



# WORKSHOP

## Seizing the Narrative Around Homelessness and Affordable Housing in California



DEPARTMENT OF  
HOMELESSNESS AND  
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

# Seizing the Narrative Around Homelessness and Affordable Housing in California

League of Women Voters Convention

Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director

San Francisco Department of Homelessness & Supportive Housing

Friday May 19, 2023



# Homelessness in San Francisco

## 2022 PIT Count Estimates

7,754 people experiencing homelessness

57% unsheltered

205 families

1,073 youth under 24

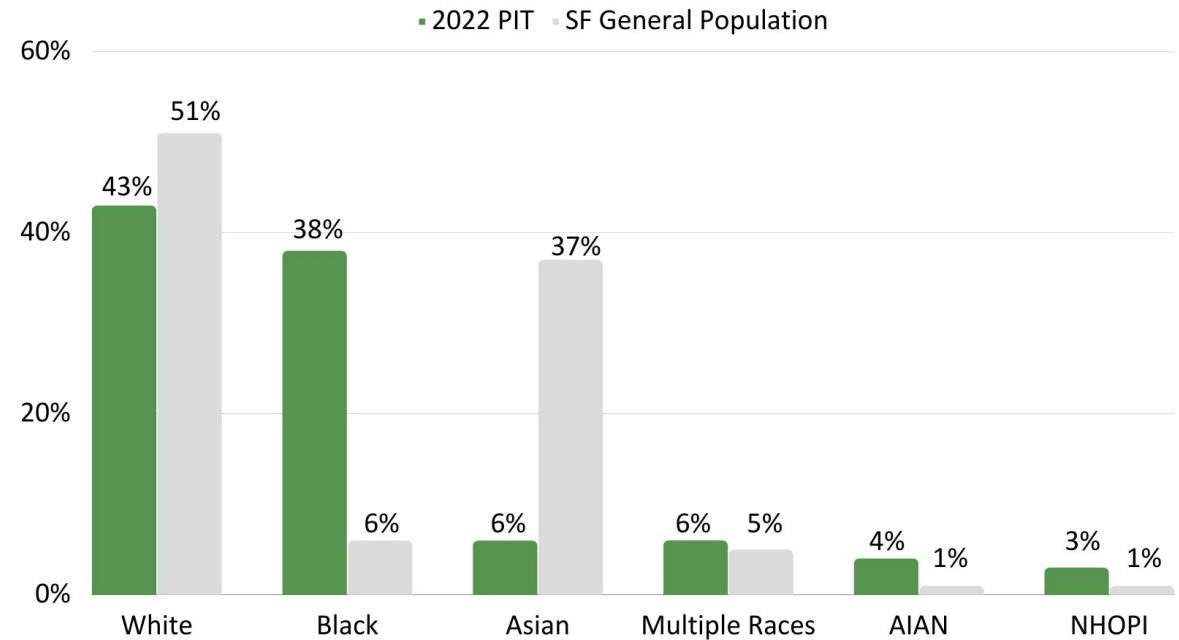
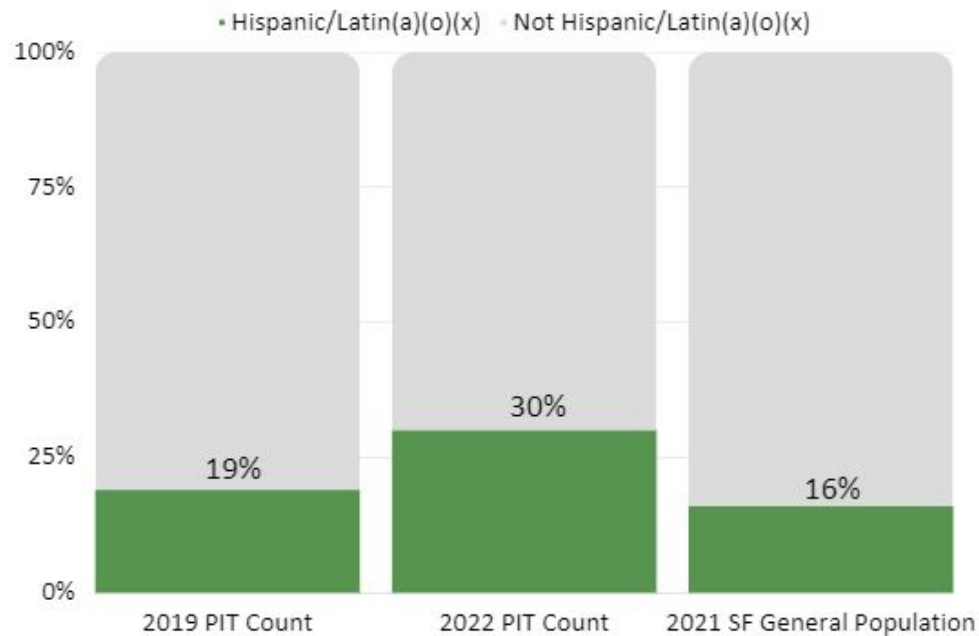
- 2022 Point-in-Time Count provides best estimate of people experiencing homelessness **on a single night** in San Francisco.
  - **3.5% decrease in overall homelessness** and **15% decrease in unsheltered homelessness** since 2019 PIT Count
- Administrative data indicates as many as **20,000 people** may experience homelessness in San Francisco over the course of a year.

