



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: CAO: Homeless Services

(831) 454-2100

Subject: Study Session: Three-Year Strategic Framework to Address Homelessness

Meeting Date: November 10, 2020

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Conduct a multi-jurisdictional study session on the proposed **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County**;
- 2) Direct staff to undertake a community engagement process to gather final feedback and input on the proposed **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County**; and
- 3) Direct staff to return no later than the first Board meeting in February 2021 with a final draft for adoption.

Executive Summary

The purpose of today's study session is to provide an introduction to the draft three-year plan, **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County** ("Framework") and invite input from the Board of Supervisors and elected officials from other jurisdictions within the County. After an 18-month engagement with nationally recognized homelessness technical assistance experts Focus Strategies, the Homeless Services Coordination Office is pleased to present the draft framework of a three-year strategic action plan to address homelessness, built upon a rigorous baseline system assessment and system modeling analysis. The framework reflects the culmination of substantial community work with all jurisdictions, key stakeholders, and those with lived experience of homelessness. Implementation will be administratively led and supported by the new Housing for Health (H4H) Division in the County's Human Services Department, with significant ongoing direct involvement and action by jurisdictions and key stakeholders being essential to the success of the plan.

Background

On February 26, 2019, the Board approved a contract with nationally recognized homeless technical assistance firm Focus Strategies for provision of homeless system assessment consulting services. The project, managed by the Homeless Services Coordination Office, has met key milestones in the project and is now in the final phase of developing the three-year strategic action plan. The entirety of the project, including the baseline system assessment and data analysis has been in response to a significant need for a community-wide, actionable plan - a blueprint - to guide the work

and shift from a reactive to proactive mode. With a well-designed blueprint and an adequate and effective decision-making structure we can collectively and more effectively utilize available funding to implement a more coordinated, communitywide and systematic response to homelessness.

Purpose and Key Results of Focus Strategies Technical Assistance Engagement

The original purpose of the technical assistance engagement with Focus Strategies was to support a strategic, data-informed, systems assessment and planning effort that would use both qualitative and quantitative system performance data and engage key system stakeholders in developing recommendations regarding system redesign based on current performance, system level performance measures, governance and decision-making structure improvements, and a detailed implementation plan. This broad charge was achieved through a phased work plan that began in March 2019. Key accomplishments from this 18-month process include:

- Data analysis of system and program performance that key stakeholders can use to understand the results and effectiveness achieved by the current system.
- Shared understanding among providers of the homeless crisis response system and how their work contributes to overall system performance.
- Improved knowledge and capacity of providers.
- Recommendations for strategies that improve results.
- Prioritized recommendations for short-term objectives and key steps that effectively respond to the crisis of homelessness in Santa Cruz County.
- Identification and understanding of key performance metrics.
- Development of recommended governance and operational structure that will oversee, evaluate, and make and/or implement strategic policy and funding recommendations that advance the homeless crisis response system.
- Staffing and resources identified to support implementation of the homeless crisis response system.
- An actionable July-December 2020 six-month work plan that is already being implemented and that will yield measurable reductions in homelessness.
- Draft three-year plan for addressing homelessness.

Key Deliverables: Processes and Products

By design, the processes engaged in with Focus Strategies have been highly inclusive of various stakeholder groups in order to develop shared understanding of data, current practices, gaps, and opportunities and to create greater connectivity between service providers, people accessing homeless services, community and jurisdictional stakeholders. While the County initiated and managed the work with Focus Strategies, the community at large welcomed and fully participated in the work. Through this 18-month engagement, Focus Strategies has provided two major reports, numerous presentations and updates to the Board, has led topical work groups and guided County, City and CoC staff towards identifiable, achievable system improvement strategies that are now incorporated into an interim July-December 2020 Six-Month Work Plan, and described further in the report that is the subject of today's study session.

Written Reports:

- Focus Strategies Santa Cruz System Performance Results Report - June 2020

- Focus Strategies Santa Cruz Baseline Assessment Report - August 2019

Community Presentations:

- Preliminary System Performance Results - December 4, 2019
- Baseline Assessment Report Community Presentation Summary - September 11, 2019
- Homeless System Planning Technical Assistance Community Kick Off - April 17, 2019

Board of Supervisors Progress Updates:

- System Design and Action Plan Progress Report - June 16, 2020
- System Performance Measurement PPT - March 10, 2020
- Baseline Assessment PPT - October 8, 2019

Analysis

Today's study session is to present the proposed **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County** and to create an opportunity for open discussion of the overarching goals, strategies and objectives outlined in the draft Framework.

Overview of the Framework

The Framework, covering the period from January 2021 to January 2024, contains two overarching goals, two core goals, and four primary strategic areas.

Overarching Goals

1. The number of households experiencing unsheltered homelessness will decrease by 50%.
2. The number of households experiencing homelessness will decrease by 30%.

The overall goals of reductions in both overall and unsheltered homeless require specific system improvements and expansions, described in the Core Goals, below:

Core Goal #1: Improve the effectiveness of all programs in helping people secure housing:

- A. Reduce lengths of stay
- B. Increase rehousing rates
- C. Increase program entries from homelessness

Core Goal #2: Expand Capacity within the homelessness response system.

