



MENLO PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT
Homeless Outreach Team



Initial MPPD Proposal on Homelessness in Menlo Park (June 2015)

A Complex Issue with no One Solution or Viewpoint

The issue of homelessness is a multifaceted one, with strong feelings from the residential and business community on how best to manage a city's homeless population. Some persons view the solution as the enforcement of relevant state and local laws.

"Efforts to address homeless encampments and homelessness in general are often met with hostility from the public, perhaps because they resent public resources being spent on people seen as unproductive members of society, or because they think providing services will encourage more transients to move into the area. Many members of the community would rather push the problem out of their area than deal with it in a meaningful way." –

Understanding Your Local (Homeless) Problem, POPCenter.org

While others view the issue as more social in nature and that the homeless are unfairly targeted by law enforcement officers that need to be better trained on how to deal with homeless persons and families.

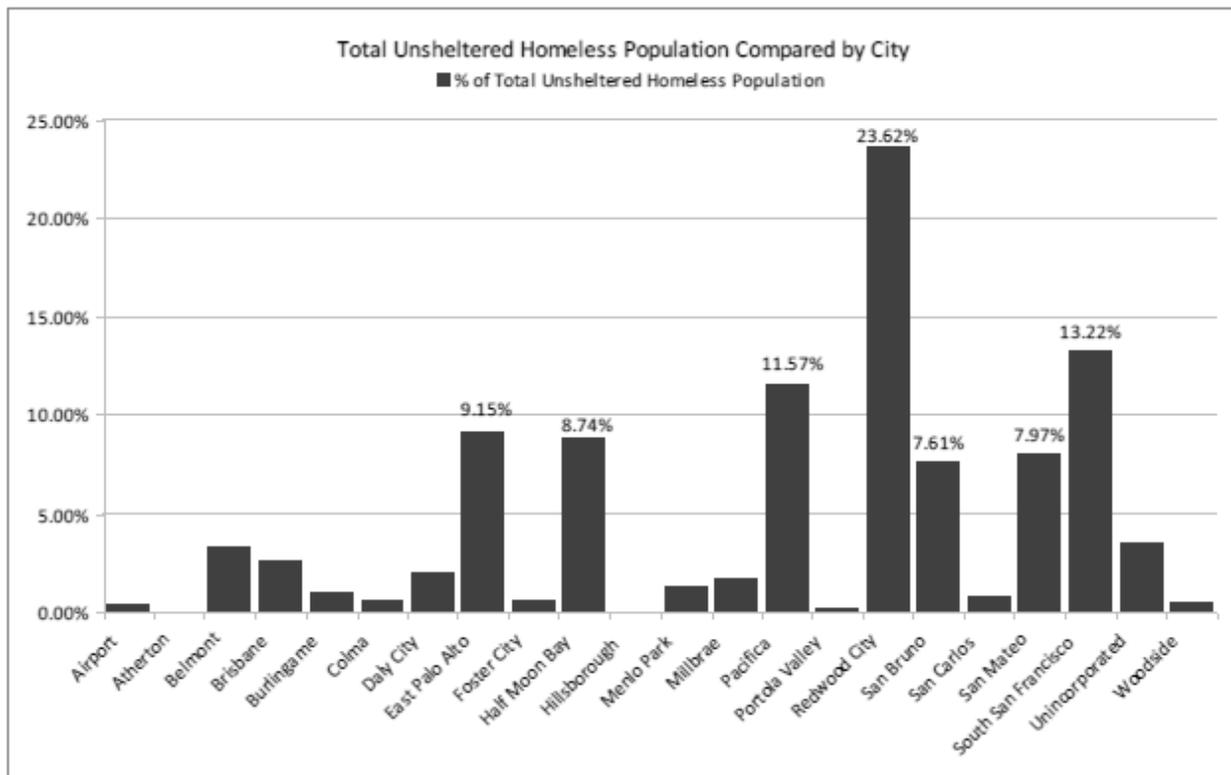
"Homelessness continues to be a national crisis, affecting millions of people each year, including a rising number of families. Homeless people, like all people, must engage in activities such as sleeping or sitting down in order to survive. Yet, in communities across the nation, these harmless, unavoidable behaviors are treated as criminal activity under laws that criminalize homelessness." – **A Report by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2014**

Some San Mateo County and Menlo Park Statistics

Approximately every two years, the County conducts a census of the homeless population. I have included a copy in this proposal of the 2013 census prepared by the San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Center on Homelessness.

Based on this information, in 2013, the city Menlo Park had an unsheltered homeless population of approximately 16 people. Compared to the census taken in 2011 (72 persons), Menlo Park saw a 78% reduction in the amount of homeless persons. In 2007 the homeless counted were 52 and then 25 persons in 2009. There has been no official census conducted by the county for 2015.

The census noted that the fluctuation of homeless populations were possibly due to “the mobility of the homeless population within the County... (based on) breakdowns by city, including data on the numbers of people observed on the street, in cars, in vans/RVs, and in encampments in each city and how those numbers have changed from count to count.”



Compared to the rest of the county, Menlo Park’s homeless population is quite small. This provides MPPD with an opportunity to more closely work with its homeless population in determining what resources are available to them.

The Six Goals of this Proposal

Since Menlo Park police officers are often-times the first government official to make contact with a homeless person in the city, it makes sense for officers to examine the ways law enforcement personnel can learn about, and create solutions for, working with our

homeless population. To that end, six goals were created to help guide the beginning of this process:

- 1) Determine what resources are available within the city of Menlo Park and San Mateo County, for the homeless. How are other cities working with their homeless populations?
- 2) Enforcement and enactment of civility laws & improvements to protect the health and safety of Menlo Park residents.
- 3) Contact homeless persons in Menlo Park to learn more about them and their specific needs, thus beginning the important step of building relationships with them; this is a key aspect of the homeless management process.
- 4) The education and training of MPPD officers and CSOs in how to better work with the homeless and determine possible solutions for a specific person or family.
- 5) Networking and case management with various resources and charting the best course of action for the specific needs of the homeless person (e.g. housing, food, medical care, reconnection with family members, etc.).
- 6) Maintain relationships and encouragement of homeless contacts. Meet regularly with homeless persons to continue developing the relationship and encourage them to take advantage of resources that are available to them.

Goal One: Determining Available Resources

The County of San Mateo has a significant homeless population, but also has some fantastic resources available through InnVision and the ShelterNetwork. I visited eight of these facilities throughout the county and one in Santa Clara county to ascertain how they operate and what services they offered. These resources are heavily burdened but available to help homeless families and individuals. This help comes in the form of meals, emergency and temporary housing, clothing, case management, facilities for showering, and access to medical examinations and treatment.