# Causes of Homelessness

- Structural forces push people into homelessness
  - Divestment from affordable and public housing
  - Generations of discrimination and injustice
  - Systemic lack of affordable and accessible health care (physical and behavioral)
- The most significant cause of homelessness is the persistent lack of affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes.

# Racial Equity & Homelessness

- **Structural & racial justice issue** - disproportionate impact on people of color.



Who  
experiences  
homelessness  
in our  
community?



## City Stories



DEPARTMENT OF  
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*Homeless, for over 20 years, Thea, a San Francisco native, grew up in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood. Being alone, without family, made life on the streets very difficult and dangerous. Thea recalls, “I had to fight my way day by day.” When Thea connected with the Jennings Safe Sleep team at United Council, it was life changing. Coming in this safe space allowed Thea to as she says, “catch up on years of sleep.” The stability of safe sleep allowed Thea the chance to complete her housing application and today she lives in a studio apartment in the Bayview, the first home she’s had to herself. Now Thea is stably housed she is able to work as a janitor and is close to receiving her high school diploma. Going back to school and working would not be possible without the security of housing, says Thea. To people experiencing homelessness and still struggling, Thea recommends simply asking for and accepting help. “Doors will open for you,” she says*

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Thea  
Former Jennings Safe Sleep Client, 2023

Who  
experiences  
homelessness  
in our  
community?



“

*On her birthday there was an unexpected knock on her RV door from Catholic Charities staff who Rosa calls, “God’s angels”. They told her about an Emergency Housing Voucher program that would allow Rosa to move into an apartment. Fearful of leaving her RV and the only stability she had known for more than a decade at the VTC; she nonetheless viewed the opportunity as “God’s blessing” and went to look at apartments. She found her new one bedroom home in the bustling Excelsior neighborhood using her Emergency Housing Voucher. Nonprofit Bayview Hunters Point Foundation stepped in and supplied furniture, bedding, housewares and everything Rosa needed to turn her apartment into a home.*

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Rosa  
VTC to EHV Client, 2023

Who  
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community?



