

# FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

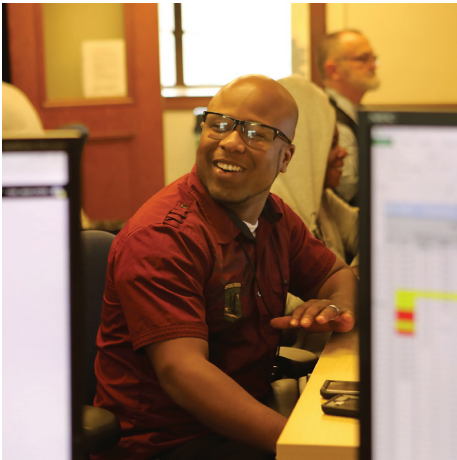
City and County of San Francisco  
DEPARTMENT OF  
HOMELESSNESS AND  
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



OCTOBER 2017



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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



# Letter from the Director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing



San Francisco faces a crisis on our streets. Homelessness is a social emergency, and the suffering of our unhoused neighbors must be addressed with a renewed sense of urgency. We cannot accept a “business-as-usual” approach while thousands of adults, families with children, and youth are without housing.

As a compassionate and creative community, we have responded to homelessness with a strong commitment, investing more than \$250 million dollars annually in homeless services. Our collective efforts have helped approximately 25,000 people exit homelessness since 2005, and provided shelter and support to thousands each year. We are pleased to have helped so many people find a respite from the streets and a place to call home. We are proud that San Francisco has pioneered model programs to address homelessness. We are thankful for the tireless volunteers, nonprofit workers, and City employees who support people striving to overcome homelessness every day. However, while preparing this Strategic Framework, we faced the sobering fact that despite these investments and efforts, thousands of people still live on our streets.

San Francisco must and will do better. This Strategic Framework is a call to action and lays out our goals to significantly reduce homelessness in San Francisco. We will strive to get house keys into the hands of as many

people as possible and improve the quality of life for all San Franciscans, both housed and homeless. Achieving this vision will require nothing short of a radical transformation of the work we do.

This Strategic Framework outlines ambitious yet achievable goals for the next five years. This document is not meant to be a step-by-step guide for how to proceed. Rather, it provides a roadmap for reducing homelessness in San Francisco and ensuring it becomes a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence. Achieving the goals of this Strategic Framework will require us to continuously analyze data, listen to our stakeholders, learn from those impacted by homelessness, and adapt. We do not presume to have all the answers—but we have the evidence, drive, and optimism needed to achieve our goals.

Success will only be possible by working in partnership with people experiencing homelessness, nonprofit providers, advocates, researchers, philanthropists, businesses, community groups, volunteers, elected officials, City Departments, and the dedicated staff of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. We are deeply grateful to everyone who helped develop this Strategic Framework and look forward to our collective efforts to reduce homelessness in San Francisco.

Now is the time to focus on compassionate **and** common sense solutions. Most San Franciscans want their City to assist people experiencing homelessness **and** they want safe and clean streets. Most San Franciscans want to see increased investments in homelessness **and** they expect to see better outcomes from these investments. We must have the courage to demand compassion **and** common sense while working toward the fundamental systems change outlined in this Strategic Framework.

I hope that all San Franciscans will join us on this journey, bringing our collective compassion, common sense, and courage to help our neighbors struggling to find a way home.

Sincerely,

Jeff Kositsky  
Director

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, San Francisco rehouses nearly 2,000 people experiencing homelessness; we also assist approximately 15,000 unhoused people with food, shelter, outreach, health care, and other forms of assistance. Nevertheless, an estimated 7,500 people are homeless in San Francisco on any given night. This number has remained stubbornly persistent for more than a decade, despite our City's commitment, concern, and considerable investments.

Since 2005, San Francisco has helped approximately 25,000 people exit homelessness. However, our City has lacked a coordinated, data-driven, and integrated system to ensure these efforts result in permanent, sustained reductions in homelessness. We also lack the full complement of resources needed to meet the current demand for housing, shelter, and services. While we should be proud of our accomplishments to date, achieving sustained reductions in homelessness will require nothing short of a radical transformation of the work we do.

In August 2016, Mayor Edwin M. Lee launched the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) to fundamentally change the way San Francisco addresses homelessness. Our vision is to make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time event. Our aim is a **significant, sustained reduction in homelessness in San Francisco**.

We will accomplish this by partnering with our many stakeholders to achieve the five-year goals outlined in this Strategic Framework (see <http://hsh.sfgov.org/framework> for full document).

