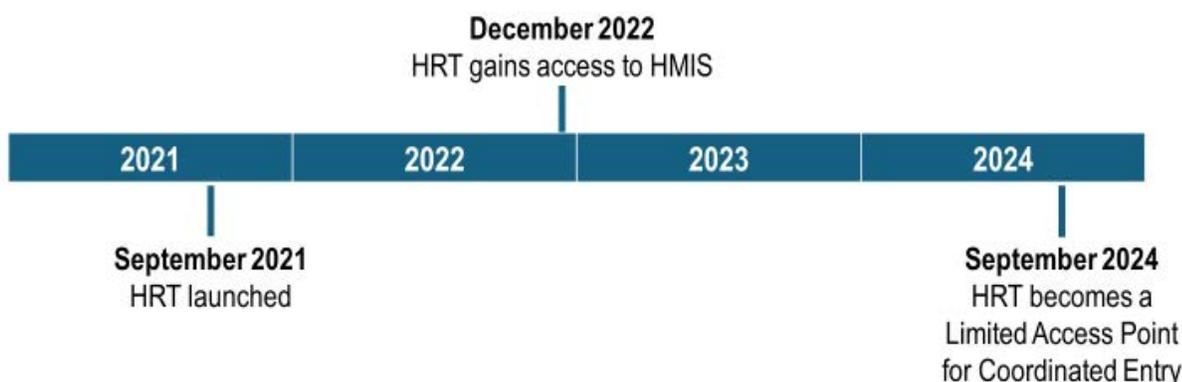
Note: Though HRT gained access to HMIS in December 2022 and could view clients' Coordinated Entry assessments, they could not perform these assessments themselves until September 2024.

Source: City Manager's Office

The lack of a centralized information system resulted in limited coordination among providers. The additional step of having HRT coordinate with a separate provider to get clients into the Coordinated Entry system may have increased wait times to access resources. According to one HRT staff member, before they had Coordinated Entry access, they had to refer a client to another provider 50 percent of the time because that client did not have an updated assessment.

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[16] USICH also recommends convening outreach teams with people experiencing homelessness and data experts to decide what data needs to be collected.

[17] Alameda County granted multiple teams - such as mental health clinics, schools, hospitals or outreach teams - access to Coordinated Entry in September 2024 as part of their first Limited Access Point cohort.

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According to Alameda County officials, the delay in granting HRT access to Coordinated Entry was due to the County's limited capacity to ensure proper training for a large number of users. However, best practices recommend ensuring all outreach teams are integrated within the larger homelessness system of care and Coordinated Entry process. According to the HRT, their persistent advocacy to Alameda County convinced the County to grant the HRT access to data systems, aligning with best practices.

Recommendations

To avoid future lapses in communication with service providers, the HRT should:

2.1   Document the coordination structure for encampment-related meetings. Continue to meet regularly with key participants as identified by the City for all encampment outreach and interventions.

To address inconsistencies in data collection, the HRT should:

2.2   Develop and document internal procedures for collecting data on HRT activities and encampments. Include plans for regular review for data accuracy.

To address gaps in data sharing with service providers, the HRT should:

2.3   Fully transition to the Outreach module and work with HHCS to consider including the module in contracts with city-funded outreach teams who work with encampment residents. As part of this recommendation, consider developing shared procedures for how HRT and city-funded outreach teams can use the data to inform delivery of services.

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The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.

The three goals guiding the HRT's work in encampments were to reduce unsheltered homelessness, mitigate dangerous encampments, and maintain a clean City. The HRT tracked some outcomes related to these program goals during the audit period but reported information cumulatively which made it difficult to identify trends over time. They also did not report on other outcomes that could connect to their goal of reducing unsheltered homelessness, though they expanded on reported outcomes in a May 2025 report to Council. Going forward, it will be important for the HRT to consistently report on these outcomes related to their goals. Additionally, the HRT could improve the accessibility of their public reporting. Limited administrative staffing may constrain the HRT's ability to collect, measure and report data, though it is important to fill gaps where possible.

