



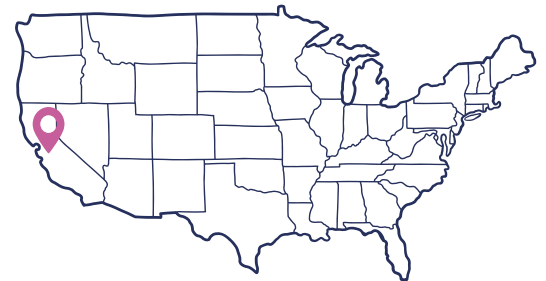
Collaborating to End Homelessness

City of San Jose & Santa Clara County, California

An innovative, housing-first approach to addressing homelessness across Silicon Valley

I. Overview

Over the past decade, Santa Clara County and its most populous city, San Jose, have collaborated closely to address the growing issue of homelessness in the region. Beginning with a Blue Ribbon Commission launched by Santa Clara County Supervisor Don Gage and City of San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed in 2007,¹ and propelled by the success of the Housing 1000 pilot program in 2011,² the City and County have coordinated their efforts and developed a deep and exemplary partnership. Working closely with local nonprofits—most significantly, Destination: Home—the City and County adopted the first official five-year Community Plan to End Homelessness in 2015.³ This first-of-its-kind regional plan promoted a “housing-first” approach to combat homelessness. Building on the success of the first plan, the City and County in 2020 unveiled a second five-year plan running through 2025.⁴ Since 2015, the region has achieved a number of milestones, including housing more than 14,000 people, launching a new Homelessness Prevention System that serves approximately 1,000 households annually, and approving a \$950 million County bond to grow the supply of affordable housing.



1. Krutko, L. (2008). Memorandum from the City of San Jose to the Community and Economic Development Committee Re: Final Report on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness. http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CommitteeAgenda/CED/022508/CEDC022508_4ba.pdf
2. Health Trust. (2014). Housing 1000 Helps Push National 100,000 Homes Campaign Across the Finish Line. <https://healthtrust.org/2014/06/11/housing-1000-helps-push-national-100000-homes-campaign-across-the-finish-line/>
3. Community Plan to End Homelessness: 2015-2020. <https://destinationhomesv.org/documents/2020/10/2015-2020-community-plan-to-end-homelessness.pdf/>
4. Community Plan to End Homelessness: 2020-2025. https://housingtoolkit.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb501/files/CommunityPlan_2020.pdf

County/City Demographic Profile⁵

	Santa Clara County, CA	San Jose, CA
Size (square miles)	1,291	178
Total Population	1,927,852	1,021,786
Population Density	1,493/sq. mile	5,747/sq. mile
Race & Ethnicity		
Asian	39%	35.9%
Black or African American	2.8%	3%
Hispanic	25%	31.6%
White	52.4%	39.9%
Other	5.9%	6.4%
Workforce & Economic Indicators		
Unemployment Rate	2.3%	2.5%
Poverty Rate (persons below poverty line)	6.1%	7.1%
Child Poverty Rate (<18 below poverty line)	5%	6%
Median Household Income	\$133,076	\$115,893

City/County Governance

Santa Clara County is governed by an elected five-member Board of Supervisors, while a Board-appointed County Executive manages day-to-day operations. The City of San Jose operates under a Council-Manager governance structure. The City Council consists of a Mayor serving as council chair and 10 council members. The Council appoints a City Manager, who serves as the City's chief administrative officer.