Meeting with the many people that volunteer and work at these shelters is an important step in the process of working towards determining the right solution or combination of solutions for homeless persons, such as:

Addressing the lack of housing affordability by continuing to create supportive and affordable housing for homeless people and those at-risk of homelessness;

Continuing to develop specialized outreach to homeless veterans and linking them to available housing resources, particularly the VASH permanent housing program;

Working with the systems of care whose clients have very high levels of homelessness, particularly the alcohol and drug treatment system, mental health system, and the criminal justice system, to develop strategies for meeting the housing and service needs of these populations

Coordinating with the health systems on the implementation of the MediCaid expansion authorized through the Affordable Care Act, which should result in many currently uninsured homeless people becoming eligible for health care;

Recognizing that the majority of homeless people are long-time residents of San Mateo County and embracing joint planning between the County and local jurisdictions to meet their housing and service needs

Goal Two: Protect Health & Safety of Menlo Park Residents via Enforcement and Consideration of Civility Laws & Improvements

Establish ordinances that create a means by which Menlo Park can enforce desired outcomes, the personnel and standard operating procedure of law enforcement to manage infractions, and the political buy-in from parties involved in the process to reach an acceptable outcome for the community.

The consistent but non-capricious enforcement of current state and local laws such as open container of alcohol, obstructing sidewalks, disorderly conduct (urinating in public), etc.

The consideration of new laws that contribute to the safety and well-being of Menlo Park residents such as: standing in road medians, sleeping in a vehicle, sit-lie laws, etc.

Goals Three & Four: Meeting with Homeless in Menlo Park and the Training of Officers in Alternative Communication Techniques

These two goals go hand in hand. The initial contact with homeless persons is an important step in building a relationship somewhat different than the typical encounter with police officers. In the past, the usual contact was because an officer was notified that a homeless person may have been in violation of a municipal or state law. The important distinction with Outreach contacts is to make it clear that the officer is not there to ask the subject to move on or threaten a citation, but rather to genuinely get to know that subject and their needs as a homeless person.

However, personal and public safety are still the primary responsibilities of an MPPD officer and as such, arrests by an Outreach officer are not ruled out as the situation warrants.

Best practices suggests police officers who engage in a clear strategy to address chronic homelessness are vital to reducing the number of homeless (e.g. utilizing alternative communication techniques). Cities that have success with homeless issues usually have officers trained in homeless-specific solutions like defusing potentially volatile situations, and assisting patrol officers in assessing a homeless person's need for mental health services as an alternative to jail. Outreach officers also need to build *rapport* with the

homeless population which helps assess long-term needs of the chronically homeless. And it's this assessment which leads to the next goal:

Goal Five: Case Management Tailored to a Homeless Person or Family

One of the key elements I have observed that has led to the success of a homeless person actually receiving the help they need is through *consistent* case management. Once a subject actually has a case manager, that person becomes a key contact for a police officer to coordinate assistance, or at the very least, to learn about the resources available to that homeless family or individual. The case manager helps facilitate county resources and will sometimes meet with the officer and homeless person in the field.

Some examples of the importance of determining tailored solutions for individuals are evidenced by contacts with subjects such as D.B., a female homeless person that is interested in obtaining medical help for a severe skin condition. In addition to this, D.B. wants help getting a new ID card, and possibly moved into transitional housing.

Subject M.H. is a male homeless person, who is a vet that currently gets SSI. He has stated that he would love to get housing, specifically HUD VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) or at the very least would like to see more temporary housing like what is offered by Hotel De Zink.

Subject J.A., a female that currently utilizes Hotel De Zink for temporary housing, has a part time job as a cook with Stanford University. She is interested in medical assistance to help her manage her depression and anxiety. J.A. also would like to have access to more permanent housing.

These contacts demonstrate that understating the specific needs of the person or family is crucial to helping them take ownership of their own lives by assisting them to take a more active role in voicing what they need with officers and case managers.

Goal Six: Maintain Relationships and Encourage Homeless Persons.

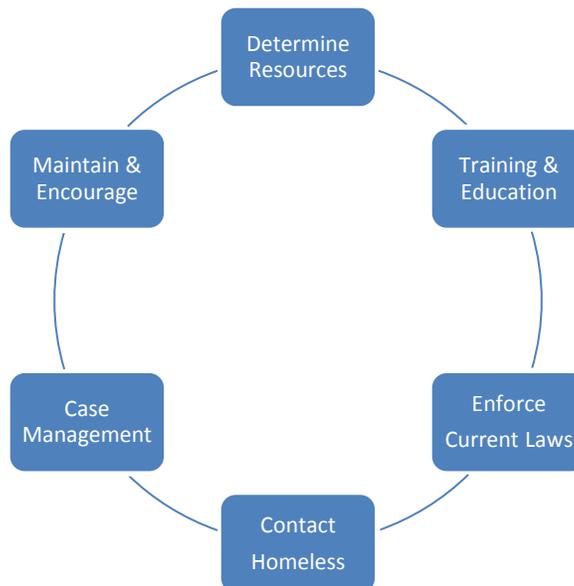
While understanding the specific needs of the homeless is critical, maintaining that relationship and continually encouraging homeless persons to progress is one of the most important goals. Follow-up with homeless persons can be time-intensive and sometimes feel discouraging for officers. However, having a better understanding of the process involved in achieving solutions reveals that it takes time and patience to achieve the end goal. Housing for the homeless and a feeling of independence or ownership of their lives is essential. It is important that officers maintain relationships with the homeless and key contacts within the

resource network of case managers, volunteers, and others that help direct the available resources in the county.

Six Goals that Work Together for One Central Goal

All of these goals are elements in achieving one main goal: self-sufficiency and dignity for the homeless. Working towards a solution for the homeless in any city, is a challenge for police officers. Through training and education, officers will understand what services are available to homeless persons. The officer can then take this information and utilize it in the field, while still enforcing laws as needed to ensure public safety. Officers will need to employ alternative communication techniques when dealing with the homeless to work towards building a level of rapport and trust with them.

Through building this relationship and maintaining it, an officer will better understand the unique needs of that individual. Using that information, the officers can work with county resources to help determine a path of change that will hopefully lead the homeless person to achieve independence and dignity.



Short-term Solutions & Recommendations:

Expansion of the highly successful Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to Menlo Park. The existing HOT teams in the county conduct intensive outreach to, and engagement with, chronically homeless people while helping them get permanent supportive housing. Teams

in San Mateo have assisted hundreds of homeless over the past several years. The HOT program will help reduce the incidence of chronic homelessness in Menlo Park.

