



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 14, 2025

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

From: Jan Lester 
County Administrator

Re: **Office of Housing Opportunities and Homeless Solutions Year-End Report**

One year ago the County created the Office of Housing Opportunities and Homeless Solutions (OHOHS) to facilitate internal department collaboration to prevent and address homelessness, implement strategic programs and provide outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness.

To facilitate increased communication and collaboration horizontally within Pima County government and with external partners, OHOHS was to coordinate shared efforts in the areas of:

- Emergency & Temporary Shelter
- Homelessness prevention & diversion
- Housing
- Long-Term Housing
- Planning and Performance Review
- Prevention strategies
- Supportive or wrap around services

During this past year, OHOHS Director Jenifer Darland has worked with an Executive Team comprised of the Deputy County Administrators and representatives of the Departments of Animal Care, Behavioral Health, Community and Workforce Development, Grants Management and Innovation, Health, Justice Services and Regional Flood Control. Ms. Darland and the Executive Team focused efforts during this first year on four key priorities, which are to:

- Conduct an inventory of existing County and partner programs addressing homeless/at-risk populations;
- Describe and illustrate the homeless response system and care coordination;
- Develop County and public facing communication strategies to enable individuals to understand where and how to access information and resources; and
- Develop a Strategic and Continuous Improvement Plan with the goal of ensuring County programming is responsive, sustainable, and equitably distributed.

. Critical elements of this past year's work include:

1. The Update to the Pima County Administrative Procedure 50.02, which is Pima County's Homeless Protocol. Discussions and the insight gained through the work with many

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involved outreach staff have led to the development of proposed amendments to this Protocol. The draft of this document is currently being circulated to both elected and appointed officials for comment prior to finalization. Additionally, I will work with County Administrative Support staff to ensure notification of the proposed revision for County staff input prior to finalization.

2. The Centralization of Reports and Data into the [Homeless Reporting Tool](#), an online survey application developed by the City of Tucson. The County began incorporating data into this central site, which the public can access this tool via City and County webpages, and reports can also be submitted via phone by calling 3-1-1. Ms. Darland's Year-End Report notes that from December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024, a total of 2,206 verified / referred homeless encampments were reported for the region. Of the 2,206, 354 (~ 16 percent) were reports located in unincorporated area of the county, on properties owned / maintained by the County in neighboring jurisdictions, or within the jurisdictional authority / responsibility of neighboring jurisdictions, including federal or state agencies.
3. The addition of ways in which encampment complaints / reports come into County departments, including emails or telephone calls, constituent feedback webforms or drainage complaint forms available on County webpages.
4. The development of tools to evaluate potential impacts on property owners, which will allow Pima County to respond if and as needed to Proposition 312 – Property Tax; Refund; Nuisance Enforcement, now recorded in Arizona Revised Statutes under [Title 42 – Taxation; Chapter 17; Article 8; Subsection 42-17451](#):. Pima County Information Technology's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) division is working to develop a central system that can integrate reports to one data platform allowing the County to determine the site of and responsibility for any encampment.
5. Unifying a vision for County Programming, which will the County and other jurisdictional and community partners to support crisis intervention, navigate vulnerable / at-risk or homeless individuals into programs to alleviate their housing crisis, including shelter, housing, treatment, or justice services.
6. Striving to reduce homelessness in Pima County. [The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the consolidated 2024 Point in Time estimates](#) report that 2024 saw a decrease of 107 individuals or 4.8% experiencing homelessness. Later this month the 2025 Point in Time count will occur, which will allow us all to evaluate if the collective community efforts / initiatives have successfully staved off further increases to homelessness.

During this past, first year of operations and as we move into 2025, OHOHS regularly reviews how the Department is aligning with [Board of Supervisor Policy E 36.2 "Reducing Generational Poverty and Improving Individual and Community Wealth"](#). Within the 13 strategies of the Prosperity Initiative that are designed to focus on the underlying factors of poverty, several focus on issues of housing. These include:

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Sub-Policy No. 1: "Increase the supply of housing by prioritizing practices and investments that result in diverse housing types and prices in neighborhoods, ensuring affordable housing options are available throughout Pima County, especially in low poverty, high opportunity neighborhoods."