*Zack grew up in San Francisco in a two-parent home and attended A.P. Giannini High School. His dad passed away when he was 17, which created a hardship for the family. Zack always worked but recently found himself in a situation of housing instability. Couch surfing with family members became a way of life, but Zack never gave up on the hope that he could have a place of his own to call home. When Zack faced challenges such as a lack of credit history, not enough money for a deposit and a total lack of furniture, Brilliant Corners stepped in to help him move out of homelessness. His program manager Casey recalls, “When Zack connected with us, he immediately began looking for housing. He found his new apartment right away, even in this tough rental market.” Today, Zack works fulltime and resides in a SOMA studio. He says, “Brilliant Corners is a wonderful organization. Casey helped me so much and my new landlord gave me a much-needed chance. Finding this housing happened just in time and I’m forever grateful.”*

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Zack  
EHV Client, 2023



# Changing the Narrative

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- Focus on the human experience
- Focus on systemic causes
- Focus on solutions and success
- Focus on hope
- Focus on the impact everyone can make on changing the crisis of homelessness in California.





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# Thank you!

Learn: [hsh.sfgov.org](https://hsh.sfgov.org) | Like: [@SanFranciscoHSH](https://www.instagram.com/SanFranciscoHSH) | Follow: [@SF\\_HSH](https://www.instagram.com/SF_HSH)

# Seizing the Narrative Around Homelessness and Affordable Housing in California

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Ryan Finnigan

Senior Research Associate

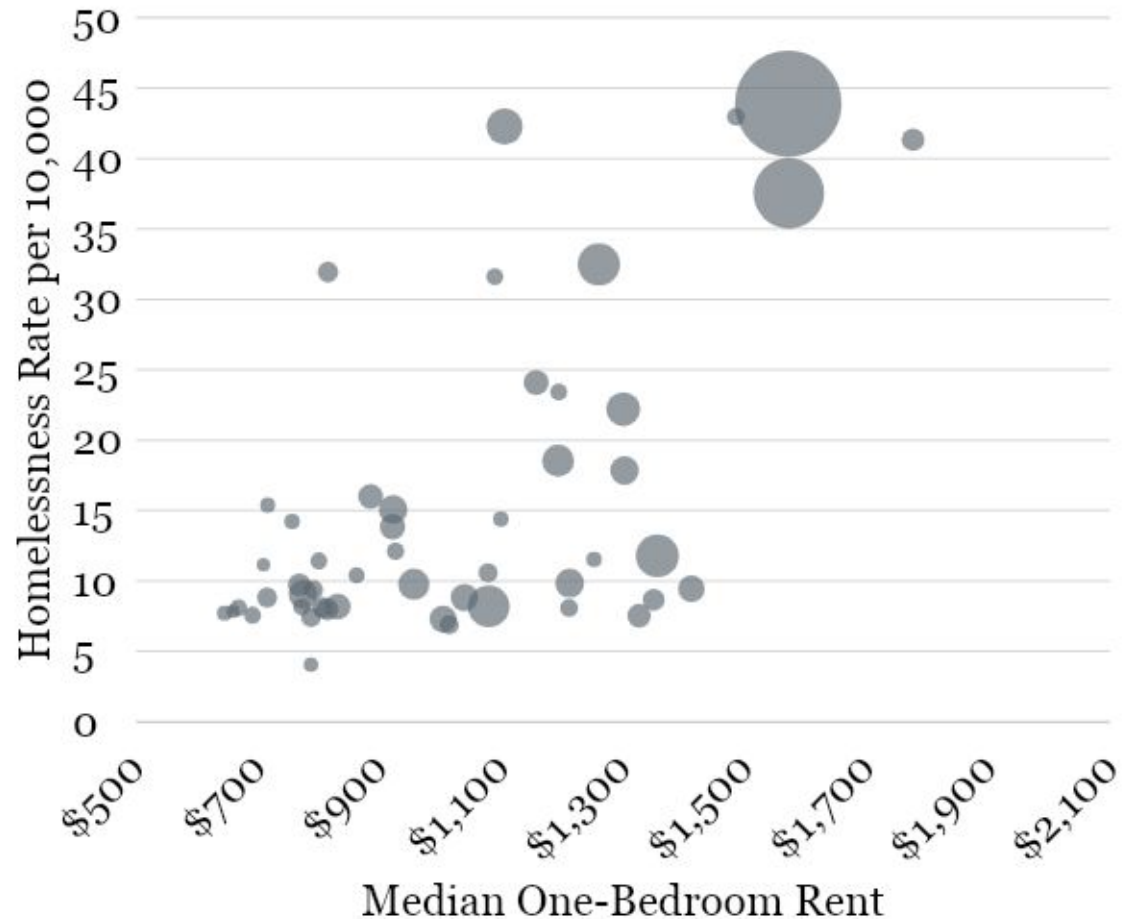
TURNER  
CENTER  
FOR HOUSING  
INNOVATION  

