

# County of Santa Clara


## Office of Supportive Housing

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March 6, 2020

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive

FROM: Ky Le, Director, Office of Supportive Housing 

SUBJECT: Overview of Temporary Housing for Unhoused People

Under advisement from March 19, 2019 (Item No. 8), this memo provides an overview of the temporary housing system in Santa Clara County including the various types of temporary housing, the County's investment in temporary housing, capacity and utilization, the relative cost per shelter bed night, and system performance.

### **Temporary Housing System Overview**

According to the 2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey, 9,706 people were homeless at the time of the census, and 18% of those people were sheltered. Santa Clara County's supportive housing system includes several types of temporary housing.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Emergency Shelters*

Emergency shelters provide temporary residences for homeless people, typically in a commercial building with sleeping accommodations in large dorm-style rooms. Some emergency shelter programs use houses, motels, or apartments. Most emergency shelter stays are time-limited. Some, but not all, emergency shelters require participants to leave the facility during the day. Access to emergency shelters depends on the shelter; some shelters allow walk-ups and others maintain a waiting list, but the majority are based on referrals from other service providers.

In Santa Clara County, most shelters target one or two particular subpopulations, though many shelters will admit other people, as well. Subpopulations served in local shelters include:

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<sup>1</sup> Transitional Housing programs are also temporary in nature but are not included in this report on temporary housing as their role in the supportive housing system is as a permanent housing-level intervention. TH are best for people seeking a more structured and supportive environment (e.g., people in addiction recovery, those fleeing domestic violence, young adults) before moving to independent permanent housing.

- Individual adults, usually with sleeping areas separated by gender
- Families with minor children
- Unaccompanied minors
- Young adults
- Individuals or families fleeing domestic violence<sup>2</sup>
- Adults being discharged from inpatient hospitalizations
- Adults being discharged from mental health hospitalizations
- Adults with criminal justice involvement
- Veterans
- Adults who identify as LGBTQ+

The level of supportive services ranges, with some shelters only providing assistance with meeting basic needs like a safe place to sleep, food, and hygiene, while other shelters provide workshops, a high level of case management, and other services. All share a common goal of helping people get permanently housed.

### *Interim Housing*

Interim housing is intended for people who are enrolled in a supportive housing program<sup>3</sup> and who need a short-term place to stay while they are looking for housing or waiting for their housing unit to be ready. Interim housing has many forms, including beds in emergency shelter facilities or motel rooms. The City of San José recently opened a Bridge Housing Community, offering interim housing in tiny houses. Placement in an interim housing program is based on referrals through the Coordinated Assessment System, and people can generally stay in an interim housing program until they move into their permanent housing. If there are no supportive housing program participants who will utilize an interim housing bed that is an emergency shelter, the shelter will typically place an emergency shelter participant in that bed.

Because people using interim housing have case managers through their PSH and RRH programs, the focus of supportive services offered for interim housing participants may be different than for emergency shelter participants. Services often focus on areas that will contribute to a participant's housing stability, such as understanding the rights and responsibilities of tenancy or establishing connections to community resources.

### *Cold Weather Shelters*

Cold weather shelters are emergency shelters that operate seasonally. The season of operation depends on what the facility allows or can accommodate. The cold weather shelter season begins in October and ends in April, with some cold weather shelters opening later or closing sooner. Cold weather shelters close during the day, except under special circumstances like holidays or inclement weather. People access cold weather shelters through referrals from another service provider.

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<sup>2</sup> Shelters for people fleeing domestic violence are typically in a confidential location.

<sup>3</sup> Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

### *Inclement Weather Beds*

Inclement weather beds are extra spots offered at emergency shelters or cold weather shelters during periods of inclement weather, also known as an Inclement Weather Episode (IWE). These extra spots are not regularly available in shelter facilities for various reasons, including space and facility functionality. A list of shelters that offer extra beds during an IWE is published on the Office of Supportive Housing's website, and shelters offering inclement weather beds accept walk-ins when space is available during an IWE.