[The November 26, 2024, memorandum to the Board related to the progress of housing market study](#) initial estimates show 8,000 additional housing units are needed right now to address the affordable housing shortage for households earning between 0-30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). To date, the Board has allocated over \$16 million in general funds in the form of gap funding for development and preservation of affordable housing. Presently, the Board has accepted recommendations for [\\$10.9 million in funding awards, leveraging an additional \\$422.5 million in additional investment for the development of over 1,059 units of affordable rental and homeownership projects.](#)

Sub-Policy No. 3: "Improve housing stability among renters and homeowners, especially in high poverty / low opportunity neighborhoods, by preventing evictions and foreclosures, increasing homeownership, developing more affordable housing and reducing home energy and weatherization costs."

The Pima County Emergency Eviction Legal Services (EELS) program has proven to be invaluable to the recently evicted households, resulting in 80-85 percent of the individuals / households served by this program have exited into some form of permanent / stable housing.

The initial focus for OHOHS for 2025 will be the continuation of three key tasks:

1. Update the [Pima County Administrative Procedure 50.02 "Pima County Homeless Encampment Protocol on County Owned or Maintained Property"](#) (Homeless Protocol);
2. Centralize homeless encampment reports, associated documentation and data; and
3. Work with County health and human service departments on developing unified understanding and vision for how County programs and services should be leveraged for vulnerable / at-risk or homeless individuals and families.

Attached please find Director Jenifer Darland's Year-End Report for 2024

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Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Jenifer Darland, Director, Office of Housing Opportunities and Homeless Solutions

Date: January 13, 2025

To: Jan Leshner
County Administrator

From: Jenifer Darland 
Director, Office of Housing
Opportunities and Homeless
Solutions

Re: Office of Housing Opportunities & Homeless Solutions (OHOHS) Year-End Report

The year is ending with modest accomplishments in the initiated activities aligned with the five foundational priorities to the actions and efforts of the OHOHS as identified in the [December 22, 2023 memorandum to the Board](#), which are:

1. Conduct an inventory of existing County and partner programs addressing homeless / at-risk populations.
2. Describe and illustrate the homeless response system and care coordination.
3. Develop County and public facing communication strategies to enable individuals to understand where and how to access information and resources.
4. Develop a Strategic and Continuous Improvement Plan with the goal of ensuring County programming is responsive, sustainable, and equitably distributed.
5. Develop means of tracking efficacy of County assistance programs and work with the departments and partner agencies and government to develop attainable measures of success.

These priorities have served as a guiding pillar for the OHOHS, establishing a framework of understanding related to the scale and complexity of homelessness, as well as how County, community and regional programming / initiatives, adjacent systems are interfacing / intersecting with individuals experiencing homelessness. This required dedicating much of this first year to working alongside Mari Vasquez, Multi-Agency Resource Coordinator for County and City of Tucson, County and City of Tucson staff, and community partners while responding to and engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness so as to establish a deep understanding of how these systems are working – independently as well as together – as well as how these systems are confronting challenges associated with substance use and limited low-barrier shelter options. This experience has been foundational to the first year as Director of the OHOHS, has added depth to the understanding of the complexity of the homeless crisis, and has fostered a deep appreciation for the dedicated County staff who are confronting these challenges daily.

While most of the first-year efforts addressing Priorities 1 through 3 have been previously reported on either in memoranda or as part of the monthly presentations to the Board, this report will outline present activities and developing efforts, briefly address areas where County programming can reduce homelessness, and touch on areas of focus for the year ahead.

Activities and Developing Efforts

Going into the year ahead will be the continuation of three key tasks : 1. Update the [Pima County Administrative Procedure 50.02 “Pima County Homeless Encampment Protocol on County Owned or Maintained Property”](#) (Homeless Protocol); 2. Centralize homeless encampment reports, associated documentation and data; and 3. Work with County health and human service departments on developing unified understanding and vision for how County programs and services should be leveraged for vulnerable / at-risk or homeless individuals and families.

