



Office of the City Manager

May 16, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *Dee* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Subject: As shelter and permanent housing investments have increased, Berkeley's homelessness has declined

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## Summary

The bi-annual count of Alameda County's homeless population showed that overall homelessness – which includes those in shelters – dropped by three percent countywide since 2022, with the number of unsheltered residents decreasing by 11 percent. The City of Berkeley saw even larger decreases, with unsheltered homelessness down 45% and overall homelessness down 21%.

City staff, with the support and leadership of the City Council, have facilitated the permanent housing of nearly 1,200 people since 2021. Among the many programs that the City administers to provide housing, support and shelter, some highlights include:

- Bringing in at least \$40 million from the state to create new, non-congregate shelter and permanent supportive housing that has nearly doubled the shelter acceptance rate in encampments
- Launching an inter-departmental Homeless Response Team
- Investing over \$8M in efforts to stop homelessness before it starts through efforts that include eviction defense

This Point in Time (PIT) Count is a federal requirement for all communities receiving HUD homelessness funding, and it takes place every two years on a cold night in January. The methodology was updated slightly for this year's PIT count. A record number of volunteers, nearly 1,300, were sent to known locations where people were experiencing homelessness throughout the County. Volunteers completed survey

questionnaires with hundreds of unhoused persons, which will provide deeper insight to community and individual needs compared to previous counts. Additionally, each city or jurisdiction set up its own PIT Count deployment, coordinating much of the preparation and volunteer recruitment.

You can see all the data, trends and local jurisdiction data [online](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Background

In 2021, the Berkeley City Council endorsed the All Home Regional Action Plan<sup>2</sup>, a Bay Area-wide strategic homelessness plan that called for a 75% reduction in street homelessness by focusing on investments to bring people inside and off the streets, and then find permanent solutions for them. Since then, the City has focused its efforts on implementing that plan, and we have used local funding to do exactly what that plan called for by:

- Bringing in roughly \$10M in State Encampment Resolution Funds alongside an additional \$5M in Measure P to open 92 motel-based, non-congregate shelter beds, the addition of which has nearly doubled our shelter acceptance rate (from 43% to 79%) among unsheltered people living in encampments;
- Launching an inter-departmental Homeless Response Team that coordinates all wings of the City and our nonprofit partners to respond to our most dangerous encampments and ensure people living in them are connected to interim housing and other resources (67% of the people we encounter move into permanent housing or shelter);
- Bringing in over \$30M in State Homekey funding to open 85 units of new permanent supportive housing at two former motels; and
- Investing over \$8M in homelessness prevention and eviction defense resources, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, to stop homelessness before it starts.

These are only a handful of many programs we fund, support, and administer. Altogether, since 2021 (the year that plan was passed), we have permanently housed nearly 1200 people (1183) experiencing homelessness.

Given these responses, we are pleased but not surprised to see the PIT Count numbers; they show exactly what we would expect them to: fewer people are on our streets (45% reduction in street homelessness), more are in shelter (54% increase in sheltered homelessness), and more of them are being connected to solutions that permanently resolve their homelessness (21% reduction overall).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/simtech.solutions/viz/AlamedaCountyPoint-in-TimeCountResultsSummary/PITTrends?publish=yes>

<sup>2</sup> <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-07-13%20Item%2012%20Endorse%20All%20Home%20CA%20Regional%20Action.pdf>

We know we have much more work to do, but we are excited to see these efforts beginning to pay off.

If you have any questions, please contact Peter Radu, Assistant to the City Manager and Interim Deputy Director of Health, Housing and Community Services, at [pradu@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:pradu@berkeleyca.gov).

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