Homeless-specific FI cards. With building a MPPD specific HOT team, the creation of field-interview cards specifically tailored to understanding a homeless person or family are an important step. Patrol officers could fill out this information and then pass it on to an Outreach officer for follow-up.

Officer training and education. MPPD-patrol officers will need to be trained and educated on the specifics of alternative communication techniques with the homeless, utilizing the homeless specific FI cards, and follow-up with relevant Outreach personnel.

Specialized Homeless Outreach position. Creation of a specific role for a sworn officer to work as part of the Homeless Outreach Team. This officer would be responsible for regular training and education with regards to the homeless and mental health issues. The officer would also be responsible for disseminating relevant training and other information to patrol officers for implementation into the field. The Outreach officer(s) would need to maintain the field interview information and keep up-to-date on contacts and resources within the county. Networking is critical to the success of any homeless outreach program.

Homeless resource card. The creation of weather-resistant information cards for distribution by patrol and Outreach officers. These information cards would contain up-to-date information such as shelter phone numbers and addresses, locations of hot meals and the times they are served, locations of drop-in centers and their times, and various other services.

One suggestion comes from the publication *No Safe Place*, distributed by *The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty*:

Public libraries often serve as a central gathering place for homeless people because libraries offer free access to computers and to the internet, allowing people to set up an email account, look for social services, search for jobs, and connect with the outside world. Libraries, therefore, are prime locations for making contact with homeless people and helping them to connect with the services that they need.

In recognition of this, the San Francisco Public Library hired a full-time social worker to serve the library's homeless patrons. The social worker, a trained and licensed therapist, develops relationships with homeless library visitors and helps them to access stable housing. The program served as a model for similar programs in Salt Lake City, Philadelphia, the District of Columbia, and Sacramento.

Long-term Solutions to Consider

Interactive Kiosk. As a city well-regarded for being high-tech and progressive, Menlo Park can further lead the way by creating an interactive kiosk computer inside the MPPD Lobby. This kiosk would contain information for the homeless, or anyone else, to view details on currently available resources for meals, shelters, housing, medical services, or other relevant information.

Establishment of more homeless services within the city. Menlo Park currently offers homeless services in the form of discounted housing for veterans at the VA, transitional housing for families at The Haven House, meals at Trinity Church, and one month a year, Menlo Presbyterian Church acts as a temporary homeless shelter via Hotel De Zink that sleeps 15 persons for as long as 30 days.

The establishment of more permanent facilities. Established resources that are available all year for emergency housing of individuals is a step in the direction of finding homes for the homeless. Even facilities available throughout the week for hot meals, clothing, and showering or clothes-washing services are steps towards removing chronic homeless from streets. With buy-in from community members, groups, and businesses, this type of solution could have a positive effect on the homeless persons and the Menlo Park community as a whole.

Housing First Program. Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing the homeless with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve.

Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible, without time limits;
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis; and
- A standard lease agreement to housing – as opposed to mandated therapy or services compliance.

The City of San Mateo has a very unique take on Housing First with their Vendome facility. This historic building was purchased by the city and renovated in 2009 to house 16 of the most chronically homeless men and women as part of the non-profit Shelter Network of San Mateo County. Individuals have their own rooms and use one-third of their income to pay rent. This is permanent supportive housing for people and there is a live-in counselor that manages cases for the residents ensuring they continue to get county services they need. Residents also develop community through house meetings, weekly chores, and beautification projects.

It was astounding to note the impact on the city of San Mateo and their police department by creation of The Vendome housing project.

Before The Vendome the city of San Mateo incurred a cost of approximately \$195.93 per homeless person per month in medical expenses. Police contacts were approximately 38.46 per person, per month. After establishment of The Vendome, the medical costs dropped 85% to \$28.98 per person, per month. Police contacts fell to almost nothing, at 0.04 contacts per person, per month.

In the five years prior to the HOT/Vendome program, the City of San Mateo Police Department accrued \$141,675 in expenses from these homeless individuals. Subsequent to permanent housing, police expenses dropped to an average of \$8.18, per person, per month.

Brian Greenberg, the Director of Programs and Services at Shelter Network noted that *“Not only did The Vendome and HOT program reduce the cost of homelessness for the City, but it visibly improved the quality of life for the community: businesses, residents, and the formerly homeless population in downtown San Mateo”*.

Conclusion

While the issue of understanding and solving homelessness is a complex and apparently daunting task, there are solutions available to help move things in a positive direction. With the proper understanding of the resources available in the county and the training of MPPD officers on the topics of homelessness and mental health, significant progress can be made towards successfully working with the homeless in determining the best solutions for them and ultimately the safety and well-being off all people in Menlo Park.

Appendices

2013 San Mateo County Homeless Census and Survey Final Report (May 2013)

Prepared by the San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Center on Homelessness Data Analysis by Kate Bristol Consulting and Philliber Research Associates



2013 SAN MATEO COUNTY HOMELESS CENSUS AND SURVEY

FINAL REPORT

May 2013

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2013 San Mateo County Homeless Census And Survey

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the San Mateo County 2013 Homeless Census and Survey (“the Census and Survey”) is to gather and analyze information to help us understand who is homeless in our community, why they are homeless and what interventions they need to end their homelessness. This data forms the basis for effective planning to solve this complex and long-standing problem. The San Mateo County Human Services Agency’s Center on Homelessness the San Mateo County Continuum of Care Steering Committee were responsible for overseeing this data collection effort, with assistance from a broad group of community partners, including non-profit social service providers, city and town governments, and homeless and formerly homeless individuals.

The Census and Survey was designed to meet two related sets of data needs. The first is the requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that communities applying for McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance funds (also known as Continuum of Care or “CoC” funds) must conduct a point-in-time count of homeless people a minimum of every two years. These counts are required to take place in the last ten days of January. The Census and Survey was conducted in January 2013 to meet this HUD requirement. The previous HUD-mandated count was conducted in January 2011.

The second set of data needs that the Census and Survey is designed to meet are those outlined in “Housing Our People Effectively (HOPE): Ending Homelessness in San Mateo County” (the “HOPE Plan.”) This Plan is the result of a year-long process that began in 2005 and incorporated the experiences and expertise of over 200 stakeholders, including members of the business, nonprofit and government sectors. The HOPE Plan lays out concrete strategies designed to end homelessness in our community within 10 years. Plan implementation is overseen by the HOPE Inter Agency Council (IAC). The bi-annual Census and Survey provides data the IAC and the community needs to guide the implementation of the HOPE Plan, by collecting and analyzing a wealth of additional information beyond what is required by HUD. This data allows for a more complete understanding of who is homeless, why they are homeless, and what they need to end their homelessness, and helps ensure that the interventions undertaken through HOPE are targeted to achieve the best possible results.