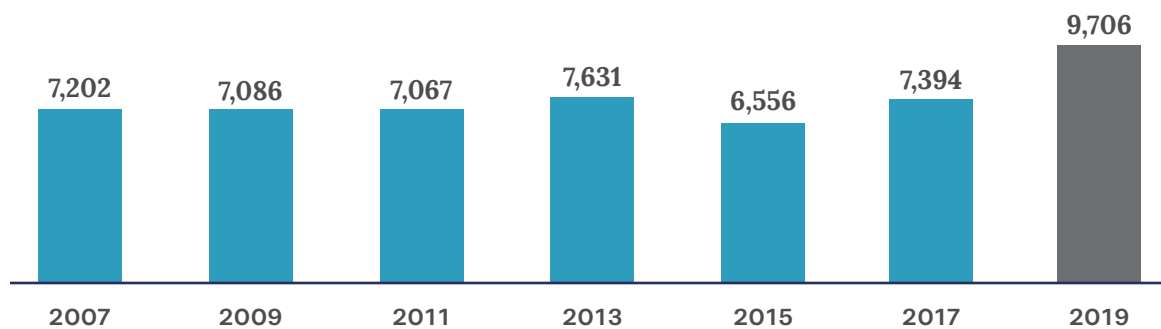
5. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2019, one-year estimates.

II. Need for Collaboration/The Challenge

As the home of Silicon Valley, the County hosts some of the richest and most influential companies in the world, including Google, Facebook, and Apple. Despite the presence of extreme wealth, income inequality and access to affordable housing are persistent issues in the region. As a result, homelessness has increased over the past decade (see Figure 1). According to the most recent 2017–2019 Santa Clara Homeless Census, the number of people experiencing homelessness rose by 31% between 2017 and 2019 to 9,706—the largest number in over a decade.⁶

Furthermore, homelessness disproportionately impacts males and communities of color. For example, 19% of individuals experiencing homeless within the County are Black/African American, though they only comprise 3% of the general population. Similarly, 43% of people experiencing homelessness identify as Hispanic/Latinx, though they make up only 26% of the County population.⁷

Figure 1. Persons Experiencing Homelessness In Santa Clara County



Individual residents, businesses, and local governments have much to gain from finding solutions to end homelessness in the region. A 2015 study revealed that homelessness costs the County an average of \$520 million per year in public services.⁸ Yet for many years, housing and homelessness services in the Santa Clara region lacked coordination, which made the system extremely challenging to navigate for both providers and clients. There was no process for coordinated entry, no shared data, and no alignment of goals. Leaders recognized it was essential to coordinate systems in order to better serve individuals and families in need. Over the past decade, the region made tremendous strides.

6. Santa Clara County. (2019). Homeless Census & Survey: Comprehensive Report. <https://osh.sccgov1.acsitemfactory.com/sites/g/files/exjcpb671/files/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

7. Santa Clara County. (2019). Homeless Census & Survey: Comprehensive Report. Retrieved from <https://osh.sccgov1.acsitemfactory.com/sites/g/files/exjcpb671/files/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

8. Flaming, D., Toros, H., and Burns, P. (2015). Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley. <https://osh.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb671/files/Santa%20Clara%20County%20CostStudyReport.pdf>