- A. Add 160 year-round, low-barrier emergency shelter beds, consisting of 140 beds for adults and 5 units (20 beds) for families with children under 18 years old.
- B. Add 350 rapid rehousing slots for currently homeless adult households
- C. Add 100 permanent supportive housing slots for currently homeless adult households.

To achieve the Framework goals, Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz County sets out four high-level strategic areas and numerous specific objectives in each strategy area to transform current efforts to address homelessness. The objectives to support each strategy will span over multiple six-month action plan cycles. The January-June 2021

Six-Month Work Plan will be developed and provided along with the final Framework to be adopted in February 2020.

Strategy 1: Enhance and Effectively Target Outreach, Engagement, and Temporary Shelter Resources

Strategy 2: Expand Permanent Housing Exit Resources and Pathways

Strategy 3: Implement Targeted Prevention, Diversion, and Housing Problem Solving Interventions

Strategy 4: Implement New Governance, Planning, Evaluation, Communication, and Collaborative Action Structures

Key Reference Materials

Focus Strategies recently completed two key reports that informed the development of the Framework, and which are provided as attachments to this Board letter as reference materials.

- 1. Santa Cruz Predictive Modeling Summary Report:** Focus Strategies conducted a quantitative analysis of the performance of the homelessness response system using their System-Wide Analytics and Projection (SWAP) tools. SWAP is a joint project of Focus Strategies and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). The tools are designed to help communities use their local data to understand what their current system is accomplishing and to plan and prioritize changes to bring about the greatest possible reduction in homelessness. Utilizing their SWAP tools, they tested a range of scenarios for what can be accomplished over the next three years through a combination of changes to the inventory of beds in the homeless system and improvements in the performance of homeless system programs. The selected scenario that has been integrated into the Framework assumes:
 - Half of the temporarily added new COVID-19 shelter inventory will be made permanent, for an addition of 145 year-round, service enriched shelter beds;
 - The system will add 350 additional rapid rehousing slots (200 units in Year 2 and 150 units in Year 3) and 100 new permanent supportive housing slots (all in Year 3); and
 - Performance targets will be established for each program type consistent with the recommendations above and achieved along three measures: rate of entry from literal homelessness, length of stay in programs, and exit rate to permanent housing.

Taken together, these changes will result in a 50% decrease in unsheltered homelessness and close to 30% decrease in total homelessness.

- 2. Santa Cruz County Housing Market Gap Analysis:** This report looks specifically at the local housing market, including the supply and the availability of housing for people at the lowest income levels. To leave homelessness, people experiencing homelessness must secure a housing unit; the relative availability of housing is a critical consideration in systemic efforts to reduce homelessness. This report examines current known conditions in the housing market in Santa Cruz County and estimates the gap between what is available and what is needed at different

levels of affordability.

Additional reference material attached includes the **California CoC 2019 PIT Counts**, which summarizes homeless counts for all California CoCs, and a funding summary previously provided to your Board, the **County and Continuum of Care Funding Sources Scan June 2020**.

Next Steps for Stakeholder and Community Input on Framework

The County will be presenting the draft Framework at all four city council meetings in the coming week, and convening several community meetings to provide information about the Framework, solicit feedback, and provide information about how stakeholders and community can learn more and provide additional input. There will be outreach and surveys taken among the County's homeless residents in order to ensure that the voice of those with lived experience of homelessness is heard and centered in our system response.

Planned Engagements:

- November 10: Santa Cruz and Watsonville City Council meetings
- November 12: Capitola City Council Meeting
- November 17: CORE Coffee Chat
- November 18: Community Meeting - Homeless Action Partnership and Key Stakeholders
- November 18: Scotts Valley City Council Meeting
- November 19: Fourth District Town Hall

Community Input:

The County extends its gratitude to the Homeless Action Partnership for hosting a Systems Change webpage where all of the Focus Strategies materials will be available for viewing, and where community will soon be able to provide input on the draft **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County**. Announcement of the webpage address and opportunities for providing input there will be provided as soon as the webpage is live.

Conclusion

The proposed **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County** represents an effective, actionable, and achievable plan for system improvements and expansions that are anticipated to result in overall reductions to homelessness and in particular unsheltered homelessness. The Framework is the culmination of many months of analysis and system modeling by expert consultants Focus Strategies, along with substantial staff work and extensive stakeholder involvement in focus groups, implementation work groups and more. Today's study session marks the beginning of a period of public comment and stakeholder input that will culminate in a final draft of the Framework incorporating public comment and anticipated for adoption by the Board and City Councils, to be provided in February, 2021.

Strategic Plan Element(s)

2.D (Attainable Housing: Homelessness) - Assessing the performance of the current

system to address homelessness and obtaining technical assistance for system planning and improvements directly supports the Strategic Plan goal on Homelessness to expand services to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability.

Submitted by:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Recommended by:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Attachments:

- a Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz - A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness
- b Santa Cruz Predictive Modeling Summary Report
- c Santa Cruz County Housing Market Gap Analysis
- d California CoC 2019 PIT Counts
- e County and Continuum of Care Funding Sources Scan June 2020

cc:

County Administrative Office