II. METHODOLOGY

The 2013 Census and Survey consisted of two main components:

1. **The Homeless Census (“the census”)**, a point-in-time count of homeless persons living on the streets, in vehicles, homeless shelters, transitional housing and institutional settings (jails, hospitals, substance abuse treatment programs) on the night of January 24th, 2013¹.

¹ The shelter portion of the Census counted people occupying beds on the night of Jan. 23rd/early morning of Jan. 24th. The street count portion of the count began at 5:00 a.m. on Jan. 24th and was designed to capture data on people sleeping outdoors or in vehicle on the night of Jan. 23/early morning Jan. 24.

2. **The Homeless Survey (“the survey”)**, consisting of interviews with a representative sample of 192 unsheltered homeless people conducted over a two-week period between January 28 and February 11, 2013. Homeless people who were interviewed were asked to respond to a one-page questionnaire designed to elicit demographic information (e.g. age, gender, disabilities, veteran status), as well as information about how long and how many times they have been homeless, and their use of benefits and services.

The Census and Survey used the definition of homelessness established in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as the basis for determining who to include and exclude:

1. An individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and
2. An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:
 - a. A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); or
 - b. An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
 - c. A public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition does not include people who are “at-risk” of homelessness (i.e. living in unstable housing situations) or those who are “couch surfing” (i.e. those who “float” from location to location).

Additional details about the methodology used in the Census and Survey may be found in Appendix 1.

III. FINDINGS

A. Homeless Census

The sections below provide a summary of key findings from the 2013 Homeless Census. Complete Census data may be found in Appendix 2.

1. Number of Homeless People

The 2013 point-in-time homeless census determined that there were **2,281 homeless people in San Mateo County on the night of January 23, 2013** comprised of:

- 1,299 unsheltered homeless people (living on streets, in vehicles, in homeless encampments) and,
- 982 sheltered homeless people (in emergency shelters, transitional housing, motel voucher programs, and institutions (residential treatment, jails, and hospitals).

Using an annualization formula developed by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, there are an estimated **7,151 homeless people in San Mateo County on an annual basis.**

2. Number of Homeless Households

The 2,281 homeless people counted comprised **1,835 households** as follows:

- 1,646 households consisting of only adults (90%);
- 180 households with adults and children (10%)
- 9 households with only children (unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18)

The chart below summarizes the locations where these households were living.

Location	HH with Only Adults	HH with Only Children	HH with Adults and Children	Total Households
Street Count				
Households Observed on Streets	351	0	1	352
Households in Cars	142	0	24	768
Households in RVs	240	0	40	
Households in Encampments	322	0	0	
Subtotal Street Count	1,055	0	65	1,120
Shelter Count				
Households in Emergency Shelters	215	6	7	228
Households in Motel Voucher Programs	0	0	11	11
Households in Transitional Housing	97	3	97	197
Households in Institutions ²	279	0	0	279
Subtotal Shelter Count	591	9	115	715
TOTAL HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS	1,646	9	180	1,835

² Jails, hospitals, residential treatment programs.

3. Comparison of Year to Year Results

a. Summary of Changes

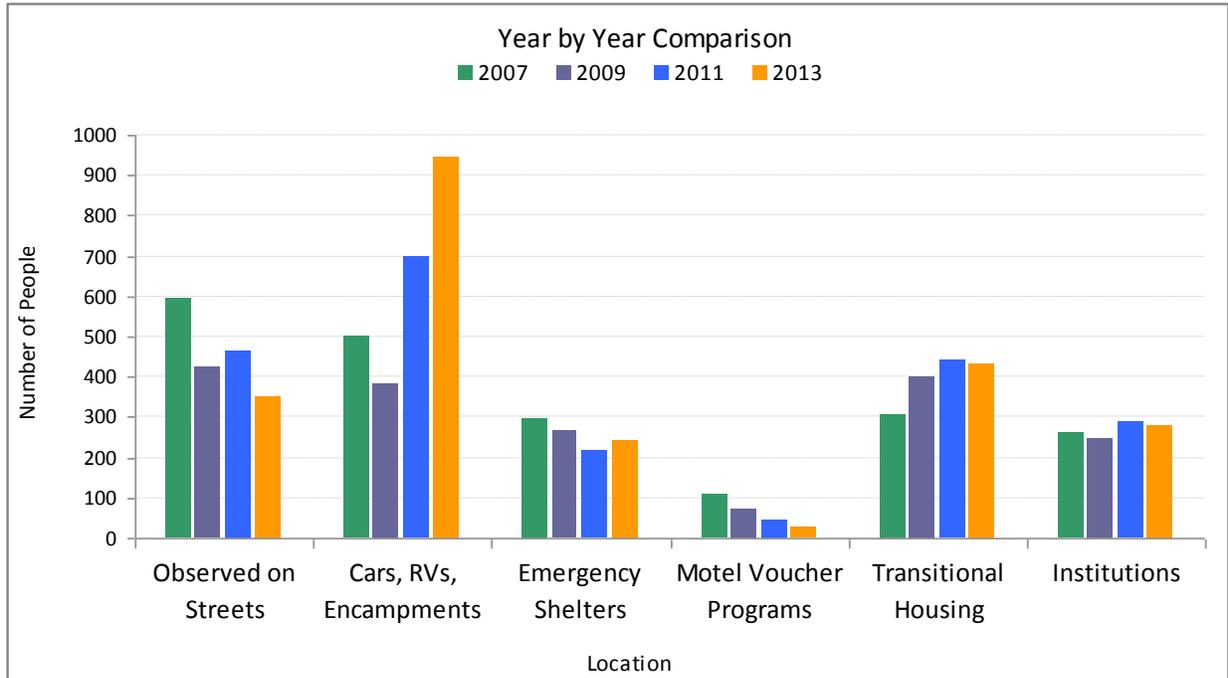


Table – Comparison of Year to Year Results						
Location	2007	2009	2011	2013	Net Change (11-13)	% Change (11-13)
Street Count						
People Observed on Streets	596	422	466	353	-113	-24%
People in Cars	498 ³	96	126	231	105	83%
People RVs		170	246	392	146	59%
People in Encampments		115	324	322	-2	-1%
Subtotal Street Count	1,094	803	1,162	1,299	137	12%
Shelter Count						
People in Emergency Shelters	296	267	215	243	28	10%
People in Motel Voucher Programs	107	74	43	29	-14	-19%
People in Transitional Housing	306	403	441	431	-10	-2%
People in Institutions	261	249	288	279	-9	-4%
Subtotal Shelter Count	970	993	987	982	-5	-1%
TOTAL HOMELESS PEOPLE	2,064	1,796	2,149	2,281	132	6%

³ In 2007 data was collected on cars, RVs and encampment as a single category, so no breakdown is available.

b. Analysis of Changes

Unsheltered Homeless People

As illustrated in the chart above, the number of people observed on the streets on the night of the count decreased from 466 in 2011 to 353 in 2013, a 27% decrease. Over the past four counts (2007- 2013), there has been a relatively steady decline in numbers of people on the streets. However, the number of people living in cars, RVs and encampments increased significantly from 2011 to 2013, rising from 696 to 946, or 66%. These numbers have also been increasing fairly consistently since the 2007 count.