**Together, we will work tirelessly, persistently, and compassionately to help each person find the right path to permanent housing.**

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

**Goal: Design and implement coordinated systems for adults, families with children, and youth by December 2018**

**Goal: Implement performance accountability across all programs and systems by December 2019**

San Francisco has been an innovator of model programs for more than two decades and has invested significant resources in addressing homelessness. Creating coordination and alignment across all our interventions will take San Francisco from a community of model programs to one with a model system. This new **Homelessness Response System** is dedicated to ending homelessness quickly and effectively for as many people as possible. Coordinated Entry is a key component of this response system, including a clear set of entry points, a standardized method to assess and prioritize people needing assistance, and a streamlined process for rapidly connecting people to a housing solution.

## How Was This Strategic Framework Developed?

This Strategic Framework (see <http://hsh.sfgov.org/framework> for full document) relies on the experiences of people experiencing homelessness, service providers, and other stakeholders in San Francisco. HSH staff conducted numerous interviews, surveys, focus groups, community meetings, and forums to gather input and receive feedback while developing this Strategic Framework. We also studied best practices from cities around the country that have made significant reductions in homelessness.

HSH staff and national experts on homelessness also developed data models that helped determine our goals, strategies, and gaps in the system. We were limited by the lack of a single database tracking the performance of our programs and impacts on homelessness in San Francisco. Furthermore, we were unable to model for possible changes in the economy or housing market. However, we are in the process of developing a new data system and once that begins to generate more accurate information about our program outcomes and costs, we will refine our models and projections. An example of the logic behind our modeling and gap analysis can be found in the first chapter of the Strategic Framework.

This Strategic Framework is meant to be a roadmap and a living document. We will develop specific implementation plans and make regular adjustments as needed. Throughout this process, we are committed to consulting with our stakeholders, especially those with lived experience of homelessness and people providing direct services in the community. We will continue tracking progress, reporting back to the community, and holding ourselves accountable for the goals we have established.

Coordinated Entry systems for all populations (adults, families with children, and youth) will be in place by December 2018.

The new Homelessness Response System will strive to ensure that clients will not have to wander from program to program, remain on waiting lists with little or no understanding of what will happen next, or receive no information on their options. This system will also acknowledge that not everyone needs permanently subsidized housing to exit homelessness. As such, we will expand the focus on Prevention, Problem Solving, and Rapid Rehousing assistance while also working to add more Permanent Supportive Housing for those who need it.

HSH has already begun developing the infrastructure needed to implement these changes. This includes merging the City's 15 different homeless services databases into one new centralized data system, called the Online Navigation and Entry (ONE) System. Launched in June 2017, the ONE System will allow for increased accountability, improved performance management, and a better understanding of the needs of each individual we serve. The ONE System will be fully implemented by mid-2018.

## ADULTS

### Goal: Reduce chronic homelessness 50% by December 2022

During the January 2017 Point-in-Time Count of the homeless population in San Francisco, we identified more than 2,100 adults who are chronically homeless. Chronic homelessness refers to people who have been living on the streets or in shelter for a year or more and have disabilities or health conditions that make it difficult for them to gain and retain housing. Focusing on the chronically homeless population will help ensure that people who are ill and experiencing long-term homelessness can access services and housing more quickly. This has proven to be an effective strategy for reducing homelessness in San Francisco and communities around the United States. For example, Chronic homelessness among Veterans in San Francisco was reduced by 30% from 2015-2017 and can be effectively ended with targeted efforts to rehouse the remaining chronically homeless Veterans.<sup>1</sup>

By reallocating current resources, developing additional housing units, investing in new housing programs, and working on prevention, we can reduce all chronic homelessness 50% by December 2022. Central to this strategy is creating a Housing Ladder to move residents living in Permanent Supportive Housing to other subsidized housing, thereby opening up Permanent Supportive Housing units for chronically homeless clients. Work in this area is already well underway.

## FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

### Goal: Ensure no families with children are unsheltered by December 2018

### Goal: End family homelessness by December 2021

The 2017 Point-in-Time Count found that less than 3% of the homeless families in San Francisco are unsheltered. While this number is relatively low, absolutely no children should be living on the streets of San Francisco. By using our Temporary Shelter resources

<sup>1</sup> Source: San Francisco's 2017 and 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Reports

## What Does Ending Homelessness Mean?

An end to homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again. It means that our community will have a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible and provides short-term emergency shelter and rehousing support whenever needed to ensure homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. Specifically, every community will have the capacity to:

- Quickly identify and engage people at risk of and experiencing homelessness
- Prevent the loss of housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system
- When homelessness does occur, provide immediate access to shelter and crisis services
- Quickly connect people to assistance and services that help them achieve and maintain stable housing

\*Adapted from Opening Doors, the nation's first comprehensive Federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness, first presented to Congress on June 22, 2010.

more strategically, we will ensure that no families with children are unsheltered. This work is already in progress, including the expansion of San Francisco's family shelter system by the end of 2017.