The current forecast<sup>4</sup> triggers for an IWE are:

- Overnight low of 40° F or lower with a probability of rain of at least 5%
- Overnight low of 45° F or lower with a 50% or higher probability of rain
- Persistent rainfall expected for two or more days that would create life-threatening conditions for those living in or along affected areas
- Overnight low of 35° F or lower for two or more days that would endanger the lives of people living in places not meant for human habitation

When an IWE is declared, shelters that have previously agreed to offer inclement weather beds are notified, as are outreach workers, drop-in centers, and other homeless services providers. In addition, an alert is texted through AlertSCC to anyone who has signed up to receive them.

### *Residential Recovery Beds*

Residential recovery beds operate similarly to emergency shelters, targeted for people who are receiving outpatient treatment services for addiction. With some rare exceptions, the people who use County-funded residential recovery beds are unhoused. Some residential recovery beds are in emergency shelters, and others are in residential facilities like single family homes or boarding houses. Beyond assistance meeting basic needs, most of the supportive services offered to people in residential recovery beds are through their outpatient treatment programs. Participants are referred to residential recovery beds through outpatient treatment programs.

### *Safe Parking*

Safe Parking programs provide unhoused people who sleep in their vehicles with a designated place to park while they sleep. The goal of safe parking programs is to help participants improve their safety and stability, remain compliant with local laws, have access to basic restroom facilities, and get support to resolve their immediate housing crisis. To access safe parking, people would call a safe parking provider to schedule an eligibility screening appointment.

## **County Investments**

The County is a significant contributor to the network of temporary housing options offered countywide. Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) staff coordinate with the community-based

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<sup>4</sup> Office of Supportive Housing staff monitor National Weather Service forecasts daily during cold weather months and will work with the Office of Emergency Management and other stakeholders when the triggers are forecasted.

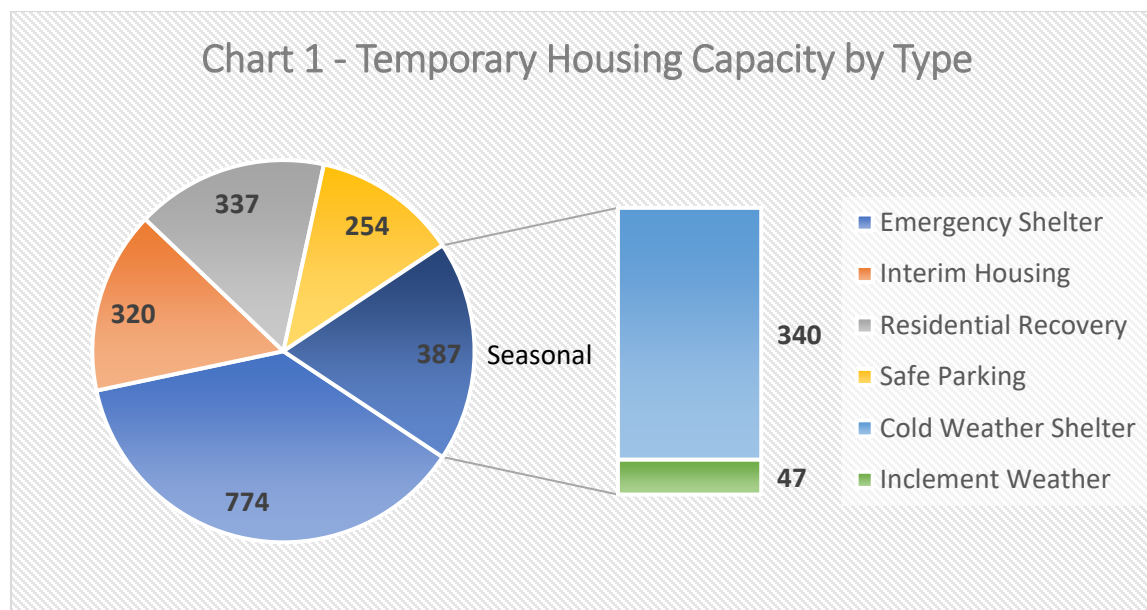
organizations that offer temporary housing, including making referrals to programs and facilitating a monthly meeting focused on quality improvement in temporary housing.