As noted in previous reports, the reason for the increases in numbers of homeless people living in vehicles and camps over the past several counts is not known. High unemployment, rising rents and lack of affordable housing are all likely causes of the increase. San Mateo County rents went up 17% in the past year alone. The Center on Homelessness also believes the larger numbers are the result of having increasingly better information available to enumerators about where to find homeless people. Each year since 2007, the Human Services Agency and its partners have recruited more “homeless guides” to conduct enumeration. The guides are currently homeless individuals who have first-hand knowledge about the locations where unsheltered homeless people tend to sleep at night. Each guide is assigned to an enumeration team in a location with which he or she is familiar. As result, the teams are increasingly more effective at targeting particular locations to focus their efforts and locating more homeless people living in vehicles and camps.

It should also be noted that counting certain types of vehicles, particularly RVs, is an inexact process. People sleeping in cars can generally be assumed to be homeless, since cars are not designed as living spaces. RVs, however, are designed to be lived in and provide adequate living facilities provided there are electrical and sewer hookups available. While enumerators were instructed only to count RVs with sleeping occupants that were parked on the street and did not appear to be connected to services, some of the RVs counted probably did not have homeless occupants. See Appendix 1, Methodology, for a further discussion of the challenges of counting homeless people living in RVs.

Sheltered Homeless People

Unlike the unsheltered homeless count, the sheltered count changed very little, decreasing by 1% from 2011 to 2013. This result was expected, given that the inventory of available shelter and transitional housing beds has changed relatively little in the past two years.

Total Number of Homeless People

Overall, the 2013 homeless count of 2,281 total people represented a 6% increase compared to 2011. This was largely a result of the increase in people observed in vehicles and encampments, as discussed above. Looking at the long-term trend, the total number of homeless people has been rising slowly since 2007 (with the exception of a drop in 2009).

Homeless Families With Children

As in prior years, the enumerators counted very few unsheltered homeless families with children. Of the 180 family households counted in 2013, 115 (64%) were living in shelters, 64 (36%) were in cars or RVs, and only 1 (<1%) was observed on the street. The very low numbers of unsheltered homeless families on the street reflects the County's ongoing commitment to preventing family homelessness and its investment in programs targeting families with children, such as the Motel Voucher Program, Inclement Weather Voucher Program, and homeless prevention programs operated by the Core Service Agency Network.

The 2013 data on homeless families is consistent with the experience of San Mateo County service providers who observe that homeless families with children rarely live on the streets and are much more likely to reside in shelters or cars. Many families with children also live in places that do not meet the HUD standard of homelessness (i.e. they are living temporarily with friends or families) yet they are very precariously housed. See the section on "Hidden Homelessness," below for more details.

The relative percentages of homeless households with children versus those without children increased slightly from 2011 to 2013. In 2011, 8% of all homeless households counted (both sheltered and unsheltered) were families with children compared to 10% in 2009.

See Appendix 2 for additional data on household composition of sheltered and unsheltered people.

4. Geographic Breakdown

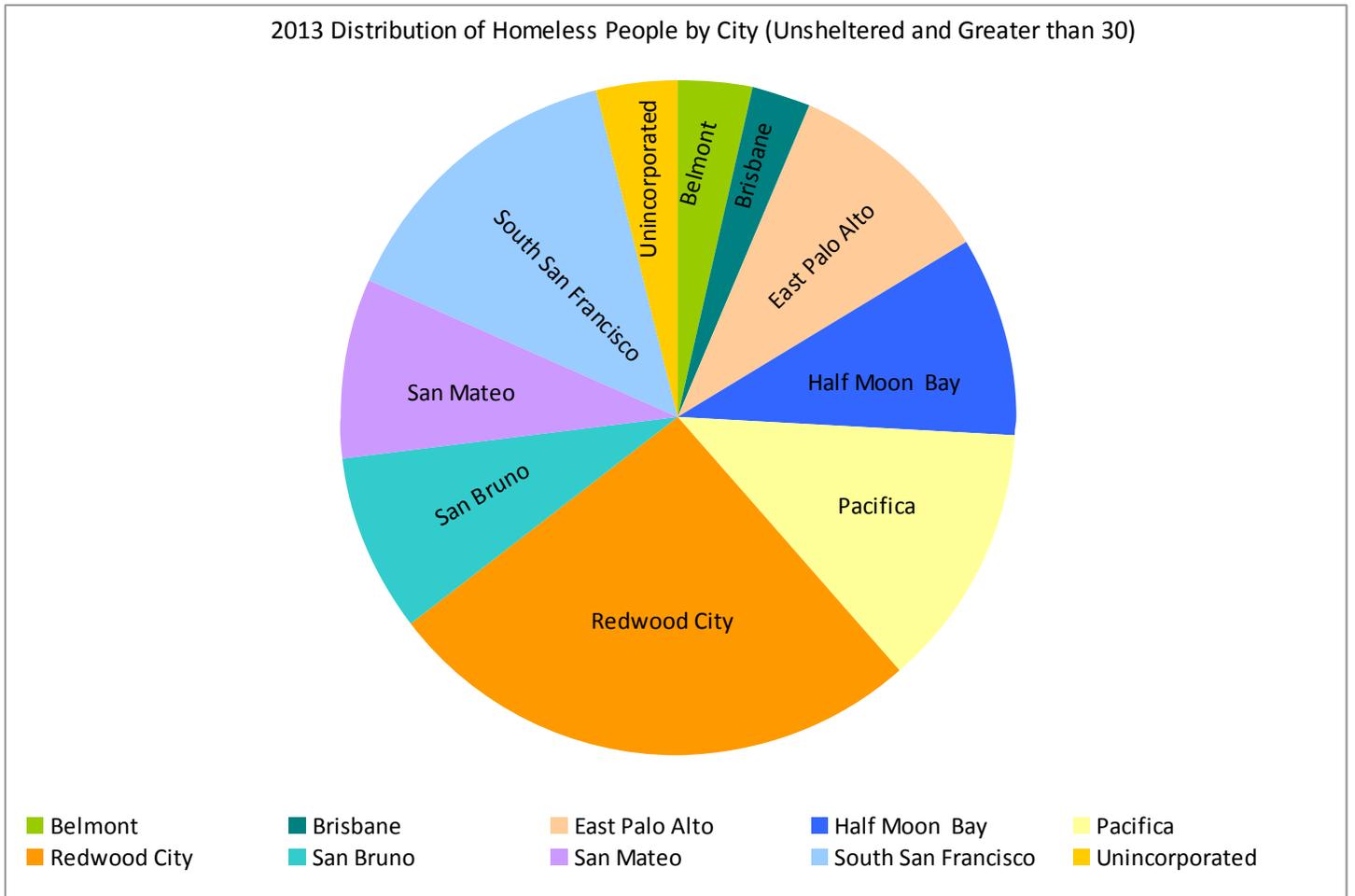
a. 2013 Distribution of Homeless People by City