III. The Partners

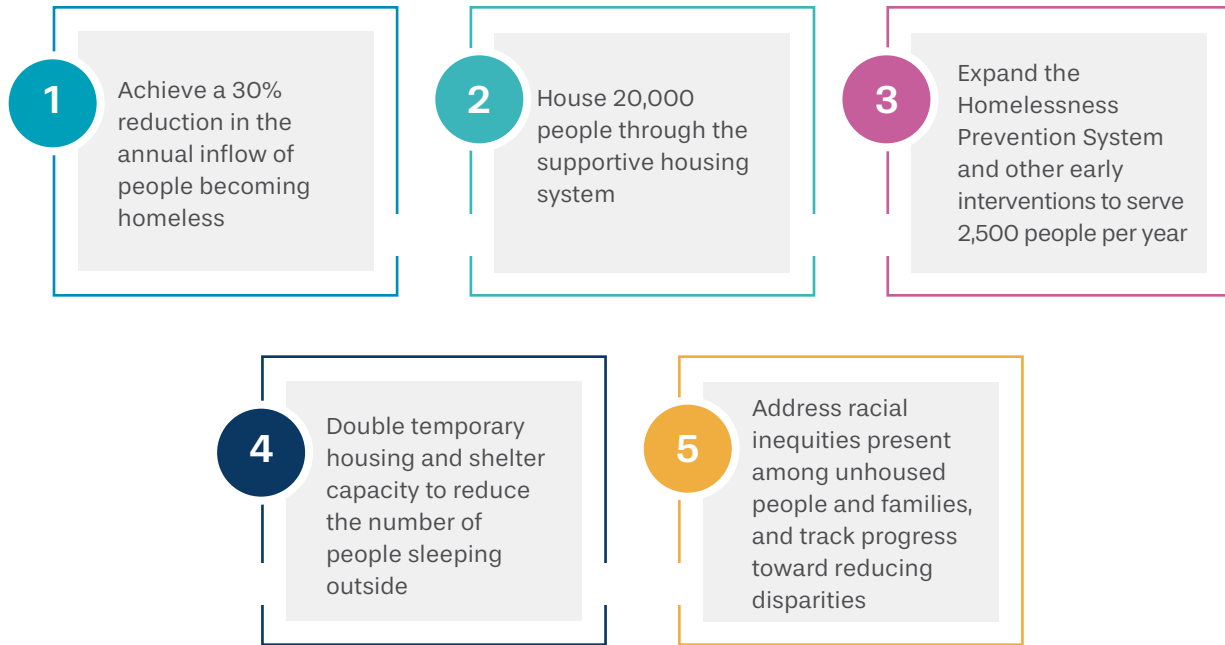
Four core organizations lead the collaborative effort in Santa Clara County. The regional work is also supported by additional partners, including nonprofits and community-based organizations, smaller municipalities, businesses, and philanthropic partners. The four core organizations are:

- **Santa Clara County Office of Supportive Housing (OSH):** OSH is the major coordinating and convening entity for the homelessness response system in the region, as well as the head of the local Continuum of Care (CoC). OSH also manages the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the central data system utilized by all service providers in the region.
- **City of San Jose Housing Department:** The City is a critical partner because it controls zoning and land use, which are critical to developing affordable housing—a major point of focus in regional plans to end homelessness. The City complements the work of the County by participating in working groups, funding and overseeing specific projects, and providing support on housing development projects.
- **Destination: Home:** This public/private partnership convenes stakeholders, fundraises, engages the community, advocates for policy change, and works to develop a regional plan to end homelessness.
- **Santa Clara County Housing Authority (SCCHA):** SCCHA provides affordable housing solutions to enable low-income people in Santa Clara County to achieve financial stability and self-reliance.



IV. The Shared Goal

The collaborative efforts between the County and City aim to end homelessness in the region. Efforts include a multi-faceted approach to address the root causes of homelessness, help those at risk of falling into homelessness, and support those already experiencing homelessness to access support services and secure housing. The specific goals outlined in the 2020–2025 plan to end homelessness include:



V. How Partners Collaborated

In 2007, the Santa Clara County Supervisor and City of San Jose Mayor launched a Blue Ribbon Commission to: "provide direction and support for a comprehensive approach to ending homelessness in 10 years and identify a unified approach to address homelessness."⁹ The Commission identified challenges and gaps in the region, evaluated the impact of homelessness on the City and County budgets, and committed to building a regional governance structure to oversee and complete the work of the Commission. Destination: Home was established in 2008, on the heels of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report's final report, as a central coordinating entity between the County and City to align efforts and raise funds as a public/private entity.

In 2011, the City and County launched the collaborative Housing 1000 campaign. This three-year campaign aimed to house 1,000 individuals who had experienced chronic homelessness. The campaign was successful and served as the springboard for the collaboration, relationship building, and infrastructure development that followed.

9. Krutko, L. (2008). Memorandum From the City of San Jose to the Community and Economic Development Committee Re: Final Report on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness. http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CommitteeAgenda/CED/022508/CEDC022508_4ba.pdf

Over the past few years, the County's OSH and the City's Housing Department have worked in closer coordination to respond to the housing and homelessness crisis in the region. Along with other partners, the City and County worked together to set joint priorities and targets for the region. They adopted a housing-first approach for the region, which led to new shared goals and, eventually, joint plans to end homelessness.

