

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

County of San Mateo Releases One Day Homeless Count Data ***Number of individuals living in RVs cited for overall increase***

Redwood City — On a single day in January 2019, 1,512 individuals were counted as homeless in San Mateo County, an uptick over past years due to the increased number of people living in RVs, according to the Human Services Agency (HSA) which released the data today.

During the biennial One-Day Homeless Count on Jan. 31, 2019, 400 volunteers fanned out on foot and by car for the snapshot data that helps the County and community partners assess how best to serve homeless populations. Every two years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the point-in-time count during which volunteers take observational tallies and conduct surveys to gain insight into demographics, household composition, duration of homelessness and services needed.

“The count is one critical tool to collect information that helps us understand more about those who are experiencing homelessness in our community and their unique circumstances,” HSA Director Nicole Pollack. “With homelessness, as with much in life, one size does not fit all and we really want to know who we are serving and what they need.”

This year’s count found 901 unsheltered homeless individuals living on streets, in vehicles or in homeless encampments, and 611 sheltered individuals (those living in homeless shelters and transitional housing). The total of 1,512 people is up from the 1,253 individuals counted in January 2017 but lower than the 2011 and 2013 counts. The overall increase is driven largely by a 127 percent increase in the number of people living in RVs (494) although simultaneously the count found a decrease in the number of people estimated to be sleeping in cars and tents.

The Board of Supervisors has named ending homelessness one of its top priorities and Board President Carole Groom said data from the count helps the County to understand more about people experiencing homelessness to help tailor services to their needs.

“We know that ending homelessness is more than a quick fix, especially because individuals experience homelessness for a variety of unique reasons,” Groom said. “With the count and surveys showing us what current factors are in play, we are better equipped to take the right steps toward solutions.”

The results of this year’s count demonstrate how the housing market continues to challenge many in the community and contributes to the risks of housing instability and homelessness, Pollack said. Both the cost and availability of housing are factors for those with low and moderate incomes trying to maintain current housing and those who are currently homeless and trying to secure permanent housing in a county where, from 2016 to 2019, the fair market rent for a studio apartment increased by 47 percent.

Despite the ongoing need to implement services that first prevent homelessness when possible and, when it does occur, quickly assist those individuals in securing housing, Pollack said the results of the 2019 count show progress. Decreases in the number of unsheltered families with children, people sleeping in tents and people sleeping in cars re-emphasizes the need to continue strategies to serve those populations.

“The extremely high costs and low vacancy rates in the local housing market remain a challenge. However, we are deeply committed to our homeless populations and have made great strides,” Pollack said.

She added that the commitment to assist those individuals experiencing homelessness is a community collaboration.

“The count is a large endeavor and wouldn’t be possible without the participation of hundreds of volunteers. We’re grateful to our community members, community-based organizations and County and city staff who participated in the count,” Pollack said. “I’d also like to say thank you to the homeless service providers who work intensely every day to help people find and keep housing.”

The full report and executive summary are available at: <https://hsa.smcgov.org/2019-one-day-homeless-count>

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