These tasks align with OHOHS Priorities 4 and 5 and will support timely review and / or initiation of responses to reported encampments on County owned / maintained assets, improve data collection and system visibility of the reported homeless encampment activity, and improve coordination of County programming.

1. Update the Pima County Administrative Procedure 50.02

The Homeless Protocol serves as a broad system response directive for Pima County departments and is designed to allow for county departments to offer humanitarian / human service resources, such as resource support and navigation to available shelter or connections to care, for those who are encamped on county owned and or maintained properties.

Following discussions and aided by the opportunity to “walk the work” alongside public works and homeless outreach staff, there is a need to update and inform the current Homeless Protocol to accurately reflect what is practicable and still flexible for responsive program and service deployment. Examples of areas addressed include clarifying language in the procedure that can improve understanding of process of notification to health and human service organizations, ensure procedure in the Homeless Protocol follows the attached visual workflow, corrections in the workflow to address process of responding to reported encampments on properties on assets owned and maintained by the County which are located in neighboring jurisdictions. Priority and attention to these improvements will be given to ensuring that County departments remain responsive to reported encampment activities.

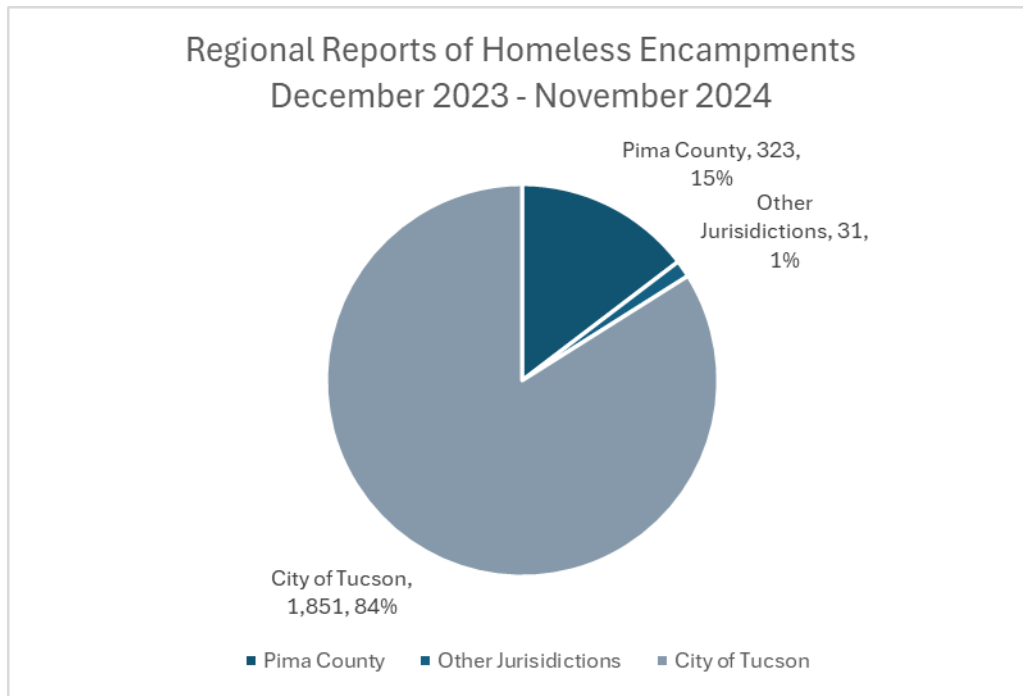
A draft has been developed with preliminary review by those staff directly facilitating the work to ensure all elements are properly accounted for prior to broad circulation and review. At the December 1, 2024 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Scott requested the draft be shared with Board of Supervisor staff prior to finalization. Additionally, I will work with County Administrative Support staff to ensure notification of the proposed revision for County staff input prior to finalization.

2. Centralize Reports & Data

Regional homeless encampment data originates from the [Homeless Reporting Tool](#), an online survey application developed by the City of Tucson. The county began incorporating reports from this tool into current county homeless protocol procedure in July 2023. The public can access this tool via City and County webpages, and reports can also be submitted via phone by calling 3-1-1.