The City and County have further codified the strategy, mission, and goals of their collaboration through the creation of shared community plans. The Community Plan to End Homelessness is now created every five years through a joint development process that includes community-based service organizations, local government, philanthropy, businesses, healthcare, and people with lived experience.¹⁰ The plan is a highly influential document used by the City and County to guide their work and maintain continuous alignment and commitment to shared goals.

Implementation of the plan is also managed collaboratively, as two leaders oversee each priority area. Leaders come from the City, the County's OSH and Housing Authority, and Destination: Home. Leaders are accountable to the Continuum of Care Board for implementation of the Community Plan and provide quarterly update reports and presentations that include data on progress to date. The plan helped all partners align on shared strategies to not just manage homelessness but solve its root causes. The plan laid out strategies for: 1) housing people, 2) housing development, and 3) prevention.

Together, the City and County have established clear processes for ongoing coordination and have worked together on multiple successful targeted initiatives. These include:

- Shared data infrastructure through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the central data system utilized by all service providers in the region to track progress toward targets laid out in the Community Plan. Service providers feed data into this system, and the County produces and shares reports with cities and service providers.
- Creating the All the Way Home program to end veteran homelessness
- Creating a dedicated shelter hotline funded 50/50 by the County and City
- Developing the Homelessness Prevention System
- Successfully passing the \$950 million Measure A affordable housing bond and utilizing funds to develop affordable extremely low-income (ELI) housing.

The high level of coordination and existing relationships between the City and County also enabled a swift COVID-19 response. For example, at the onset of the pandemic, the County and City quickly established a Joint Departmental Operations Center and divided their shelter response to meet a diverse range of needs. While the County leased hotels to serve as non-congregate shelters, the City set up congregate shelters at convention centers and other community hubs and built emergency interim housing. Coordination during the pandemic was so tight that City staff often worked from the County office.

10. Santa Clara County Community Plan to End Homelessness 2020-2025. <https://housingtoolkit.sccgov.org/take-action/santa-clara-county-community-plan-end-homelessness-2020-2025>



Impetus & Levers for the Collaboration

- **Federal mandate:** Since passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has mandated that local governments take a regional approach to addressing homelessness through the establishment of Continuums of Care (CoC).¹¹
- **Gap in extremely low-income (ELI) housing across the nation:** The category ELI, a subset of "very low-income households," is defined as 30% (or less) of the area's median income. The dearth in ELI housing across the nation and lack of federal or state-level policies to address this gap leaves local governments in the tough place of picking up the slack or not addressing the need.¹²
- **Success of the Housing 1000 campaign (2011-2014):** The campaign proved to City and County staff that they were stronger together. The campaign represented the first time the City and County truly collaborated on homelessness.¹³ Furthermore, the campaign created momentum around the collaboration and laid the foundation for current relationships and programs.
- **A catalytic leader:** Jennifer Loving became the CEO of Destination: Home in 2011 and led the Housing 1000 initiative. Her steadfast commitment, strong professional network, and fervor for the work transformed the region's approach to homelessness. She and other leaders helped build political will across organizations to do the hard work of ending homelessness. Under her leadership, people came together to address the root causes of homelessness.
- **Eye-opening evidence of the high cost of homelessness:** A 2015 study revealed that serving residents experiencing homelessness cost the County an average of \$520 million per year in public services.¹⁴ This was a call to action for local officials seeking more efficient use of public funds.

11. Blasco, A. (2015) Continuum of Care Planning. National Low Income Housing Coalition. http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Sec7.04_Continuum-of-Care_2015.pdf

12. California Department of Housing and Community Development. <https://hcd.ca.gov/community-development/building-blocks/housing-needs/extremely-low-income-housing-needs.shtml>

13. Health Trust (2014). Housing 1000 Helps Push National 100,000 Homes Campaign Across the Finish Line. <https://healthtrust.org/2014/06/11/housing-1000-helps-push-national-100000-homes-campaign-across-the-finish-line/>

14. Office of Supportive Housing - County of Santa Clara. (2015). Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley. <https://osh.sccgov.org/continuum-care/reports-and-publications/cost-homelessness-silicon-valley>



Structure of the Collaboration

The relationship between the County, the City, Destination: Home, other cities, and community partner organizations is formalized in the County's Continuum of Care (CoC) Governance Charter.¹⁵ The evidence-backed CoC framework provides an underlying structure and impetus for regional collaboration. In addition to the CoC and Community Plan, the City and County utilize formal agreements including Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) and Revenue Sharing Agreements for specific joint programs on a case-by-case basis.