In addition to the coordination role that the County plays, the County is the largest single funder of temporary housing in the county. Through OSH, the County has approximately \$14,000,000 in contracts for the various types of temporary housing interventions described above. The Behavioral Health Services Department has more than \$5,900,000 in contracts for residential recovery beds.

In addition to funding services, the County has started to acquire shelter facilities. Originally a warehouse, the County acquired the Sunnyvale Shelter site in 2015 for \$6,500,000 and has since invested approximately \$5,000,000 into two phases of renovation to make it suitable for use as a year-round temporary housing site. The ongoing utilities and maintenance costs for the Sunnyvale Shelter are approximately \$100,000 annually.

### **Capacity and Utilization**

The current countywide inventory of temporary housing, identified in *Chart 1 – Temporary Housing Capacity by Type*, can serve up to 2,072 people<sup>5</sup> nightly. Of those, the 340 cold weather shelter beds, 16% of the total inventory, are only open for three to six months of the year and 47 beds, or 2%, are only available during an IWE. The year-round inventory serves up to 1,685 people nightly.



<sup>5</sup> Some reports produced by OSH speak of capacity by the number of household units versus the number of individual beds. One unit in a family shelter would have multiple beds. One unit in a single adults program would equal one bed. The number of “beds” for safe parking programs reflects an estimated number of people who could be served in a safe parking program based on the average household size of prior safe parking households, using a multiplier of 1.56 for every safe parking spot. Residential recovery beds are not yet included in the monthly Supportive Housing Dashboard report to the Housing, Land Use, Environment, and Transportation Committee.

*Appendix A – Temporary Housing List*<sup>6</sup> provides a list of temporary housing programs, including the operating agency, city, type, target population, and nightly bed capacity of each.

Average utilization in 2019 was 80% for emergency shelters, 58% for interim housing, 66% for cold weather shelters, and 77% for safe parking. Utilization rates were similar in January 2020. OSH collects feedback from homeless people, outreach workers, and temporary housing providers about barriers to accessing shelter and other reasons that may contribute to lower than desired utilization. These reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Some shelters do not allow pets.
- Operating hours at some shelters make utilization unappealing.
- Couples do not want to be separated into gender-specific sleeping areas.
- Shelters do not offer enough storage space for people's belongings.
- Referral processes needed development and clarification.
- People referred to shelter beds occasionally do not show up to use the bed.

In March 2019, the Santa Clara County Continuum of Care (CoC) began working with technical assistance providers representing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on addressing unsheltered homelessness. Included in the goals of the technical assistance engagement is to reduce barriers to shelter utilization. In partnership with OSH staff and temporary housing providers, the CoC has added guidance and support for providers who want to write policies that allow pets in temporary housing programs. Since November 2019, OSH also staffs a new work group that meets monthly to focus on addressing and reducing barriers to shelter utilization.