Our ultimate goal is to end all family homelessness in San Francisco. Through a combination of additional Rapid Rehousing, Rent Subsidies, and Permanent Supportive Housing, as well as new interventions that offer Problem Solving strategies and flexible assistance, we will effectively end family homelessness in San Francisco. The 2017 Point-in-Time Count indicated a 12% reduction in family homelessness since 2015, and efforts already underway should lead to more significant decreases in the coming years. The public and private resources needed to achieve this goal currently exist or are in development.

## YOUTH

### Goal: Complete a detailed plan to reduce youth homelessness by July 2018

Youth make up approximately 20% of the homeless population in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> Since 2013, San Francisco has conducted special youth homeless counts during each Point-in-Time Count and has seen a decrease in youth homelessness. However, youth homelessness remains a significant problem and there has been little City-sponsored planning to address it.

HSH recently received a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and is now engaged in an in-depth and youth-informed planning process to develop the response system and the programs needed to reduce youth homelessness. We will publish our final Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness by July 2018. This plan will include specific targets for reducing youth homelessness during the next five years and will outline the work needed to transform housing and services for this population. In the meantime, we have already begun adding new youth-focused housing and services that will begin operation in early 2018.

## STREET HOMELESSNESS

### Goal: Improve the City's response to street homelessness by October 2018

### Goal: End large, long-term encampments by July 2019

Street homelessness is a serious crisis in San Francisco, with nearly 60% of the homeless population living in unsheltered situations.<sup>3</sup> A wide range of City Departments are collaborating to address these issues swiftly and humanely, creating more places of safety and pathways out of homelessness for those living outdoors. Supported and driven by a stronger partnership among City Departments, a new system for responding to public concerns will be in place by October 2018, and by July 2019, there will be no large, long-standing encampments on our streets. These efforts will lead to a reduction in street homelessness while improving the quality of life for all San Franciscans, both housed and homeless. Reducing street homelessness will require improved coordination, as well as investments in services and Temporary Shelter. Further, HSH will remain focused on housing exits as the most effective, compassionate and sensible way to address street homelessness.

## CONCLUSION

This Strategic Framework (see <http://hsh.sfgov.org/framework> for full document) combines analysis, best practices from around the country, and the collective wisdom of our community. It was developed after more than a year of gathering information from many stakeholders, carefully reviewing our system's performance, and developing data models that will help guide our work. Similar approaches have been undertaken in communities throughout the United States with documented success. Our path will be informed by what has been learned in other communities, consistently updated based on new learning and data, and rooted in the strengths of our experience in San Francisco.

<sup>2</sup>Source: San Francisco's 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Report

<sup>3</sup>Source: San Francisco's 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Report

Achieving and sustaining the meaningful reductions in homelessness outlined in this document may require additional investment above and beyond the historically high levels of funding budgeted by Mayor Edwin M. Lee in the past six years. The Department will continue to advocate for needed resources through the budget process, but San Francisco cannot do it alone. We will need significant philanthropic partnership and greater funding support from the State and Federal governments. Homelessness is a regional – if not national – issue, and paying to solve it cannot fall solely on the shoulders of the City and County’s general fund.

Since our formation in August 2016, HSH begun using existing resources to implement this Strategic Framework. Some of the accomplishments during our first year include:

- Providing ongoing housing or subsidies to over 7,500 households
- Assisting over 1,900 people to exit from homelessness
- Providing Temporary Shelter to 7,000 unique individuals
- Launching the ONE System in June 2017, which will be fully implemented by mid-2018
- Opening 300 new units of Permanent Supportive Housing
- Expanding rent subsidy programs for families and youth with over 900 households
- Reducing chronic homelessness among Veterans by 30% since 2015<sup>4</sup>
- Planning for the adult Coordinated Entry system that will be implemented in 2018
- Reducing family homelessness 12% since 2015<sup>5</sup>
- Implementing family Coordinated Entry
- Opening a new shelter for families
- Reducing youth homelessness 13% since 2015<sup>6</sup>
- Starting a youth homelessness plan that will be released by July 2018
- Resolving 18 large encampments, with over 600 people offered shelter
- Convening multiple City Departments to improve the response to street homelessness
- Opening four new Navigation Centers, with over 100 temporary shelter beds in the pipeline
- Expanding the housing pipeline to include over 1,300 units of Permanent Supportive Housing
- Raising tens of millions of dollars from Federal, State, and private sources

HSH is continuing to implement many of the changes outlined in this Strategic Framework and we are already seeing results. However, there is much more to do. We are in the process of working with our stakeholders to develop a detailed implementation plan that will guide our operations during the coming years.