From December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024, a total of 2,206 verified / referred homeless encampments were reported for the region. Of the 2,206, 354 (~16 percent) were reports located in unincorporated area of the county, on properties owned / maintained by the County in

neighboring jurisdictions, or within the jurisdictional authority / responsibility of neighboring jurisdictions, including federal or state agencies.



Regional totals for Pima County do not include reports sent directly to county departments via departmental feedback / reporting systems. Data reflects what has been reported by the public and may include reports of non-encampment related activities, such as loitering, or illegal dumping. Data often includes duplicate reports, meaning one or more person reported the site or a person reported the site more than once. Totals for unincorporated Pima County include sites that fall within unincorporated county but are owned / maintained by a federal or state agency, meaning that while the site is within the unincorporated area, the site is outside of the County's maintenance / ownership.

Homeless Reporting Tool is one of many pathways by which encampment complaints / reports come into County departments. Additional pathways include emails or telephone calls, constituent feedback webforms or drainage complaint forms available on County webpages. Multiple reporting pathways complicate real-time evaluation of the volume of incoming homeless encampment reports and limits the ability to evaluate, prioritize responses, and analyze data associated with increased activity and / or areas prone to resettlement. Lack of visibility complicates development of proactive strategies for service engagement / outreach efforts that can attempt to interrupt homelessness.

This past November, Arizona voters have passed Proposition 312 – Property Tax; Refund; Nuisance Enforcement. Now recorded in Arizona Revised Statutes under [Title 42 – Taxation; Chapter 17; Article 8; Subsection 42-17451](#): “Refund; failure to abate public nuisance; applicability; definitions” Allows a private property owner to apply to the AZ Dept of Revenue (AZDOR) for a refund or claim for costs incurred when a city or county (1) declines to enforce

existing laws prohibiting illegal camping, obstructing public thoroughfares, loitering, panhandling, public urination or defecation, public consumption of alcoholic beverages or use of illegal substances, or (2) maintains a public nuisance on or near their property. Refund may not exceed what property owner paid in prior tax year. The refund will be paid by AZDOR and reduced from the state-share of revenue that would be paid to the city or county where the property is located. While the legislation does not require a property owner to first report activities on or near their property, this adds importance to improving operational awareness and response related to reported homeless encampments in unincorporated Pima County. To that end, Pima County Information Technology's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has been engaged in a development discussion centered on establishing a central data system. The initial objective will be to develop a system that can integrate reports to one data platform, that can be accessible by the designated County staff for the purpose of review and initiation of the County Protocol, meaning the determination of location of site, if the site falls within the maintenance responsibility / authority of the County, and assignment of the report to designated County departments as appropriate.

3. Unifying Vision for County Programming

Pima County possesses a dynamic and responsive public service portfolio for vulnerable, at-risk and / or homeless constituents and is viewed as vital programmatic and stabilizing partner by community and jurisdictional partners. County resources and programming are needed to support crisis intervention, navigate vulnerable / at-risk or homeless individuals into programs to alleviate their housing crisis, including shelter, housing, treatment, or justice services.

Interactions at both the regional level as well as directly with County departments suggest while there are multiple examples of County departments / programs supporting community efforts, there is an opportunity to establish a unified understanding and vision for how County programs and services should be leveraged for vulnerable / at-risk or homeless individuals and families.

To that end, I propose beginning a quarterly discussion with County departmental directors and / or designees of Health, Behavioral Health, Justice Services, Pima Animal Care Center (PACC), Community & Workforce Development (CWD), and the Library to begin developing a unified operational understanding for programming efforts, as well as provide a routine forum for ongoing information and resource sharing on programming and existing collaborations focused on at-risk / homeless individuals and families.

Reducing Homelessness in Pima County

On December 29, 2024, [the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the consolidated 2024 Point in Time estimates](#), reporting an increase of 18 percent in homelessness since 2023. Pima County results from the 2024 Point-In -Time (PIT) homeless count estimate a total of 2,102 individuals were experiencing homelessness, a decrease of 107 (4.84 percent) from the 2023 estimate of 2,209.