### **Cost per Person per Night**

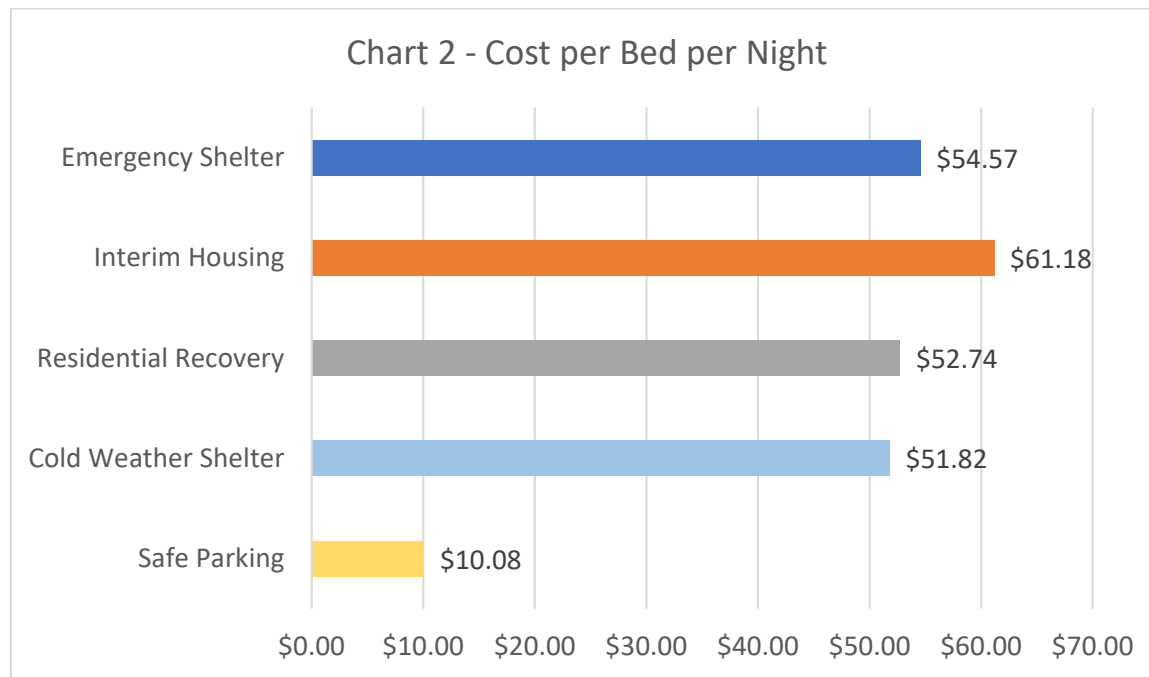
Temporary housing costs are impacted by several factors, including but not limited to the level of supportive services provided, facility capacity and size, facility design, and the level of services offered. OSH obtained data to estimate the cost per person per night through the following sources:

- Proposed bed night rate in a recent response to a County request for proposals
- Proposed bed night rate in a recent response to a City of San José request for proposals
- In an active County contract, total annual maximum financial obligation divided by number of bed nights that would be provided annually
- In an active City of San José contract, total annual maximum financial obligation divided by number of bed nights that would be provided annually
- For safe parking programs without an active County or City of San José contract, the operator's self-reported budget divided by the estimated number of people that would be served annually

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<sup>6</sup> The individual residential recovery beds programs are not included in Appendix A.