Agency leaders and staff members from the City and County meet regularly to maintain close relationships and coordinate and align efforts:

- One meeting per month for the core leadership team that oversees the homelessness agenda in the region, including:
 - » The City's Housing Department Director
 - » The County's OSH Director
 - » CEO of Destination: Home
 - » CEO of the County's Housing Authority
- Two meetings per month that include the County's Director of OSH, the City's Housing Director, deputy directors, and other staff members. The presence of leaders and line-level staff who lead program implementation ensures a high level of coordination among organizations at all levels and instills a culture of collaboration at both the leadership and programmatic levels.
- There are also additional program-specific meetings to allow for program-level coordination. For example, this includes one coordination meeting per month related to rapid re-housing, one coordination meeting per month related to development projects, etc.



15. Santa Clara County Continuum of Care Governance Charter. <https://osh.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb671/files/SCC%20Governance%20Charter%202020-01-31%20FINAL.pdf>



Funding Sources

The City and County have invested significant funding toward reducing homelessness in the region.

- A \$950 million affordable housing bond known as "Measure A," which was unanimously backed by the County Board of Supervisors, was approved by voters in 2016.
- Since 2018, Destination: Home has invested more than \$97 million to reduce and prevent homelessness in Santa Clara County.¹⁶
- A number of business and private organizations have made significant contributions through Destination: Home. The top philanthropic partners include Cisco and Apple, who helped to seed the Supportive Housing and Innovation Fund, giving \$50 million each.¹⁷

VI. Keys to Success

- **Shared commitment and goals:** The Community Plan to End Homelessness is a formal, written plan developed collaboratively by organizations and community members. It articulates a clear, shared strategy and goals for the region. If any partner gets off track, they can look to the document for guidance.
- **Dedicated funding and material resources:** Approval of the 2016 Measure A gave the City and County the mandate and funding needed to develop more extremely low-income housing units for people who traditionally do not get into or who cannot afford "low-income" housing.
- **Trust and open communication:** The City and County have regular meetings (at least two times per month) to ensure alignment on the work they are doing. They approach elected officials on coordinated timelines, using a shared strategy and approach.
- **Strong shared data systems and metrics:** Through the County HMIS, all partners have a shared data system that provides a consistent way to evaluate progress.
- **Dedicated human resources and staff support from a third-party convener:** Destination: Home has played a critical role in the success of regional collaboration efforts around homelessness in Santa Clara County. Representatives from the City and County, as well as individuals with lived experience, private-sector leaders, philanthropic organizations, and nonprofit service providers, sit on the board of Destination: Home.

16. Destination: Home. (n.d.). *Funding Impactful Strategies*. <https://destinationhomesv.org/funding-impactful-strategies/>

17. Destination: Home. (n.d.). *Supportive Housing & Innovation Fund*. <https://destinationhomesv.org/funding-impactful-strategies/supportive-housing-innovation-fund/>