	2023	2024	Change	%
Sheltered	708	821	113	15.96%
Unsheltered	1,501	1,281	(220)	(15.32%)
Total Individuals Experiencing Homelessness	2,209	2,102	(107)	4.84%

The upcoming 2025 PIT estimates will provide the community the next opportunity to evaluate if collective community efforts / initiatives have successfully staved off further increases to homelessness. What is clear is as a nation, we are still grappling with how to reduce homelessness.

In terms of County-driven strategies to further reduce homelessness, it is important to distinguish between where the County has authority to lead and where the County is a vital contributing partner.

The County's leadership authority of a broad strategy to prevent / reduce homelessness is fortified by [Board of Supervisor Policy E 36.2 "Reducing Generational Poverty and Improving Individual and Community Wealth"](#), approved December 2023. Within the policy are thirteen (13) strategies focused on the underlying factors of poverty, with strategic focus on efforts toward families who are living in high-poverty, low-opportunity areas.

Sub-Policy No. 1: "Increase the supply of housing by prioritizing practices and investments that result in diverse housing types and prices in neighborhoods, ensuring affordable housing options are available throughout Pima County, especially in low poverty, high opportunity neighborhoods."

Homelessness is complicated by a myriad of challenges not the least of which is access to housing that is affordable. To that end, the Board's continued investment in the development and preservation of housing that is affordable for low-income households is crucial to meeting this need. [The November 26, 2024, memorandum to the Board related to the progress of housing market study](#) included informational slides prepared and presented by ECONorthwest, which illustrated an initial estimation of approximately 8,000 additional units needed right now to address the affordable housing shortage for households earning between 0-30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). To date, the Board has allocated over \$16 million in general funds in the form of gap funding for development and preservation of affordable housing. Presently, the Board has accepted recommendations for [\\$10.9 million in funding awards, leveraging an additional \\$422.5 million in additional investment for the development of over 1,059 units of affordable rental and homeownership projects.](#)

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To prevent onset and / or returns to homelessness requires time-sensitive interruption at the point where housing is lost, such as at the time of eviction. The Pima County Emergency Eviction Legal Services (EELS) program is a proven disrupter to the onset of homelessness by providing strategic interventive financial and legal support at the time of eviction. [The EELS program, established during the pandemic, continues to be a stabilizing factor for recently evicted households with a program performance ~80-85 percent success rate](#), meaning 80-85 percent of the individuals / households served have exited into some form of permanent / stable housing.

The County is a substantial partner to regional efforts / strategies to address homelessness. This partnership for broad regional strategies is bolstered by the County and City sharing a full-time Multi-Agency Resource Coordinator and the inception of the Office of Housing Opportunities and

Homeless Solutions. The County is a longstanding representative to the local Continuum of Care (CoC), the Tucson Pima Collaboration to end Homelessness (TPCH). The County annually applies for competitive HUD funded-rapid rehousing programs for homeless youth, individuals, and families directly and in contracted partnership with nonprofit agencies. The County brings substantial leverage to these and other supportive housing program participants, including those served in the City of Tucson's "Tucson House", in the form of employment and workforce training.

Looking Forward

As has been a recurrent theme in monthly updates to the Board, homelessness is a complex and dynamic challenge requiring ongoing evaluation processes and resource deployment, ensuring strategies are timely, nimble and as flexible as necessary to sufficiently address and interrupt homelessness. Reducing homelessness will continue to require a collective community approach which leverages partnerships and programmatic resources under a shared operational strategy across nonprofit, health and human service agencies, law enforcement and jurisdictions. This is especially prudent as it is not immediately clear what programmatic directives may be issued by HUD that could impact the ability to serve individuals experiencing homelessness using Housing First / low-barrier strategies. In the year ahead priority will continue to be placed on the continuation of efforts aligned with OHOHS priorities, with emphasis on supporting a strengthened collaboration between county programs and community partners.

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Amaris Vasquez, Multi-Agency Coordinator for Pima County & City of Tucson