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UC BERKELEY 1

# 1. “Homelessness is a Housing Problem”

Homelessness is more common in places where housing is more expensive.



Also see Colburn & Aldern’s book, *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem*

## INFLOW

● Prevention

## EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

● Supportive service coordination

● Outreach

● Interim shelter

## OUTFLOW

● Permanent housing solution



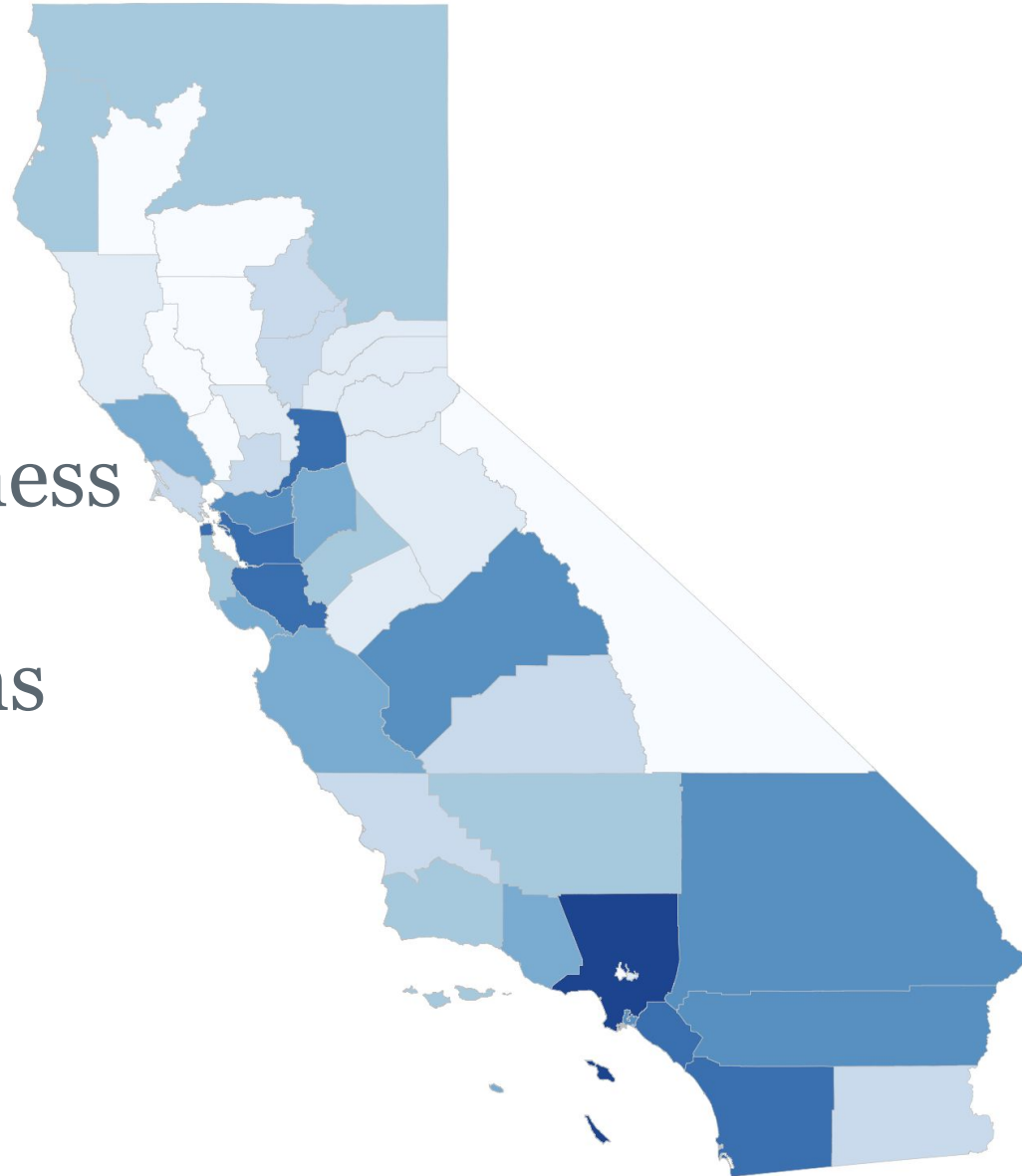
Expensive housing makes falling into homelessness easier and climbing out harder.