*Chart 2 – Cost per Bed per Night* provides the average<sup>7</sup> nightly bed cost for operating and supportive services by the type of temporary housing.



Of note regarding nightly cost:

- The nightly bed cost for emergency shelter, residential recovery, and cold weather shelter is similar.
- Interim housing programs have a wider range per bed night, with an average of \$48.68 for beds in dorm-style emergency shelter facilities and an average of \$92.30 for programs where participants have their own room or share a room with just one other person.
- Safe parking programs do not incur the expenses associated with operating and maintaining a building, which is reflected in a lower nightly bed cost. In addition, programs with paid case managers and other staff have a higher nightly average cost per person (\$13.55) than programs that are entirely volunteer run (\$1.39).

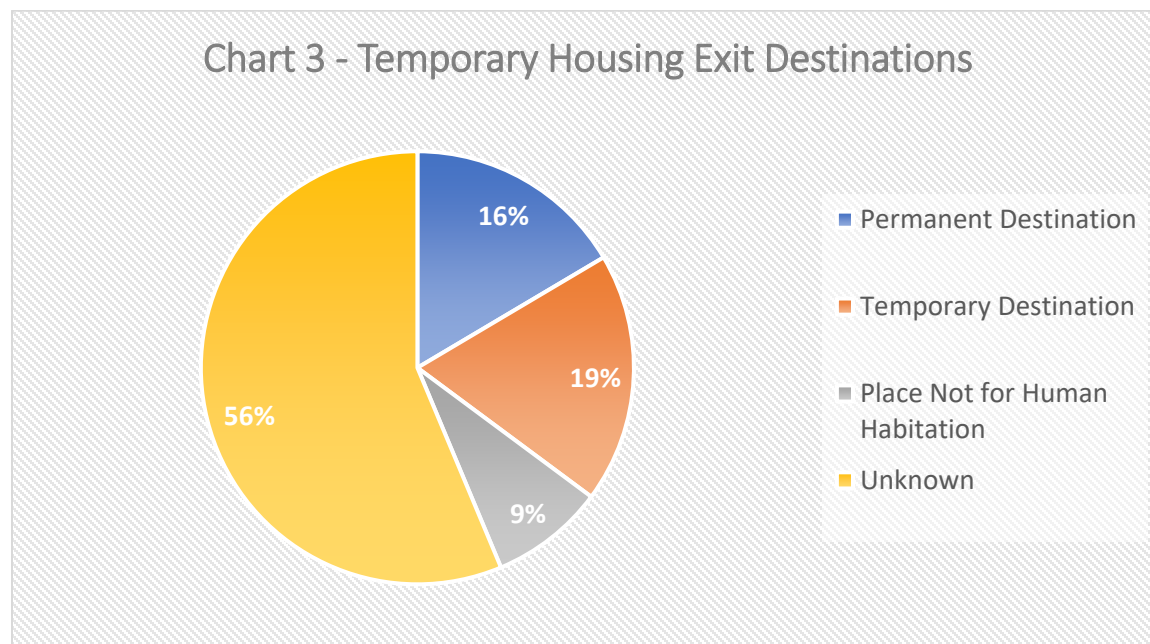
*Appendix B – Cost per Bed Night* shows the nightly cost per person by program for temporary housing programs under contract with the County or City of San José and all safe parking.

