



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 10, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Overview of Pima County Homeless Services and Costs**

Background

The awareness and visibility of those who are homeless and unsheltered in our community has increased significantly since the beginning of the pandemic. Pima County and Tucson are not unique in this experience as communities across the state and the nation are facing a similar issue. The increase in street homelessness is real and is largely due to a lack of low-barrier shelters and affordable housing units. Local shelters continue to operate at a reduced capacity to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Affordable housing inventory has been substantially reduced since the pandemic in part due to declining access to or availability of housing assistance programs for individuals. The County's Community and Workforce Development (CWD) Homeless Services Division has seen a dramatic increase in outreach, assessments for housing, and call-outs for protocols to homeless encampments since Fiscal Year 2019.

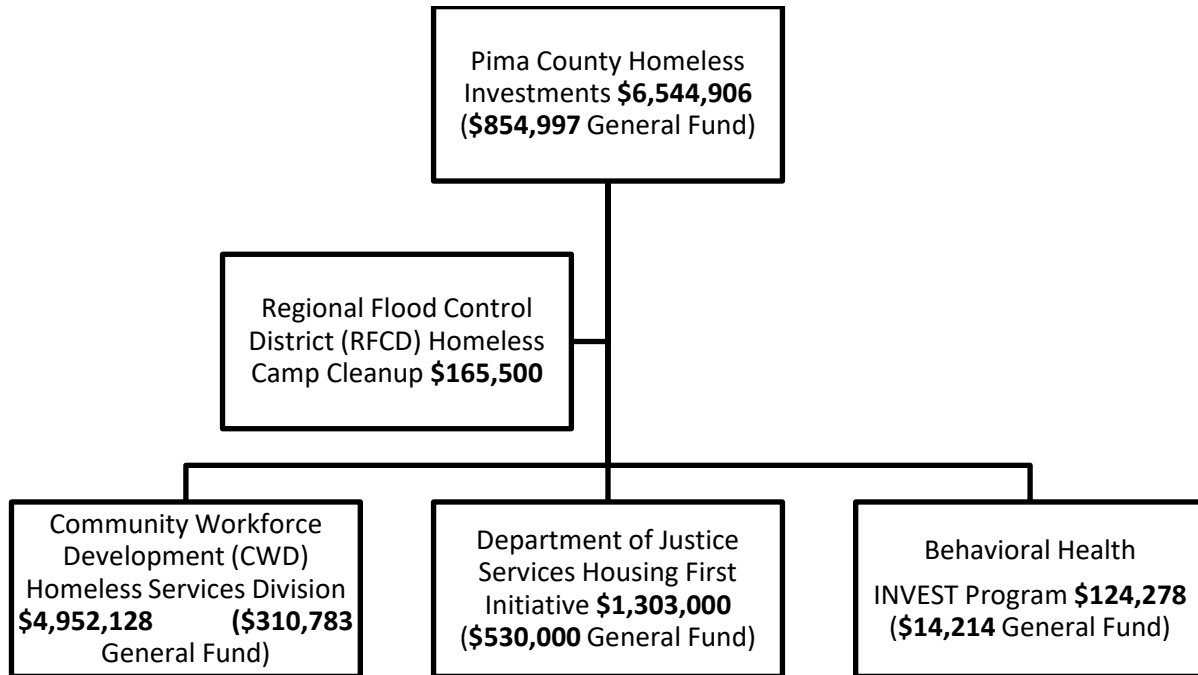
Various groups and organizations in the community have been holding forums on this topic. The County's Small Business Commission has discussed this issue at a number of recent meetings, and there is clearly frustration about what is or is not being done to address street-living homeless populations. As I reported during the October 4, 2022 Board meeting, County Administration has been involved in a number of discussions with the City of Tucson, the Tucson Crime Free Coalition, service providers such as La Frontera, Sheriff Nanos, the courts and pre-trial services. We will also be meeting with a representative from the City of Tempe soon to learn how they are addressing this issue. Additional information will be forthcoming regarding these efforts.

The purpose of this memorandum, however, is to provide an introductory overview of homeless services currently provided by Pima County departments, and the cost of those services.