The following table summarize the geographic distribution of the homeless people who were counted in the 2013 Census. Note that data is collected according to Census Tract, rather than by jurisdiction. Since some Census Tracts span multiple jurisdictions, data for some jurisdictions may include people in neighboring areas. For example, data for Half Moon Bay may include some individuals counted outside the city boundaries.

Table - 2013 Distribution of Homeless People by City			
City	Sheltered⁴	Unsheltered	Total
Airport	0	5	5
Atherton	0	0	0
Belmont	0	43	43
Brisbane	4	34	38
Burlingame	0	13	13
Colma	0	7	7
Daly City	50	27	77
East Palo Alto	52	119	171
Foster City	0	7	7
Half Moon Bay	0	112	112
Hillsborough	0	0	0
Menlo Park	142	16	158
Millbrae	0	21	21
Pacifica	0	150	150
Portola Valley	0	2	2
Redwood City	338	307	645
San Bruno	7	101	108
San Carlos	0	10	10
San Mateo	182	103	285
South San Francisco	88	172	260
Unincorporated	0	46	46
Woodside	0	7	7
Scattered Site Programs	119	0	119
TOTAL	982	1,299	2,281

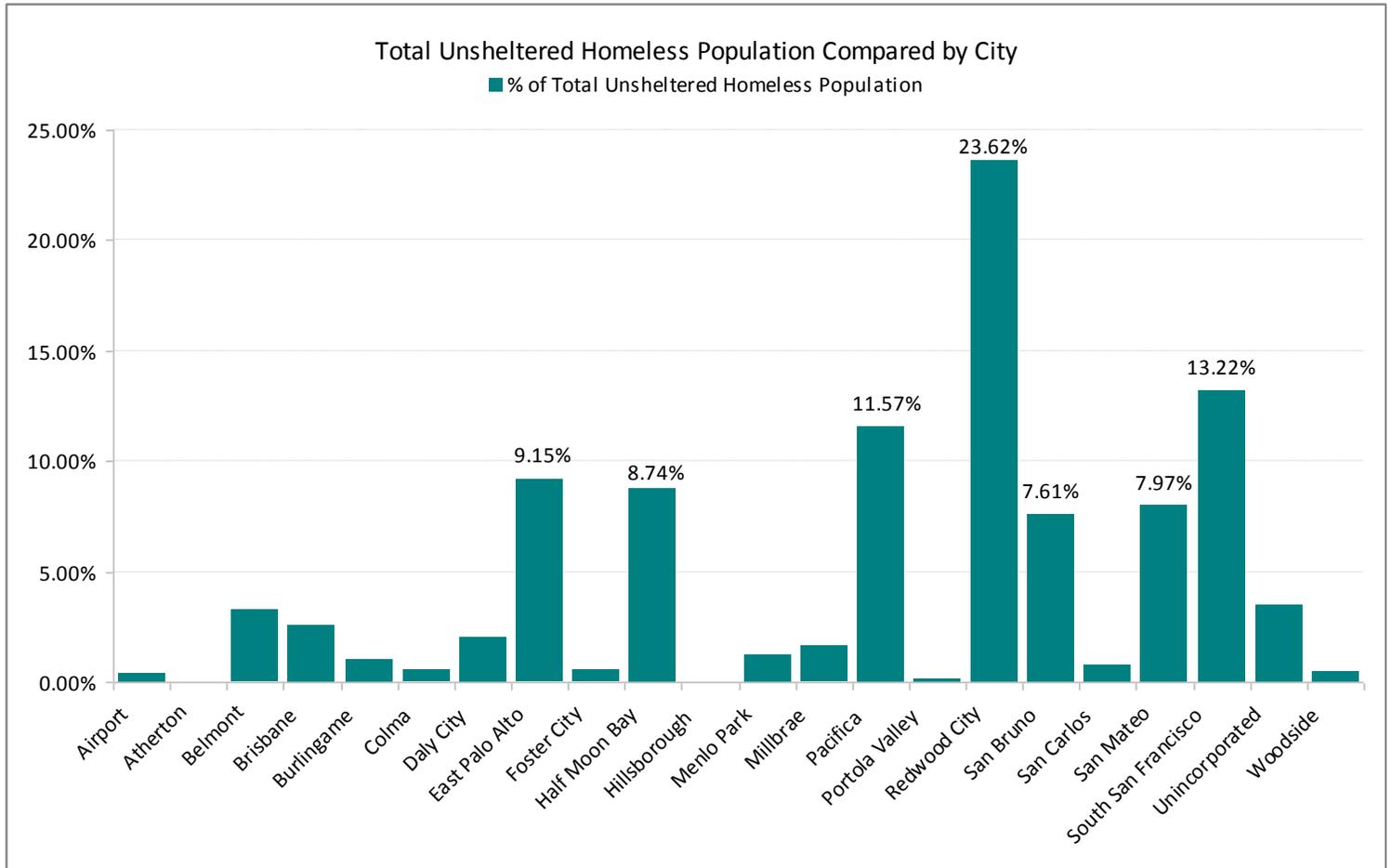
⁴ Sheltered homeless figures represent the number of people occupying shelter beds located in the identified city.

The chart below show the distribution of unsheltered homeless people by city.



b. Unsheltered Homeless Population By City Compared to General Population

The chart and table below provide an analysis of the total number of unsheltered people⁵ counted in each jurisdiction compared to the total population of people in each jurisdiction.