<sup>7</sup> One emergency shelter program, with a nightly cost of \$246.58 per bed was excluded from the emergency shelter average. The 10-bed program serves unaccompanied minors, requiring higher staffing ratios and limiting the ability to realize economy of scale, factors that contribute to its high nightly cost.

## **System Performance**

While analyzing cost is important in understanding temporary housing options, the goal of temporary housing programs is to first provide a safe place to sleep and, secondly, assist participants to obtain permanent housing.

In 2019, 16% of households and 22% of people exiting emergency shelter, interim housing, cold weather shelter, or safe parking moved to permanent housing. The majority of people exiting temporary housing do not leave to permanent housing. *Chart 3 – Temporary Housing Exit Destinations* shows the type of exit destination as a percentage of exits<sup>8</sup> from temporary housing.

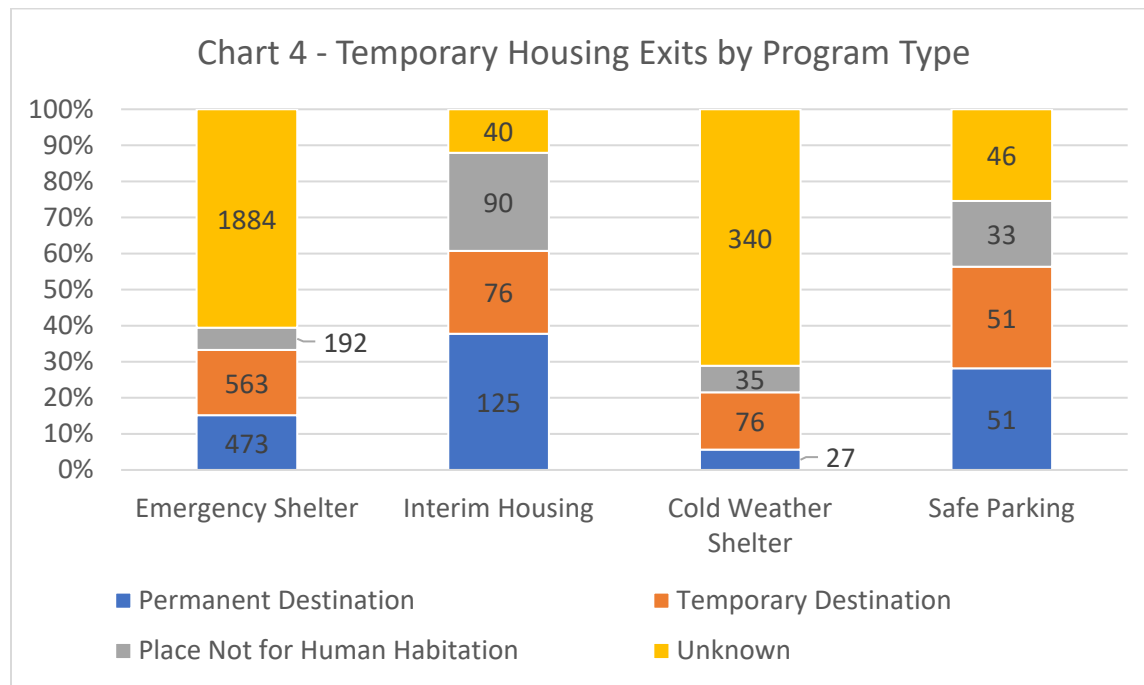


Since many households come in and out of temporary housing and stay for short periods, it can be difficult to gather accurate data on the destination of people leaving shelters. More than half of households exit temporary housing without providing information about their destination.

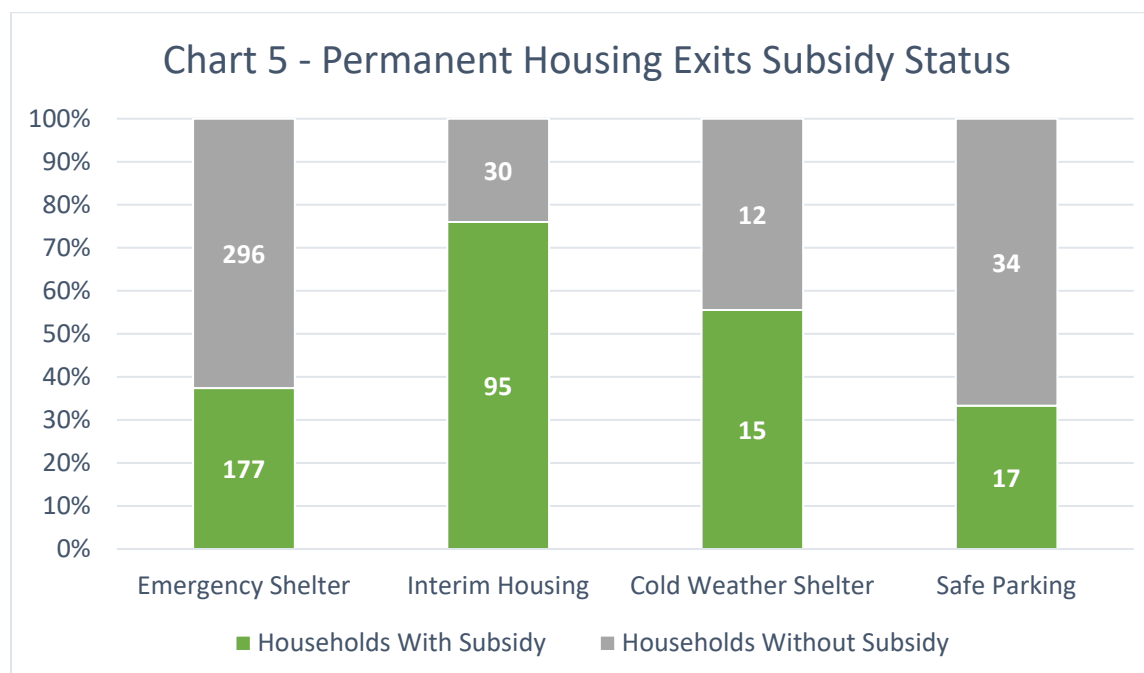
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<sup>8</sup> Outcomes data does not include domestic violence shelters, residential recovery homes, or other temporary housing programs that do not enter data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

*Chart 4 – Temporary Housing Exit Destinations by Program Type* shows that unknown exits are more common in emergency shelter and cold weather shelter programs.



*Chart 5 – Permanent Housing Exits Subsidy Status* shows the number and percentage of households by program type that exited with or without a subsidy.