Reporting on more outcomes with consistency could help connect the HRT's work with their goals, but additional resources may be needed.

The HRT tracked some outcomes related to their program goals during the audit period. The three goals guiding their work in encampments were: our residents are sheltered, dangerous encampments are not inevitable, and our City is clean. To assess progress towards those goals, the HRT tracked the outcomes listed in the table below (Figure 14).

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Figure 14. Homeless Response Team Goals and Outcomes

Goals	Outcomes	Reported Results
Our residents are sheltered	Percentage of people connected to shelter	655 offered shelter and 303 accepted shelter (46% acceptance rate), **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Percentage of people matched to housing resources	20% of HRT clients exit to permanent housing situations, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
Dangerous encampments are not inevitable	Number of notices given	1405 notices, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Number of encampment closures	59 closures, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
Our City is clean	Pounds of trash and debris removed	1 million pounds, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Number of storage notices given	35 storage notices, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.

Note: 'Over the duration of the program' refers to the time period between September 2021 and June 2024, the date of the HRT's final presentation to Council during the audit period.

Source: Homeless Response Team quarterly reports to City Council

Reporting information by standardized reporting periods rather than cumulatively can make it easier to assess HRT's progress toward its goals. During the audit period, the HRT reported on outcomes in their quarterly reports to Council as cumulative numbers, for example, 59 encampments closures or 655 shelter offers between 2021 and 2024 (Figure 14). Reporting this information as a total over the duration of the program, rather than by standard reporting periods such as per quarter, made it difficult to evaluate progress toward the HRT's goals or identify trends over time.

While the HRT reported on the outcomes above during the audit period, they did not report on other outcomes that could be useful to connect to the goal reducing unsheltered homelessness. For example, USICH recommends reporting on outreach outcomes like number of Coordinated Entry assessments or number of outreach encounters, which can shed light on the starting point of the process to get people connected to services and sheltered. Additionally, while the HRT reported the number of shelter offers and acceptances, they did not report on the number of actual shelter enrollments. This information is important because according to a sample of internal HRT data, people who accept shelter may not end up enrolling in shelter. Reporting on enrollment could help provide insight into challenges unhoused residents face to getting into shelter. Another city that reports shelter enrollment information is Seattle, which reports not only the number of shelter offers made and the number of accepted offers, but also reports the number of people who enrolled in shelter.

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Additionally, the HRT did not report on the reasons why people declined shelter offers during the audit period. Reporting on reasons that people decline shelter offers can better demonstrate success or reveal barriers in connecting encampment residents to shelter. People decline shelter enrollment for many reasons. As an example, the HRT has stated they generally see a higher shelter acceptance rate with non-congregate beds instead of congregate beds. Although there are challenges to systematically collecting this data, even limited or anecdotal data on why people decline shelter offers could provide additional insight into barriers to getting people sheltered. Additionally, the City requires Bay Area Community Services (BACS) – one of its contracted service providers – to collect data on why the people they engaged with declined shelter offers.

The HRT added new outcomes to its reports to Council in May 2025. Though outside the scope of our audit, an off-agenda memo the HRT sent to Council on May 12, 2025 reported several additional outcomes including the number of people who enrolled in shelter and the number of Coordinated Entry assessments. The memo states that these additional outcomes were intended to provide valuable information to assess progress towards the first goal to resolve unsheltered homelessness. Going forward, it will be important for the HRT to consistently report on these outcomes to provide more information on the process of initial outreach to ultimately being sheltered. This information can help the public and City decision-makers to see trends over time, understand the connection between the City's activities and goal of getting people sheltered, and reveal barriers or gaps that the City should address.