Pima County Homeless Services and Costs

Last fiscal year, Pima County spent approximately \$6.5 million on homeless services across four departments: Community and Workforce Development's Homeless Services Division, the Justice Services Department's Housing First Initiative, the Behavioral Health Department's

INVEST program and Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative, and Regional Flood Control District’s role in cleaning up homeless camps on property owned.



Homeless Services Division, Community & Workforce Development

Community & Workforce Development’s (CWD) Homeless Services Division provides direct and contracted services to individuals, families, youth and veterans experiencing homelessness throughout Pima County. In partnership with community-based housing and human service organizations, CWD directs annual competitive and formula grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to mitigate the risks and/or effects of homelessness. For Fiscal Year 2021-2022, the County’s Homeless Services Division of CWD and contracted partners served a total of 1,462 individuals and 792 families.

For over three decades, the Homeless Services Division of CWD has served as a trusted community partner for people experiencing homelessness. The Division delivers street outreach, housing assessment, shelter and resource navigation, employment and training opportunities, intake/eligibility for programs, and case management. Direct programing includes:

- Rapid Rehousing - Rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing with rental assistance and supportive services, such as employment training, for a period of 3 to 24 months.

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

Re: **Overview of Pima County Homeless Services and Costs**

October 10, 2022

Page 3

- Transitional Housing - Provides temporary housing and supportive services for no longer than 24 months to individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the goal of interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing.
- Emergency Solutions Grants - Assists homeless households and households at risk of homelessness with supporting services such as street outreach, emergency shelter, homeless prevention, and rapid re-housing.
- Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) - This is the Federal program dedicated to the housing needs of low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

There are four (4) categories of homelessness as defined by HUD:

Category 1: Literally Homeless: Individual/family is living in shelter or places not meant for human habitation or an individual exiting an institution after 90 days or less and was homeless prior to entering institution.

Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness: Individual/family will lose residence within 14 days and lacks resources and/or support to obtain housing by their own means.

Category 3: Homeless Under other Federal Statutes: Individual is an unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 or a family with children who do not qualify as homeless, but lack a permanent fixed place of residence and defined as homeless under other federal programs.

Category 4: Fleeing Domestic Violence: Individual/family who is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and has no other resources or support network to obtain housing.

Individual and family households served in Rapid Rehousing, Transitional housing, and Emergency Solutions Grant funded programs contracted and administered by the Homeless Services Division of CWD must meet Category 1, 2 and 4 definition of homelessness. Additionally, HUD requires eligible households go through a centralized assessment process known as Coordinated Entry. HUD requires the local Continuum of Care, the Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness (TPCH)¹, to establish policies and procedures to govern the community's Coordinated Entry process, including determining the local prioritization of

¹ TPCH is a coalition of community organization, governmental entities, businesses, and individuals that serves as the local Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC). The CoC is a community planning process to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

households for housing openings. Prioritization factors include high service needs and/or risk factors, such as the length of time homeless, chronicity or frequency of returns to homelessness, as well as health and other lifestyle risk factors.

Pima County also serves as the Lead Agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the local continuum of care, the Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness (TPCH). Staff manage data from households at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, preparing and submitting various reports, as well as providing ongoing training and technical assistance for over 305 HMIS users and 40 housing and health and human service agencies throughout Pima County (including incorporated cities and towns).

Housing First – Department of Justice Services

In conjunction with its partners, Pima County launched the Housing First pilot program in 2019 with a goal of providing permanent supportive housing with wrap-around services to 200 homeless individuals who have frequent involvement in the community's justice system, and mental health and/or substance use issues. The program consists of two main components – rapid placement in transitional or “bridge” housing (provided by Old Pueblo Community Services), and then into permanent supportive housing (via Section 8 housing vouchers distributed by the City of Tucson on behalf of HUD). The City's housing department has also played a valuable role in providing technical assistance and guidance, as well as reducing obstacles in the housing voucher process. At each step of the program, Housing First supplements housing vouchers and Medicaid funding with dedicated and highly trained staff who provide case management, supplemental resources (for example, “apartment kits”), and the integration with treatment services (medical, substance use, and mental health).