HSH is also developing specific housing placement and performance targets required to achieve our goals. Data and accountability are integral to our success and evaluations will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure we remain on target. This information will be reported to the public on an ongoing basis.

While data models will be adjusted and plans refined, achieving a significant, sustained reduction in homelessness is the standard by which our success should be judged. We will achieve this by building a system that aligns all efforts and actors to get house keys into the hands of as many people as possible.

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<sup>4</sup>Source: San Francisco’s 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Report

<sup>5</sup>Source: San Francisco’s 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Report

<sup>6</sup>Source: San Francisco’s 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Report

During the next five years we will strive to:

- Implement a new Homelessness Response System
- Reduce chronic homelessness by at least 50%
- Effectively end family homelessness
- Reduce youth homelessness
- Improve San Francisco's response to street homelessness

This Strategic Framework (see <http://hsh.sfgov.org/framework> for full document) is merely a roadmap for how we will accomplish these goals. We will be looking to our colleagues, partners, stakeholders, and people experiencing homelessness to plan for and implement the work. **Together, we will help thousands of people find a home and significantly reduce homelessness in San Francisco.**





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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Adult.** A homeless individual over the age of 24 years without custody of a minor child. Adults include individuals, couples, seniors, and Veterans.

**Coordinated Entry (CE).**

Organizes the Homelessness Response System with a common, population-specific assessment, centralized data system, and prioritization method that directs clients to the appropriate resources and allows for data-driven decision making and performance-based accountability. Coordinated Entry in San Francisco is organized to serve three subpopulations, Adults, Families, and Youth. The process is broken into four parts: access, assessment, prioritization, and referral.

**Family with Children (or Family).**

A household consisting of at least one adult age 18 or older and at least one minor child (under 18). In San Francisco, a person in the third trimester of pregnancy or 5+ months pregnant with a high-risk pregnancy may be considered a homeless family.

**US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).**

defines homeless as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The definition also refers to an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is either: a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. HUD's Homeless Definition Final Rule further establishes specific categories of homelessness.

**Housing Ladder.** Offers opportunities for residents of Permanent Supportive Housing to move outside of the Homelessness Response System.

**Online Navigation and Entry (ONE) System.** Launched in June 2017, ONE is the data system used for all housing and services for homeless people in San Francisco. Managed by HSH, the ONE System will replace 15 legacy data systems, including the existing Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).**

Subsidized rental housing without time limits and with intensive on-site supportive services to help tenants maintain housing and meet their desired goals. In PSH, services are offered on a voluntary basis. Clients are not required to participate in services as a condition of being housed, but services are offered to them through a process of engagement. PSH is designed to house those individuals with the greatest housing barriers and highest service needs—typically, people who have severe and persistent mental illness or other disabilities, and who have long histories of homelessness. PSH can be in buildings owned by private organizations or in sites that are leased. Some PSH sites are 100% supportive housing; others are in mixed-use buildings or scattered sites.

**Point-in-Time Count.** HUD requires every community that receives Federal funding to conduct a Point-in-Time Count of homeless people a minimum of once every two years during the last ten days of January. This count enumerates the number of people estimated to be homeless at a point in time, and contains information about their location (sheltered or unsheltered), household type, and demographic characteristics.

**Rapid Rehousing (RRH).** A housing program model that assists individuals and families who are homeless to move quickly into permanent housing, usually to housing in the private market. It does so by offering housing search assistance, time-limited and targeted services, and short-term rental assistance. RRH can be used here in San Francisco or in other communities if the client chooses.

**San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH).** The Department that oversees homeless services in the City of San Francisco. HSH was officially launched on August 15, 2016 and combines key homeless serving programs from the Department of Public Health (DPH), Human Services Agency (HSA), Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), and Department of Children Youth and Their Families (DCYF).

**Temporary Shelter.** Provides temporary places for people to stay while accessing other services and seeking housing solutions. This may include shelters, Navigation Centers, Stabilization Beds and Transitional Housing.

**Youth and Transitional Age Youth (TAY).** A homeless individual 17 years old or younger (youth), or between 18 and 24 years old (transitional age youth). These individuals often have specialized needs, different from those of families or adults that must be considered when designing programs and services.



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