Image source: California Interagency Council on Homelessness  
[https://bcsh.ca.gov/calich/ending\\_homelessness.html](https://bcsh.ca.gov/calich/ending_homelessness.html)

## 2. Homelessness is a statewide challenge

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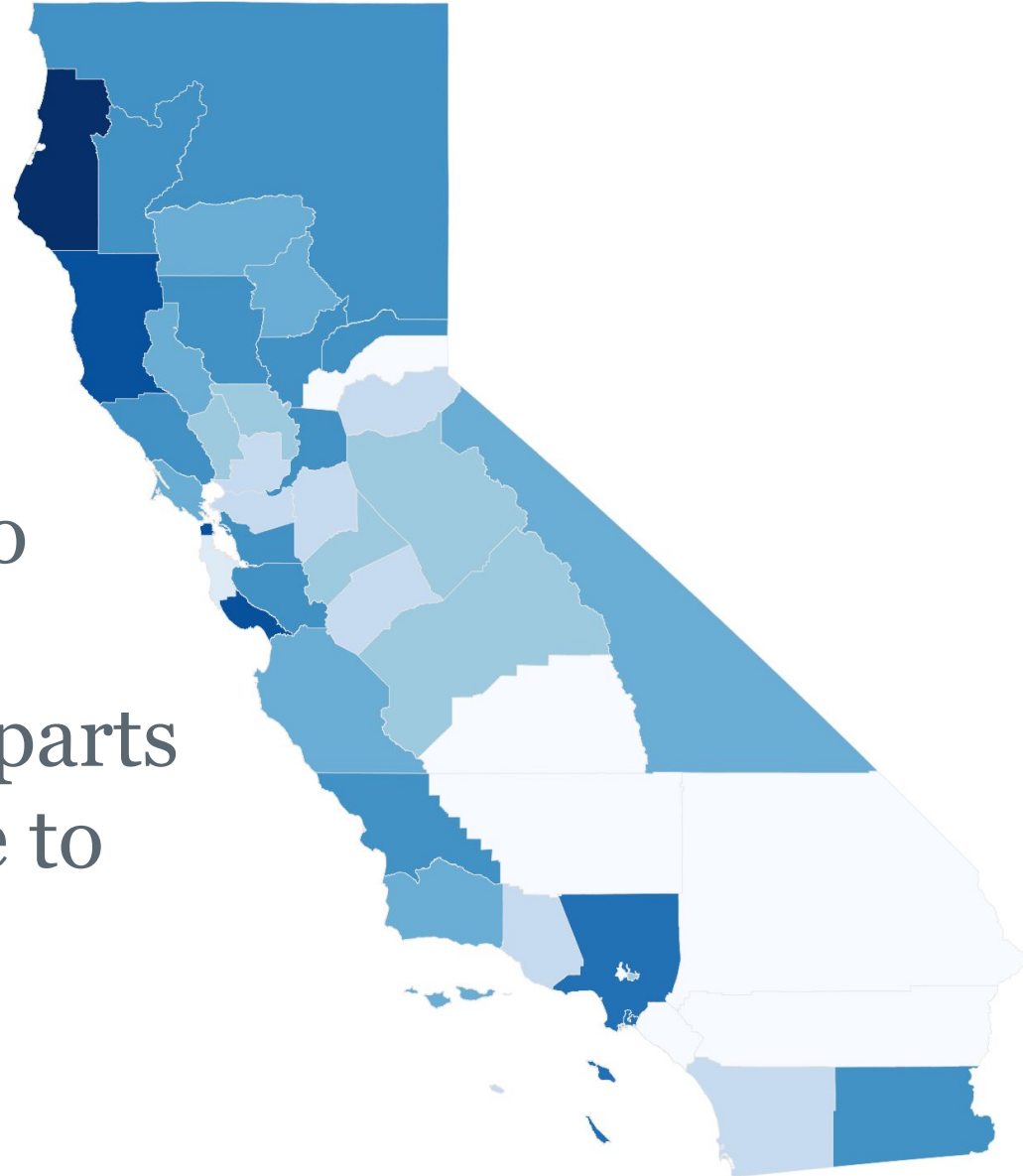
The 2022 homelessness counts showed over **171,000** Californians experiencing homelessness on a given night.