Other useful information to report consistently in all reports to City Council going forward is demographic data such as race, gender, and health conditions for encampment residents. Continuing to report on demographics where possible, such as race, gender and disability status, can help identify barriers to providing and care. For instance, disability status may affect someone's ability to accept a shelter offer if it is not ADA-compliant. Similarly, someone may hesitate to accept an offer of shelter for fear of experiencing gender-based violence. Advocates who work with the unsheltered population in Berkeley have explained that understanding the characteristics and needs of this population provides important context when planning encampment actions.[18] As one advocate stated:

> For people with physical or mental disabilities – these shortcomings become overwhelming. It doesn't take much to make a mistake that can jettison the efforts an individual has put forth. Many people in encampments, older folks, a lot of people are out there with serious handicaps, and we don't really approach that… I've been running into people in their 60s and 70s, and they are not going to be gainfully employed. We need to take these things into consideration.

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[18] Some of the points raised by advocates may be subject to litigation and this audit did not independently investigate all their claims.

Consistent reporting on this information is especially important given that the May 2025 memo pointed out that HRT participants are far more vulnerable than Alameda County's homeless population overall. For example, the memo stated that a larger proportion of HRT participants reported physical disabilities, mental health disorders, or substance use disorders compared to the overall homeless population in Alameda County. Reporting on this information can also help track HRT's progress in serving these residents and inform allocation of resources to effectively provide services.

There are some challenges to consistently collecting data and reporting on outcomes. The HRT stated that their reporting is an evolving and imperfect practice because there are few industry tools for measuring encampment outcomes and they have adapted their reporting over time based on what has worked for them. Additionally, some data may be difficult to systematically track and measure. For example, HMIS does not have a data field for reasons why people decline shelter, making this metric difficult to quantify.

Additional resources may be needed to consistently measure and report on outcomes. HRT staff explained they had limited budget and administrative support for data analysis and reporting. A 2024 staffing study of the Neighborhood Services Division found that some staff felt overburdened by administrative responsibilities. Although the study recommended hiring an additional administrative support staff position, the division did not receive funding for it. Without robust data collection, analysis, and reporting, it may be difficult to identify outreach gaps, track results, or for City leadership to make strategic decisions and allocate resources effectively.

The HRT's reports were difficult to access on the City's website.

Over the audit period, the HRT's public reports were not easily accessible. The HRT's reports were published in two different places on the City's website without a central landing page, which made it difficult to access information about the HRT's work in encampments. As a comparison, other jurisdictions provide the public with more accessible information on their efforts to assist encampment residents. We did not assess staff resources in benchmark jurisdictions compared to Berkeley; these are examples of public reporting methods that may be useful for Berkeley to consider, keeping in mind resource constraints.

The City and County of San Francisco makes information about coordinated entry accessible to the public (Figure 15).

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Figure 15. The City and County of San Francisco's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing provides data on coordinated entry assessments.
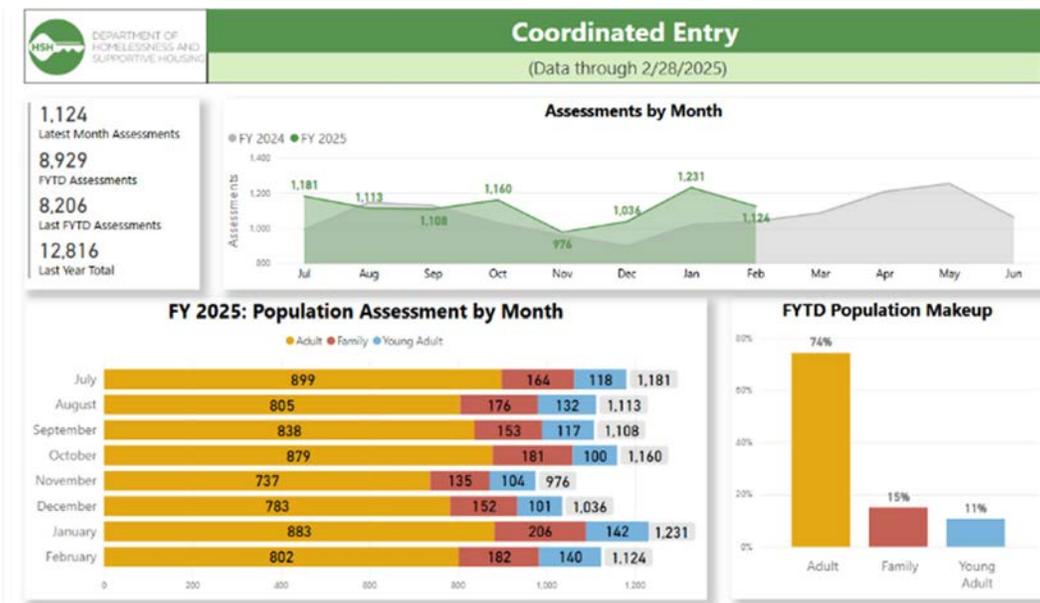
Source: City and County of San Francisco webpage