⁵ Note that this data does not include sheltered homeless people (those living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, etc.). The inclusion of the sheltered homeless people would skew the data towards those jurisdictions with the largest numbers of shelters and transitional housing programs.

Table - Unsheltered Homeless Population By City Compared to General Population				
City	General Population⁶	% of General Population	Unsheltered Homeless Population	% of Total Unsheltered Homeless Population
Airport	NA	NA	5	0.38%
Atherton	6,995	0.96%	0	0.00%
Belmont	26,147	3.60%	43	3.29%
Brisbane	4,334	0.60%	34	2.59%
Burlingame	29,157	4.01%	13	0.99%
Colma	1,815	0.25%	7	0.53%
Daly City	102,362	14.08%	27	2.05%
East Palo Alto	28,502	3.92%	119	9.15%
Foster City	30,943	4.26%	7	0.53%
Half Moon Bay	11,464	1.58%	114	8.74%
Hillsborough	10,958	1.51%	0	0.00%
Menlo Park	32,412	4.46%	16	1.21%
Millbrae	21,793	3.00%	21	1.60%
Pacifica	37,691	5.18%	150	11.57%
Portola Valley	4,406	0.61%	2	0.15%
Redwood City	77,745	10.69%	307	23.62%
San Bruno	41,616	5.72%	99	7.61%
San Carlos	28,755	3.95%	10	0.76%
San Mateo	98,391	13.53%	103	7.97%
South San Francisco	64,409	8.86%	172	13.22%
Unincorporated	61,963	8.52%	46	3.51%
Woodside	5,351	0.74%	7	0.50%
TOTAL	727,209	100.00%	1,299	99.98%

As indicated in this chart, several cities have a higher percentage of the unsheltered homeless population than their share of the general population. These include East Palo Alto, Half Moon Bay, Pacifica, Redwood City and South San Francisco. Similar results were found in 2011 and 2009. The higher numbers of homeless people in certain jurisdictions tends to correlate with higher poverty levels in those communities.

⁶ Data Source: US Census, July 1, 2011 Population Estimates

c. Comparison of 2007 to 2013 Data By City

The table below provides a comparison of the results of the unsheltered homeless count in 2007 through 2013, broken out by city.

Table - Comparison of 2007 to 2013 Data By City						
City	2007 Count	2009 Count	2011 Count	2013 Count	Net Change (11-13)	Percent Change (11-13)
Airport	16	4	9	5	-4	-44%
Atherton	0	0	1	0	-1	-100%
Belmont	12	5	1	43	42	4176%
Brisbane	11	1	0	34	34	3400%
Burlingame	20	8	3	13	10	331%
Colma	2	0	1	7	6	592%
Daly City	42	49	44	27	-17	-39%
East Palo Alto	222	204	385	119	-266	-69%
Foster City	14	0	0	7	7	700%
Half Moon Bay	74	19	41	114	73	177%
Hillsborough	16	0	0	0	0	0%
Menlo Park	52	25	72	16	-56	-78%
Millbrae	16	1	1	21	20	1976%
Pacifica	7	16	95	150	55	58%
Portola Valley	13	3	16	2	-14	-88%
Redwood City	212	220	233	307	74	32%
San Bruno	31	34	14	99	85	606%
San Carlos	9	11	9	10	1	10%
San Mateo	62	99	68	103	35	52%
South San Francisco	97	7	122	172	50	41%
Unincorporated	162	95	47	46	-1	-3%
Woodside	4	2	0	7	7	700%
TOTAL	1,094	803	1,162	1,299	137	12%

As the table illustrates, the overall number of homeless people in San Mateo County has changed modestly over the past 8 years. However, certain jurisdictions have experienced significant fluctuations in the numbers of homeless people over the past four bi-annual counts. This may reflect the mobility of the homeless population within the County. See appendix 2A for additional breakdowns by city, including data on the numbers of people observed on the street, in cars, in vans/RVs, and in encampments in each city and how those numbers have changed from count to count.

5. “Hidden” Homelessness

While many of the homeless people in San Mateo County are either residing in shelters or visible on the streets or in vehicles, there are also many homeless people in places that are not easily accessible to enumerators. These “hidden” homeless populations include individuals who live in structures not meant for human habitation, such as storage sheds, unconverted garages, shacks, bus stations, etc. These individuals fall under HUD’s official definition of homelessness, but they typically are not found during homeless counts because they are not visible on the streets.

Additionally, there are substantial numbers of people who stay temporarily in the homes of friends or family but who lack their own permanent housing. People who shelter temporarily with friends or family are not considered officially homeless according to HUD definitions of homelessness, but rather as “unstably housed,” or “at-risk of homelessness.” In the HOPE Plan, people who stay temporarily with family and friends are categorized as “at-risk” of homelessness. However, these individuals often self-identify as homeless and many homeless service providers and advocates believe they should be included in official homeless counts.

In the past two bi-annual counts (2009 and 2011), the Center on Homelessness conducted a “Hidden Homeless Study” to attempt to further analyze the number of people who are missed during the one night census. The 2011 study revealed that an estimated 9% of homeless people seeking services from providers during the three days following the count were probably missed because they lived in places that would not be visible (e.g. sheds, garages, on private property, etc.). The study further found a substantial number of people who were living temporarily with family and friends who considered themselves to be homeless even though they would not meet the HUD definition. These households were more likely to be families with children, confirming the anecdotal evidence from service providers that homeless families are more likely than single adults to stay temporarily in the homes of family members or friends.

There was no Hidden Homeless Study conducted in 2013. A description of the methodology for the 2011 Hidden Homeless Study may be found in the 2011 Census and Survey Report, which can be found on the HOPE website at <http://www.smchsa.org/hope>

B. Homeless Survey

For the 2013 Homeless Survey, volunteers conducted interviews with a representative sample of 192 unsheltered homeless people using a two-page questionnaire. The sections below provide a summary of key findings from the Homeless Survey, as well data on sheltered homeless people from the County’s HMIS system where available and relevant. Complete Homeless Survey data may be found in Appendix 3.

1. Demographic Data

The results of the 2013 unsheltered homeless survey indicated that the typical unsheltered homeless person in San Mateo County is a single man with at least one disability. Of those surveyed, 94% were single adults or adults living with other adults, 71% were men, and 80% had at least one disability. The most commonly cited disabilities were alcohol or drug problems (72%), physical disability (52%), chronic health problems (47%), and mental illness (37%). This data was consistent with the results from the 2011 survey, though all categories of disability showed small increases.