## 2. Homelessness is a statewide challenge

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Homelessness is also common in many suburban and rural parts of California relative to their populations.



### 3. Shelter and housing needs are diverse

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People want and need shelter options that provide the 4 P's:

space for their

#### **Partners**

“I have [my girlfriend] with me, you know what I mean?”

security for their

#### **Possessions**

“I'll fix bikes, sell bikes.”

support for their

#### **Pets**

“I will sleep in my car before I will give up my dog”

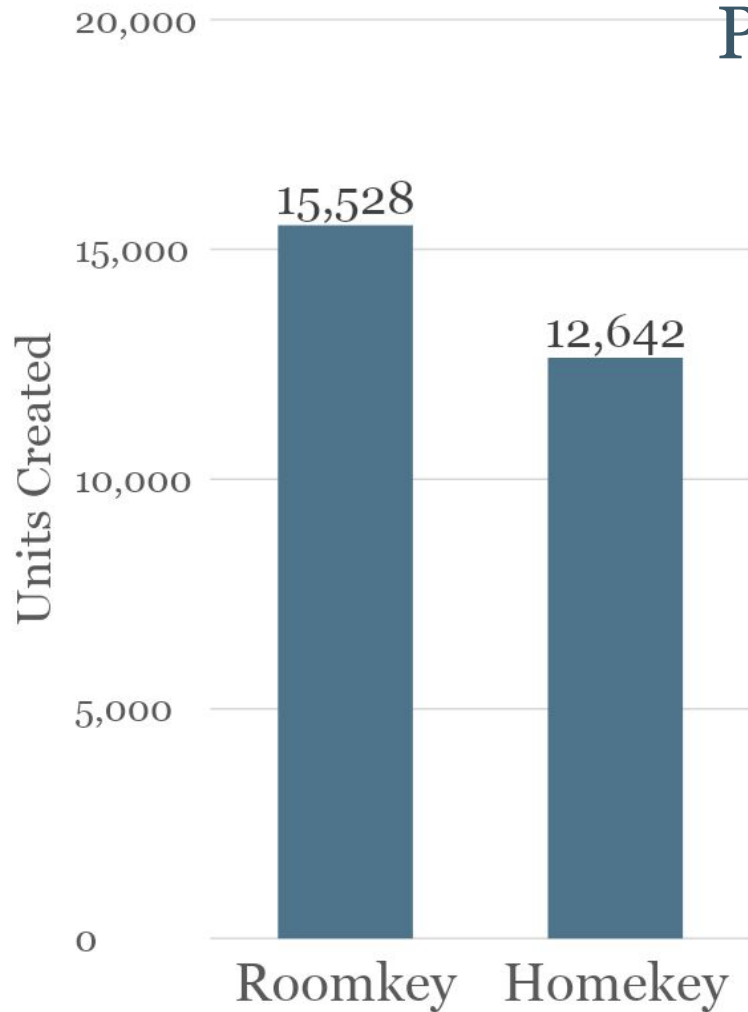
allow

#### **Privacy**

“I just keep to myself. ...And I've learned the hard way”



## 4. Shelter and housing are expanding



Programs like Project Roomkey and Homekey have created new shelter and housing opportunities with speed and at scale.