Additionally, a few jurisdictions we reviewed also provided information related to outreach efforts on their online dashboard (Figures 16-17). For example, the City of Issaquah reports on the number of monthly face-to-face interactions with clients. The City of Portland shows the number helped into shelter and the number given housing referrals, among other outcomes.

Figure 16. The City of Issaquah's Homeless Outreach and Behavioral Health Dashboard shows monthly interactions with people experiencing homelessness.
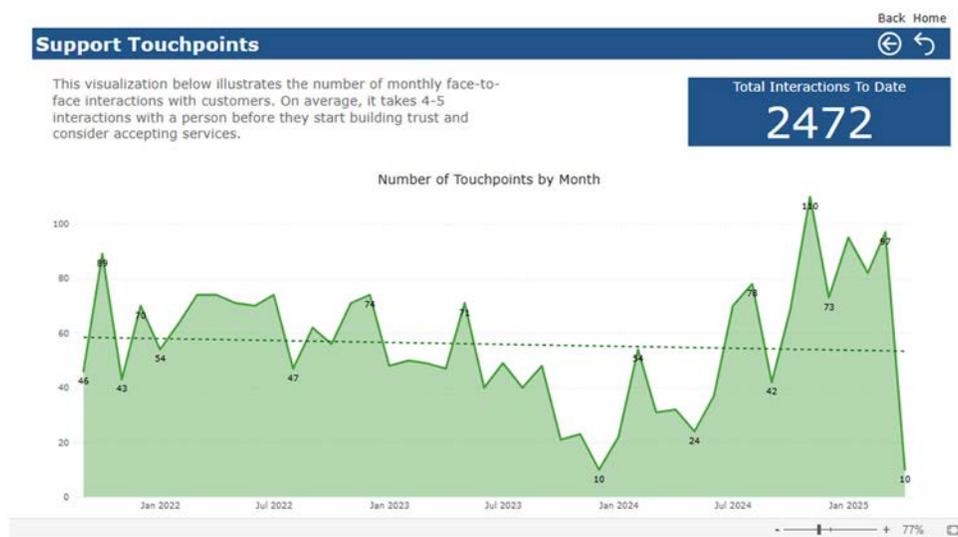
Source: City of Issaquah webpage

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Figure 17. The City of Portland's Navigation Team Outcomes webpage shows a range of outcomes by site, including number of individuals engaged.

Location	Date Range	# engaged	# assessed for supportive housing	# helped into shelter	# helped to receive ID's	# helped to receive birth certificates	# signed up for the Oregon Health Plan	# helped to receive glasses	# helped into substance abuse treatment	# given housing referrals
SE Morrison Bridge	01/30/2019-02/15/2019	21	4	4 individuals	1	0	0	0	0	0
Peninsula Crossing Trail	02/26/2019-04/15/2019	57	11	3 individuals, 4 couples	21	13	13	1	1	0
I-405 & Sunset Hwy	04/15/2019-05/07/2019	31	3	2 individuals, 2 couples	14	7	12	0	2	14
SE Johnson Creek	05/16/2019-07/10/2019	68	24	4 individuals	35	10	15	3	0	3
I-205 & SE Division	07/22/2019-08/13/2019	132	93	3 couples	61	10	27	3	8	0

Source: City of Portland webpage

Comprehensive and accessible public reporting aligns with best practices. For example, USICH recommends developing a public-facing dashboard to show progress on reducing unsheltered homelessness and encampment resolution strategies. In 2022, the HRT worked on a dashboard that included data such as shelter enrollments, program exits and exit destinations. However, the team put the project on hold, though they stated they are interested in producing a dashboard in the future.