VII. Challenges & Lessons Learned

- **A shared foundational vision prevents political disagreements:** Every public entity has its own policy-makers and elected officials. These officials may disagree on how to approach housing or homelessness. The Community Plan, however, provides City and County officials with a common reference point, laying out clear principles and goals to address these politics. They have an agreement describing priorities and setting forth a jointly agreed-upon strategy that the City and County have committed to.
- **Start small and build up to systems change:** It takes time to develop the trust and strong relationships that are critical to the success of collaborative efforts. The Housing 1000 challenge in 2011 showed the City and County that they could work together effectively to accomplish a shared goal. This win galvanized leaders and laid the foundation for continued partnership. The lesson: start with a small, measurable or defined campaign before moving to the higher-level systems change.
- **Overcome staff turnover through intentional relationship-building:** A major threat to any collaborative effort is staff turnover, which causes a loss of institutional knowledge and fragments relationships and communication channels. Leaders in Santa Clara and San Jose work to combat the effects of staff turnover by investing in relationship-building. Such intentional effort ensures that the departure of a single person does not disrupt the collaborative.
- **Leaders regularly include deputies, managers, and others** who may eventually move into higher leadership roles, so they interact with leaders and staff from partner organizations.
- **An annual off-site networking retreat for leaders and second-in-command staff** (e.g., deputies, managers) from the City, County, and Destination: Home promotes relationship-building and provides a forum in which leaders can discuss priorities for the upcoming year. These retreats are instrumental in building relationships and trust among local leaders. They also provide an opportunity for newly-hired or appointed leaders to be welcomed into the fold.

VIII. Collaboration Impact

Through the community-wide effort to end homelessness in the County, a number of significant milestones have been achieved. For example, since 2015, the region has:¹⁸

- Housed more than 14,000 people
- Passed County Measure A in 2016, an affordable housing bond providing \$950 million to build affordable housing
- Launched a new Homelessness Prevention System that serves about 1,000 households annually
- Doubled the number of supportive housing units
- Doubled temporary housing and emergency shelter capacity
- Achieved "functional zero" veteran homelessness, meaning more people are getting housed than are falling into homelessness each year¹⁹
- Funded 20 affordable housing developments, with a total of 2,000 units²⁰
- Partnered with 70 nonprofits to assist 15,000 families impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹

The collective effort to combat homelessness in the County is ongoing, and there is no sign that it will end anytime soon. The current Community Plan was launched in August 2020 after an extensive community planning process that included input from more than 8,000 community members, people with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and advocates.²³ In its first year of implementation, over 2,700 people have been permanently housed.²⁴ In October 2021, the City and County debuted the "Heading Home" program, a new initiative targeting families with children who are experiencing homelessness.²⁵

18. Santa Clara County Continuum of Care (2020). Community Plan to End Homelessness, 2020-2025: Executive Summary. https://housingtoolkit.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb501/files/SCC%20Community%20Plan%20to%20End%20Homelessness%20-%20Executive%20Summary_FINAL.pdf

19. Destination: Home. (n.d.). All the Way Home. <https://destinationhomesv.org/all-the-way-home/>

20. Destination: Home. (n.d.). Funding Impactful Strategies. Destination Home. <https://destinationhomesv.org/funding-impactful-strategies>

21. Yae, R. and Nair, N. (2021). Emergency Rental Assistance Case Study: Santa Clara County Homelessness Prevention System's COVID-19 Emergency Homelessness Prevention Program. https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Santa-Clara_Emergency-Rental-Assistance-Case-Study.pdf

22. Santa Clara County (2020). Santa Clara County Continuum of Care Releases Roadmap for Ending Homelessness. <https://news.sccgov.org/news-release/santa-clara-county-continuum-care-releases-roadmap-ending-homelessness>

23. Santa Clara County (n.d.). Ending Homelessness: The State of the Supportive Housing System: 2019-2020. <https://osh.sccgov1.acsitefactory.com/sites/g/files/ex-jcpb671/files/EndingHomelessness%282019-2020%29.pdf>

24. KPIX 5 CBS News SF Bay Area (2021). Housing Crisis: Santa Clara County Launches Plan To End Family Homelessness In Four Years. <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2021/10/05/santa-clara-county-end-family-homelessness-heading-home-program/>

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RESOURCES

2015–2019 Community Plan to End Homelessness:

http://destinationhomesc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Community_Plan_to_End_Homelessness_in_Santa_Clara_County_web.pdf

2020–25 Community Plan to End Homelessness:

https://housingtoolkit.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb501/files/CommunityPlan_2020.pdf