Private spaces provide better shelter and stability

“a little time to just relax and breathe”

Transformed local homelessness systems

“change the landscape of our housing”

# 4. Shelter and housing are expanding

## Fresno



“the impact we were looking for really required multiple properties... Homekey was the answer we were looking for”

## Riverside

“for the homeless, for LGBT folks... we just want to create a safe place”



# Resolving homelessness requires sustained effort and resources.

“if our society wants these to be replicable and sustainable, we need to invest in them.”

“Homekey starts from the premise that we can solve homelessness with urgency, resources, collaboration, and political will.”

*Thank you!*

See more of our research at [turnercenter.berkeley.edu](https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu)

Sign up for Turner's newsletter for updates on our research and policy analysis

# Seizing the Narrative Around Homelessness and Affordable Housing in California

Tomiquia Moss, Founder and CEO



# Our Vision



All Home envisions a Bay Area that has rendered homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring, and where everyone has access to a safe, secure, and affordable home.

Those who work have access to a job that pays at least a living wage; and the region has a robust, coordinated, and responsive safety net that is accessible to anyone who needs it. People with extremely low incomes, particularly Black, Indigenous and other people of color are fully included as valued members of the Bay Area community—regardless of their age, ability, or employment status.

People of all backgrounds throughout our region understand that when those marginalized by the housing and economic systems of the past have a dignified home and the means to thrive, everyone in the community benefits.

# NARRATIVE

Conscious and unconscious beliefs that shape how we think. They are everywhere.

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# STORIES

How we communicate. Build trust, connection, empathy.



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Conscious and unconscious beliefs that shape how we think. They are everywhere.

# STORIES

How we communicate. Build trust, connection, empathy.

# MESSAGING

The words, images and sounds we use to tell stories that advance narratives.

# WHY NARRATIVE MATTERS



**People act based on their beliefs and feelings.**

# WHY NARRATIVE MATTERS



People act based on their beliefs and feelings.

**They support solutions based on what they believe is the problem.**

# WHY NARRATIVE MATTERS



People act based on their beliefs and feelings.

They support solutions based on what they believe is the problem.

If unjust systems force people into homelessness, fixing or replacing those systems make sense.

# How to Talk About Homelessness

*A messaging guide from*

[Tools for You](#) | [Grow Your Skills](#) | [Join Our Network](#) | [Case Studies](#) | [About Us](#) | [Events](#)



## SEIZE THE NARRATIVE ON HOUSING JUSTICE

Imagine a Bay Area where we are bold enough, courageous enough, ambitious enough to embrace the cause of **housing justice for all**.

We have research-driven and field-practiced strategies, tactics, and messages that can help us grow public support and political will, that can change hearts and minds, and seize this powerful moment to drive new narratives for our movement.

Now, we just **need you to join us**.

### TOOLS FOR YOU

MEDIA RELATIONS

MESSAGING

ORGANIZING

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

ALL



**SHIFT THE NARRATIVE PLAYBOOK**  
Our playbook on advancing housing and racial justice in the Bay Area, based on field-practiced and



**MESSAGE GUIDE**  
We've refined months of research and engagement into a message guide designed to help you both



**QUICK REFERENCE MESSAGING GUIDE**  
A quick reference message guide, to keep our initiative's narrative strategies & message guidance

# How to Talk About Homelessness

*A messaging guide from*

shift  
the bay



ALL  
HOME

## Important Principles

**Establish shared values and benefits.** Lead and close with inclusive, values-based language that reaches across race and class to remind your audience what we all have in common. Show how addressing homelessness benefits our entire community.