Not being able to easily access HRT data on a website or dashboard means that Council and members of the public may not understand the extent to which the HRT has been successful in achieving program goals of reducing unsheltered homelessness. It also becomes difficult for oversight bodies, such as the Homeless Services Panel of Experts, to provide adequate oversight over the HRT's activities if they are not able to access information.[19]

Recommendations

To more effectively measure the impact of their work and enhance transparency, the HRT should:

3.1   Expand reported outcomes that align with the HRT's goals and define how they will be measured. Public reporting could include key information such as outreach efforts and shelter enrollments, along with demographic breakdowns and reasons people decline shelter, where possible. Report on the same outcomes over time using a consistent timeframe to support comparisons.

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[19] The Homeless Services Panel of Experts (HSPE) was established with Measure P in 2018 to make recommendations on the City's funding for programs to end or prevent homelessness in Berkeley and provide humane services and support.

To improve the accessibility of public reporting, the HRT should:

3.2   Consider sharing public data in a more accessible format, such as on a single landing page on the City's website or through a dashboard.

To ensure there is adequate staffing to focus on reporting and the measurement of impact, the City Manager's Office should:

3.3   Assess staffing resources needed to support data and reporting efforts without impacting HRT's operational duties.

Recommendations and Management Response

We provided a draft of this report to the HRT and city management for review and comment. City management agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We generally expect the City to implement audit recommendations within two years of report issuance. The department provided the implementation dates and corrective action plan below. We will be conducting our standard recommendation follow-up process after the audit is issued. We have not yet confirmed to what extent the recommendations have been implemented prior to the audit release date.

2.1 Document the coordination structure for encampment-related meetings. Continue to meet regularly with key participants as identified by the City for all encampment outreach and interventions.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: September 1, 2025

Corrective Action Plan: We are in the process of formalizing the coordination structure for encampment-related meetings. Specifically, we will:
- Document the relevant parties to be included in the HRT's regular Case Conference meetings, including city staff, housing/shelter providers, and relevant outreach partners.
- Codify the group's purpose, which will include the coordination of encampment supportive services response, case conferencing around vulnerable clients, and collaborative use of the HMIS Outreach module.
- Establish written procedures to guide participation, information sharing, and alignment with citywide outreach protocols.

These meetings already occur weekly (city staffing permitting) and will continue on a regular basis, serving as the central forum for coordinated encampment outreach and intervention efforts.

2.2 Develop and document internal procedures for collecting data on HRT activities and encampments. Include plans for regular review for data accuracy.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: September 1, 2025

Corrective Action Plan: This recommendation is addressed through several recent improvements already underway:
- The revamped HRT performance report (May 2025) includes clearly defined data points, consistent timeframes, and demographic tracking tied to team activities and encampment engagement.
- The HRT Case Conference group will serve as the anchor for data coordination, with documented procedures being developed to guide use of the HMIS Outreach module.
- We will formalize internal workflows for collecting, reviewing, and verifying data related to outreach contacts, shelter offers, and encampment activity.

Regular data accuracy reviews will be built into the case conferencing process and integrated into our ongoing refinement of performance reporting. Data collection and accuracy review protocols resulting from these plans will be codified in an internal HRT policy memo.

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2.3   Fully transition to the Outreach module and work with HHCS to consider including the module in contracts with city-funded outreach teams who work with encampment residents. As part of this recommendation, consider developing shared procedures for how HRT and city-funded outreach teams can use the data to inform delivery of services.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: Phase 1: September 1, 2025; Phase 2: August 1, 2028

Corrective Action Plan: We agree with the value of utilizing the HMIS Outreach module to improve coordination, data consistency, and service delivery across outreach teams. However, incorporating this requirement into city-funded outreach contracts will require additional time due to the structure of current service agreements. These contracts are renewed on a four-year cycle and were most recently executed in 2024, meaning the next regular opportunity for revision will be in 2028. Given the recent retirement of the Homeless Program Manager position in HHCS, and the subsequent freezing of that vacancy to address the city's general fund budget deficit, we seek to minimize off-cycle contract amendments, as these impose significant administrative burden that would impact service delivery.