The population of sheltered homeless people looks somewhat different than the unsheltered population. While this population is still predominantly single and male, there is a greater representation of families. Of the homeless adults living in shelters, transitional housing and institutional settings, 21% are in families with children, compared to only 6% of the unsheltered adults. Sheltered adults were 60% male and 40% female. Levels of disability are also somewhat lower among the sheltered population compared to the unsheltered population: only 10% reported having a mental illness and 8% chronic substance use.

The racial and ethnic composition of the unsheltered homeless population was 60% White, 19% Latino, 13% Black or African-American, and 10% other races and ethnicities. This data reveals that some groups are over- or under-represented among homeless people in San Mateo County. African Americans represent only 3% of the total County population, yet are 13% of the homeless population. Many of the African Americans in San Mateo County live in the south county communities of East Palo Alto and Redwood City, which, as noted earlier, have a disproportional number of homeless people. Latinos are 25% of the total population but only 19% of the homeless people surveyed.

Of the unsheltered homeless people counted, 11% were Veterans (having either served in the U.S. Armed Forces and/or in the National Guard or as Reservists). This represented a decrease from 2011 when 13% of unsheltered homeless people were veterans, and may reflect increases in the availability of housing resources for this population since ending veteran homelessness has been made a key priority both locally and at the federal level. Among the sheltered people counted in the HMIS system, 24% were veterans, compared to only 10% in 2011. This reflects the addition of a number of shelter and transitional housing beds funded by the VA to the sheltered count, rather than an expansion in the number of sheltered homeless veterans.

A very high proportion of unsheltered homeless people in San Mateo County have been homeless repeatedly and/or for long periods of time. The survey found that 65% were “chronically” homeless, meaning that they were disabled and had been homeless for longer than 12 months or for 4 times in the past 3 years. This represented an increase from 2011, when only 46% were chronically homeless. The rise in chronic homeless is likely due to the same factors that have contributed to the overall increase in homelessness: high unemployment, rising rents and lack of affordable housing.

The typical homeless person has strong connections to San Mateo County. Of those who responded to the survey, 87% reported that that they were living in San Mateo County at the time they became homeless and 69% indicated that their hometown was in San Mateo County.

2. Service Utilization

In addition to providing demographic data, the survey also provided critical data about the services that unsheltered homeless people need. Given their high rates of disability, it was not surprising that the survey found high rates of service use among unsheltered homeless people. Of those surveyed, only 11% indicated that they were not accessing some form of social services (e.g. health care, mental health and substance use services, job training, transportation assistance, free meals, emergency shelter etc.).

The survey documented some significant improvements in filling service gaps compared to 2011. In the prior survey, only 20% of people with mental illness reported receiving mental health services. In 2013 this number increased to 41%. In 2011, only 32% of veterans reported receiving veterans benefits, while in 2013 71% of veterans reported receiving some form of services for veterans.⁷ This data suggests that focused efforts by the County departments, the VA, and service providers to conduct outreach to homeless veterans is having an impact.

The survey also documented that homeless people tend to be frequent users of emergency services, which are not only very expensive but also are not highly effective in helping them become more stable. Of those surveyed, 36% reported that the main place they receive medical care is the emergency room and another 8% indicated they received no medical care at all. Only 9% reported using community clinics, 7% a mobile healthcare van, and 22% the County General Hospital (San Mateo Medical Center).

Criminal justice system involvement was prevalent among those surveyed but declined compared to 2011. In 2013 14% of those surveyed reported being on probation or parole. This was only about half the rate found in 2011 when 27% indicated they were on probation or parole. The survey also found a lower rate of involvement with the foster care system, with 10% reporting in 2013 that they had been in foster care compared to 18% in 2011. However, the 2013 data was similar to 2009 when 11% indicated they had been in foster care. The 2013 survey data on domestic violence was consistent with 2011. In both years 16% of respondents indicated they had been victims of domestic or partner violence.

Apart from the 2013 survey, other data sources tell us that homeless people in San Mateo County have very limited incomes. The vast majority are unemployed and those who have any income typically are below the federal poverty level. Low incomes and the high cost of housing are the major reasons for homelessness. Behavioral issues relating to disability are also significant causes of homelessness, with many homeless people reporting substance use or mental illness as a reason for housing loss and/or their inability to secure housing.

⁷ It should be noted that these questions were asked differently in 2011 compared to 2013 so that could have resulted in a higher “yes” response rate in 2013.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

Combining data from 2013, 2011 and 2009, planners, policymakers and service providers have a wealth of data available as they work to expand and improve the system of housing and services for homeless people. The following are some strategies and approaches that have been and will continue to be the highest priorities.

Continuing Areas of Focus

The following strategies are already being implemented and will continue in the coming year:

- Addressing the lack of housing affordability by continuing to create supportive and affordable housing for homeless people and those at-risk of homelessness;
- Continuing to develop specialized outreach to homeless veterans and linking them to available housing resources, particularly the VASH permanent housing program;
- Working with the systems of care whose clients have very high levels of homelessness, particularly the alcohol and drug treatment system, mental health system, and the criminal justice system, to develop strategies for meeting the housing and service needs of these populations
- Coordinating with the health systems on the implementation of the Medicaid expansion authorized through the Affordable Care Act, which should result in many currently uninsured homeless people becoming eligible for health care;
- Recognizing that the majority of homeless people are long-time residents of San Mateo County and embracing joint planning between the County and local jurisdictions to meet their housing and service needs

New Areas of Focus:

- Expansion of the highly successful Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to cover the entire County. The existing HOT teams conduct intensive outreach to and engagement with chronically homeless people and help connect them to permanent supportive housing. Teams in San Mateo and South County have assisted hundreds of clients over the past several years. Increasing the capacity of this program will help reduce the incidence of chronic homelessness.
- Expanding shelter system capacity in the South County in response to the high levels of homelessness in those communities. New emergency shelter capacity should be strongly linked to permanent supportive housing options to ensure there are ways for people to exit the shelter system.
- Addressing the high rate of unemployment among homeless people by exploring strategies to engage and secure employment. In particular, there is a need for specialized

employment and training services that are tailored to meet the needs of chronically homeless people with disabilities. This population requires support in the areas of employment readiness, as well as approaches like supported employment and wage subsidies in order to successfully enter the workforce.

- Over the next year, the Cities, in partnership with the County, should explore additional methodologies for identifying people who are vehicularly housed (particularly those living in RVs) and assessing their need for housing and services. This project may include outreach, engagement and needs assessment surveys.

This report may be downloaded at the HOPE website: <http://www.smchsa.org/hope>