**Explain that structural forces push people into homelessness.** "Pushed into" evokes the systemic and economic forces at play: decades of underbuilding and underfunding affordable housing, and generations of systemic injustice and discrimination.

**Center homelessness as an experience, not an identity.** Connect with the humanity of your audience and the people who are suffering.

**Focus on solutions.** Everyone knows there's a problem, they want to know more about how to solve it.

**Include a call to action.** Give your audience something to do, a next step to take to be part of the solution.



**ALL  
HOME**

# **New Solutions Library**

Explore real solutions to homelessness  
and poverty from around the Bay Area



[allhomeca.org/solutions](https://allhomeca.org/solutions)

[← Back to Solutions Library](#)

# BAYVIEW VEHICLE TRIAGE CENTER

[Download Info Sheet](#)

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center (VTC) opened in January 2022 with 53 parking spots, and will eventually include up to 135 parking spaces for 203 people. The Center provides 24/7 staffing and security, bathrooms, mobile shower facilities, potable water, and mobile blackwater pumping services. Additionally, the Center will provide people living in their vehicles in the immediate area with access to services designed to help stabilize their lives through health care, housing, employment, or other interventions that meet their unique needs and lead to a permanent exit from homelessness. The Bayview VTC is funded by Proposition C, which voters passed in 2018, and newly secured state resources. The center will be operated by the non-profit organizations Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation and will operate for 2 years.

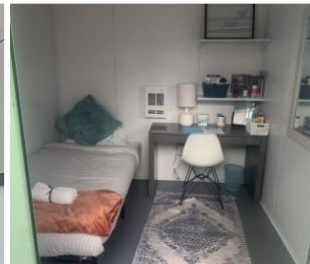
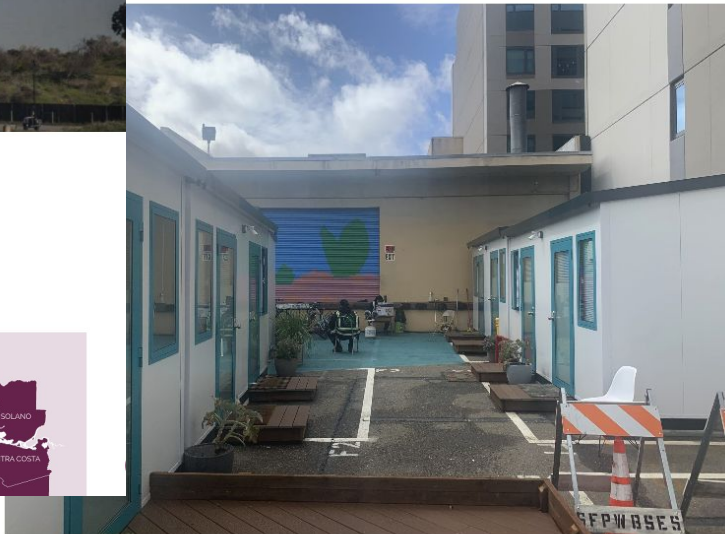
[OFFICE OF THE MAYOR: NEWS RELEASE](#)
[LEARN MORE](#)

## Strategy

HOUSE/STABILIZE

## County

San Francisco


[See all images](#)
[Download Info Sheet](#)

33 Gough Street is an interim supportive housing community in San Francisco built by DignityMoves in collaboration with Tipping Point and the City of San Francisco. The facility is made up of 70 individual rooms, case manager offices, a clinic, a computer lab, and other community spaces using modular construction materials. Every room is equipped with its own bed, desk, window, and, crucially, a door that locks – DignityMoves is committed to the idea that privacy and security help provide the dignity that people who have experienced

## Strategy

HOUSE/STABILIZE

## City

San Francisco







**ALL**  
HOME