Moreover, including the City's expectations for full participation in the HMIS Outreach module in the next Community Agency Funding RFP will create more transparency and an equitable opportunity for all agencies to position themselves for this funding. We anticipate that this can be completed with the completion of new Community Agency contracts for the next funding cycle, likely by August 1, 2028.

In the interim, we will:
- Begin regularly using the HMIS Outreach module as part of the HRT case conference process, allowing for structured and coordinated use of this tool within our team and city partners.
- Encourage voluntary use of the module by non-HRT outreach partners, including those funded through county, federal, or other sources.
- Develop shared policies and procedures based on lessons learned during our pilot of the Outreach module, to guide consistent and effective use.
- Incorporate in the policies and procedures, standards for entering client level data and set goals for client engagement tracked within the module.

These interim steps can be taken and completed by September 1, 2025. While full implementation will require future contract updates, we are proactively laying the groundwork for alignment across outreach providers and are committed to making progress in advance of formal contract changes.

3.1   Expand reported outcomes that align with the HRT's goals and define how they will be measured. Public reporting could include key information such as outreach efforts and shelter enrollments, along with demographic breakdowns and reasons people decline shelter, where possible. Report on the same outcomes over time using a consistent timeframe to support comparisons.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: August 1, 2025

Corrective Action Plan: Since the time of the audit, the HRT has taken significant steps to improve transparency, clarity, and alignment in our outcome reporting. In May 2025, we released a revamped public report titled New Homeless Response Team Mission and Performance Data Report, which directly addressed many of the Auditor's findings and recommendations.

The updated report includes:
- o Clearly defined goals and a revised mission statement for the HRT.
- o Quantitative outcomes such as outreach contacts, shelter enrollments, and service referrals.
- o Demographic breakdowns of clients served, when available.
- o Analysis of shelter enrollment rates based on shelter type.

This report format was developed to be consistent in content and updated regularly, allowing for year-over-year comparisons and community accountability. We anticipate publishing the next quarterly report, using this same format and covering the 2nd quarter of calendar year 2025, in August 2025, which will support comparative trend analysis over time. We believe this work reflects the intent and substance of the auditor's recommendation.

3.2 Consider sharing public data in a more accessible format, such as on a single landing page on the City's website or through a dashboard.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: August 1, 2025

Corrective Action Plan: We agree with the importance of making HRT data more accessible to the public. Our team is fully supportive of this recommendation. Moving forward, and beginning with the August 2025 memo referenced above, we will begin publishing all quarterly performance data reports on the Reporting Safety Concerns at an Encampment page:
 https://berkeleyca.gov/safety-health/homeless-services/reporting-safety-concerns-encampment

3.3 Assess staffing resources needed to support data and reporting efforts without impacting HRT's operational duties.

Management Response: Agree

Implementation Date: Completed

Corrective Action Plan: In January 2024, Neighborhood Services engaged VIVA Consulting to perform a staffing analysis of the division, including the Homeless Response Team; the final report was issued in May 2024. Pertinent to the Homeless Response Team, the report found the following:

- o Neighborhood Services needed more division-wide analytical support; in response, in November 2024 (midway through the Audit period), Neighborhood Services was assigned one FTE Administrative Assistant. This has helped the division handle the large volume of administrative work in the division.
- o In terms of operational duties, the City of Oakland has a similar encampment response approach to Berkeley, but at the time of the staffing analysis, had 7 dedicated FTE in the City Administrator's Office to handle the workload, including two dedicated analysts. Of importance, and at the time of the staffing analysis, Oakland's Encampment Management Team also included dedicated staff from several other departments including Public Works (10), Police (2), Fire (1 inspector), Human Services (1 analyst and 2 case managers), among others, all of whom worked exclusively on encampment operations and the various data reporting associated with it.