The premise of the pilot and housing first model is that in achieving housing stability first, and eliminating the chaos of homelessness, supported individuals will be better able to address used that impact their lives. The pilot program was determined, through external evaluation, to not only be viable but also highly successful. The program has positively impacted the lives of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, as well as improving community safety and quantifiably reducing costs to the justice system by 40 percent for Pima County, the City of Tucson and other partners. As a result, the Board supported continuing this program with a budget last fiscal year that included both grant funds and continued general funds.

INVEST, Behavioral Health Department

Pima County's INVEST study focuses on the local jail system, through which adults with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders cycle multiple times each year. After returning to the community from incarceration, these individuals must navigate a complex network to access or continue care. Many end up on the streets, in emergency rooms, and/or back in jail. INVEST seeks to disrupt this cycle of crisis, with a targeted set of screenings, interventions and navigation to mainstream services, that will sustain participants' recovery,

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: **Overview of Pima County Homeless Services and Costs**
October 10, 2022
Page 5

wellness and advancement over the long term, including housing assistance. The total number of individuals who are to be enrolled in the INVEST study is 300; 150 of whom will be assigned to the treatment group and will be offered housing assistance if needed.

\$1 million in ARPA funding has been allocated for the Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative, which is currently under design. The program is intended as a second phase for individuals who successfully complete the existing INVEST program. The supportive housing program is intended to address the housing and therapeutic needs of those individuals who need additional support after completing INVEST but also demonstrate the desire, commitment and potential to be successful (employed, sober, no new criminal charges, engaged in treatment).

Homeless Camp Cleanup, Regional Flood Control District

The Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) is the County's coordinating agency for homeless camp cleanups on County and RFCD owned land or right of way, in both unincorporated and incorporated areas. The RFCD executes these cleanups according to the Pima County Homeless Encampment Protocol (PCHEP) that was revised June 2022. The PCHEP is designed to allow Pima County departments the opportunity to offer humanitarian and human services resources to homeless camp inhabitants and address the facilitation of law enforcement and remediation activities on affected properties.

The RFCD is responsible for major watercourse and large drainage ways in incorporated and unincorporated areas. The majority of homeless camps are along major watercourses and drainageways, which are predominately owned and managed by the RFCD or are on County parks adjacent to the Loop and watercourses. Since RFCD has full time field personnel, RFCD has become the lead in doing the initial ownership determination and field inspections when a homeless camp complaint is received. About 80 percent of the major watercourse lie within the City limits, and RFCD coordinates with the Tucson Police Department and City social services. In unincorporated Pima County, complaints received on private land are provided to the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality who notify the private owners. In 2020, the RFCD also began continual cleanup along the Loop going from one segment to another even if there were no complaints.

For calendar year 2021, 229 sites were reported to RFCD, and after initial ownership determination and field inspections, 35 were cleaned up by the RFCD.

Related Services

Not included in this memorandum are a number of services that Pima County provides directly or via funding agreements with outside organizations, to reduce housing costs for those in need, and provide other services that keep individuals and families housed. These additional mitigation services include rent and utility payments, including emergency rental assistance,

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: **Overview of Pima County Homeless Services and Costs**
October 10, 2022
Page 6

home repair and weatherization, support services to low income households, food, clothing, senior support, youth services, food pantry, Section 8/foster youth vouchers, case management, employment and training services, eviction legal services, and bridge housing at local motel/hotel for those experiencing eviction.

The County will also co-sponsor this year's Arizona Town Hall, which is focused on the intersection of mental health, substance use and homelessness. Those familiar with the Arizona Town Hall format will remember that it includes individual town halls in communities across the State to develop, in a very focused and compressed time, a report documenting the selected problem and possible solutions. Two sessions will occur in Pima County; one hosted by the University of Arizona and the second hosted by Pima County at the Abrams Public Health Center that is aimed at engaging service providers who serve this population as well as individuals with lived experience. The latter event is scheduled for October 27 and more information can be found at www.aztownhall.org.

JKL

c: Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Regina Kelly, Director, Grants Management and Innovation
Paula Perrera, Director, Behavioral Health Department
Suzanne Shields, Director, Regional Flood Control District
Dan Sullivan, Director, Community and Workforce Development
Kate Vesely, Director, Justice Services Department
Jenifer Darland, Deputy Director, Community and Workforce Development
Nicole Fyffe, Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office