In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the supportive housing system, OSH will continue to analyze both relative cost per bed night and how well temporary housing programs meet the goals of providing unhoused people with support in meeting basic needs and pathways to permanent housing.

cc: Chief Board Aides  
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer  
James R. Williams, County Counsel  
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

## Appendix A – Temporary Housing List

### *Emergency Shelter*

Site or Program	Agency	City	Target Population	Nightly Beds
Asian Women's Home	AACI	San Jose	People fleeing DV	10
Boccardo Reception Center (BRC)	HomeFirst	San Jose	Adults	210
Drop-in Center Shelter	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Young Adults	10
Emmanuel House	Salvation Army	San Jose	Adult Males	22
Georgia Travis House	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults Women and Families with children	38
Healthcare for Homeless Veterans	HVEHF	San Jose	Veterans	15
Host Homes	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Young Adults	6
Hotel de Zink	LifeMoves	North County	Adults	20
Julian Street Inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	21
La Isla Pacifica	Community Solutions	North County	People fleeing DV	18
Montgomery Street inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	32
New Haven Inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults identifying as LGBTQ+	20
Next Door Solutions	Next Door Solutions	San Jose	People fleeing DV	19
Project WeHope	Project WeHope	East Palo Alto	Adults	5
Rescue Mission	City Team	San Jose	Adults	50
Safety Net Shelter	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Unaccompanied Minors	10
San Jose Family Shelter	Family Supportive Housing	San Jose	Families with children	105
Sunnyvale Shelter	HomeFirst	Sunnyvale	Adults and Families with children	75
Villa	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults Women and Families with children	60
Youth Shelter - North	Bill Wilson Center	Mountain View	Young Adults	8
Youth Shelter - South	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Young Adults	4
YWCA	YWCA	San Jose	People fleeing DV	16
<b>Total Emergency Shelter</b>				<b>774</b>

## Appendix A – Temporary Housing List

### *Interim Housing*

Site or Program	Agency	City	Target Population	Nightly Beds
8th Street	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Adults	10
BRC Interim Shelter	HomeFirst	San Jose	Adults	20
Sunnyvale Shelter	HomeFirst	Sunnyvale	Adults and Families with children	100
Bridge Housing	HVEHF	San Jose	Veterans	25
Julian Street Inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	66
Montgomery Street inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	43
Georgia Travis House	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults Women and Families with children	10
The Plaza	The Health Trust	San Jose	Adults and Families with children	46
<b>Total Interim Housing</b>				<b>320</b>

### *Safe Parking*

Site or Program	Agency	City	Target Population	Nightly Beds
Posada Safe Parking Program	Amigos De Guadalupe	San Jose & Santa Clara	Adults and Families with children	60
Focus Safe Parking Program	Gilroy Compassion Center	Morgan Hill	Adults and Families with children	12
LifeMoves Safe Parking	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults and Families with children	72
Lots of Love	Move Mt. View	Mountain View	Adults and Families with children	57
Rotating Safe Car Park	n/a - volunteer run	Cupertino & Saratoga	Adults and Families with children	30
Silicon Valley Safe Parking	n/a - volunteer run	Campbell & San Jose	Adults and Families with children	23
<b>Total Safe Parking</b>				<b>254</b>

## Appendix A – Temporary Housing List

### *Cold Weather Shelter*

Site or Program	Agency	City	Target Population	Nightly Beds
OWL - Bascom Community Center	HomeFirst	San Jose	Adults	30
OWL - Roosevelt Community Center	HomeFirst	San Jose	Adults	30
Gilroy Armory Shelter	HomeFirst	Gilroy	Adults and Families with children	125
Mountain View TUMC Shelter	HomeFirst	Mountain View	Adults and Families with children	50
Ochoa Winter Family Shelter	St. Joseph's Family Center	Gilroy	Families with children	105
<b>Total Cold Weather Shelter</b>				<b>340</b>

### *Inclement Weather*

Site or Program	Agency	City	Target Population	Nightly Beds
Drop-in Center Shelter	Bill Wilson Center	San Jose	Young Adults	10
Rescue Mission	City Team	San Jose	Adults	6
Montgomery Street inn	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	9
Georgia Travis House	LifeMoves	San Jose	Adults	2
Project WeHope	Project WeHope	East Palo Alto	Adults	5
Emmanuel House	Salvation Army	San Jose	Adult Males	15
<b>Total Cold Weather Shelter</b>				<b>340</b>

## Appendix B – Cost Per Bed Night