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Neighborhood Services has 3 dedicated FTE (one Community Services Specialist III, the unit lead and supervisor, and two Social Services Specialists). It also receives analytical support from 1 FTE Homeless Services Coordinator, but this classification also supports data analysis and budget strategy work for the entire homeless system. With the adoption of the FY2026 Mid-biennial budget, the City Council added a third Social Services Specialist FTE to the team, bringing the total FTE to 4.

Therefore, right-sizing the Berkeley Homeless Response Team to better meet the intensive demands of the work and the administrative, legal, and analytical work it engenders would require more dedicated staff both in Neighborhood Services and its various partner departments, and a blueprint for doing so has already been provided by this third-party consultant report. However, adding more authorized positions to the City's budget during a time of ongoing structural deficit would require tradeoffs without new dedicated revenues, opportunities for which have not been identified given the State's budget deficit and the Federal administration's ongoing efforts to drastically downsize, not increase, the public sector's workforce.

Methodology and Statement of Compliance

We audited the Homeless Response Team's (HRT) operations for fiscal years (FY) 2022 through 2024. We performed a risk assessment of the HRT's practices and procedures to identify potential internal control weaknesses, including fraud risks, within the context of our audit objectives. This included a review of selected policies and procedures, as well as interviews with internal staff.

To gain an understanding of the HRT's operations and internal controls and to achieve our audit objectives, we used the following methodology:

- We reviewed internal policies and procedures, meeting notes, email communications, and other documentation related to HRT operations, interagency coordination, and encampment response efforts.

- We analyzed HRT data related to encampment activities, service connections, and outreach outcomes. We evaluated the quality and consistency of data collection practices and assessed how the HRT used data to measure progress toward its goals. We also reviewed how outcomes were reported to the public, including through City Council materials, performance reports, and public communications. We evaluated the clarity, completeness, and accessibility of HRT's public reporting against best practices in transparency and accountability. While we were unable to verify the accuracy of the HRT's internal data, we analyzed their data reporting in our audit in order to understand how they communicate information to the public and make recommendations for improvement.

- We compared HRT practices against published best practices and guidance from organizations such as the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), as well as models used in other jurisdictions with similar encampment response challenges.

- We reviewed documents and sources that shaped the operating context for the HRT, including:

  - Biennial city budgets to understand HRT funding and staffing resources.

  - Berkeley Municipal Code and Administrative Regulations related to encampments, homelessness response, and interdepartmental coordination.

  - Local and federal court cases that influenced encampment policy, including *Prado v. City of Berkeley, Johnson v. Grants Pass*, and *Martin v. Boise*.

  - City Council materials and reports that documented policy decisions and legal considerations relevant to HRT operations.

- We interviewed a wide range of stakeholders to understand how the HRT coordinates with others and uses data in its work. This included HRT staff and staff from other city departments involved in homelessness response, Alameda County officials, and contracted outreach and service providers. We also spoke with members of the Homeless Services Panel of Experts, city leadership, and homeless advocates. These interviews provided insight into coordination challenges, service delivery gaps, and differing perspectives on the City's approach to encampments.

- We attended community meetings held by city leadership regarding homeless encampment response to better understand how information was shared with the public and how community concerns and feedback were addressed. These meetings provided additional context for assessing the City's communication practices and stakeholder engagement.

Data Reliability

We assessed the reliability of encampment data by interviewing data system managers and owners and examining the data for completeness, consistency, and appropriateness. We determined that the data are sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our audit.

Though we found the encampment data to be inconsistent and incomplete, we used encampment data to understand the type of data HRT collects and the data they present to the public, and therefore any inconsistencies in the data did not affect our audit findings. When cross-checking the data to additional sources, we could not independently verify certain data fields including the number offered and accepted shelter, the number of tents or structures, and the number of notices given. Therefore, we did not use the data for analysis or measurement. Our audit includes recommendations for improving management of encampment data to increase data system reliability.

Statement of Compliance

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Mission Statement

Promoting transparency and accountability in Berkeley government.

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BERKELEY CITY AUDITOR