

# **Community of One: All In**

## Draft Strategic Plan to Make Homelessness Rare, Brief and Nonrecurring (FY 25-30)

City Council Informal Session | March 12, 2024

This item relates to Focused Action Plan Initiative #2.14



Housing &  
Neighborhood  
Preservation

# Our Goals Today

- Review of our community system to address homelessness
- Highlight progress since 2017 “Community of One” plan
- Present proposed goals and key strategies of updated plan
- Seek Council feedback and direction on potential next steps

**No policy decisions are requested at this time.**



# We address homelessness as one community system



**BEACH**

Bringing an End to  
All City Homelessness

- City-Faith-Nonprofit Partnership
- Represents 30-year commitment of working together
- Coalition formalized in 2009
- BEACH Governing Board is required by HUD
- Three ways to access the service system:
  - **Housing Resource Center:** Day Services, Homeless Services, Health Center, Human Services
  - **Regional Housing Crisis Hotline:** (757) 227-5932
  - **Homeless Outreach:** Unsheltered population



# Our partners include...

- 5 Star Residential
- Begin Again Foundation
- BrightView Health
- Community Alternatives Management Group (CAMG)
- Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia
- Charity Tracker
- Christ Investment Corp.
- Church of the Ascension
- Connect With A Wish
- DHS Behavioral Health
- Endependence Center
- Hampton VA Medical Center
- Interfaith Alliance at the Beach
- JCOC
- LGBT Life Center
- Lift Fitness
- Open Alter Ministries
- Sentara Health (formerly Optima)
- PiN Ministry
- Potter's House
- Samaritan House
- Senior Services of SE Virginia
- Seniors Unlimited Lifestyles Inc.
- Seton Youth Shelters
- StandUp for Kids Hampton Roads
- The Planning Council
- VB Home Now
- VB City Public Schools
- VBCDC
- VBDPH Community Development
- Virginia Beach Dept. of Health
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Virginia Supportive Housing
- Virginia Veteran and Family Support
- Vision Life Ministries



# Community resources include...

## Homeless Services:

- Financial assistance
- Permanent housing
- Shelter
- Case management

## Food/Meals:

- Community dinners
- Bag lunches
- Pre-packed grocery
- Food pantries

## Basic Assistance:

- Day Support: showers, laundry, housing support
- Clothing
- ID/birth certificate assistance
- Financial assistance
- Hygiene items
- Bike program
- LGBTQ+ youth meetings

## Health Services:

- Preventative medical



# Our goal is to make homelessness...

**Rare,**

**Prevent** people from experiencing homelessness

**Brief,**

**Shorten** the length of time that people experience homelessness

**and Nonrecurring**

**Stably house** & provide wraparound support to help people leave homelessness behind



# Our Philosophy & Service Delivery Approach

## Housing First Philosophy

- Having a stable place to live is the critical platform from which people can take all the additional steps they need to thrive
- **About removing barriers to housing, but it does not create more housing**

## Best Practice & Equitable Approach

- Everyone who presents for shelter and housing are assessed using the same, standard tool
- **Limited resources are prioritized** for the most vulnerable who are literally homeless
- Not by first come, first served



# “Community of One”

- Strategic plan adopted in 2017
- Collective work of City, faith and nonprofit organizations
- Path toward a future where everyone in Virginia Beach will be able to live in safe, decent and affordable housing
- Seven core goals



COMMUNITY OF ONE

MAKING HOMELESSNESS RARE, BRIEF & NONRECURRING (2017-2020)

ADOPTED OCTOBER 17, 2017





# Progress Since “Community of One”

## Goal 1: Transform Our Service System to Make Homelessness Rare, Brief, and Nonrecurring

- Completed the Housing Resource Center (HRC) in 2018
- Expanded prevention services → Prevention of approx. 2,288 households experiencing homelessness

## Goal 2: Make Family Homelessness Rare, Brief, and Nonrecurring

- Expanded housing opportunities → 22.5%\* decrease in the percentage of homeless persons in families w/minor children

## Goal 3: Make Chronic Homelessness Rare, Brief, and Nonrecurring

- Prioritized housing opportunities for chronically homeless households → 11% decrease in chronic homelessness

\* 2017 – 2023 VB PIT Count



# Progress Since “Community of One” (cont.)

## Goal 4: Make Youth Homelessness Rare, Brief, and Nonrecurring

- Expanded housing opportunities targeting homeless youth → Almost 53%\* decrease in unaccompanied homeless youth

## Goal 5: Maintain and Increase the Supply of Permanent, Accessible and Affordable Housing

- Nonprofit partners received increased Continuum of Care (CoC) → System to housed 350 VB households
- Increased affordable housing opportunities (e.g. 65 Emergency Housing Vouchers funded through City American Rescue Plan Act funds)

## Goal 6: Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement in Our Community Efforts

- Added new service provider partners to our homelessness response system

## Goal 7: Develop and Maintain Sustainable Resources to Support Our Ongoing Community Effort

- VB Home Now foundation raised nearly \$1.7M in private donations → \$800K+ invested towards programs to help VB households in obtaining/sustaining housing



# Helping Individuals Leave Homelessness Behind



## Returns to Homelessness

Year	% in 6 months	% in 12 months	% in 24 months
2019	11%	4%	4%
2020	7%	7%	10%
2021	6%	3%	4%
2022	5%	4%	4%



# Serving the Most Vulnerable During the Pandemic

Scaled up shelter and state funding towards housing opportunities.

**Provided 452 individuals with non-congregate shelter (March 2020 – May 2021)**

- **40% exited to permanent housing**

**Launched program within four days of the emergency declaration – the first in the region to do so.**



# What we know and what we are learning...

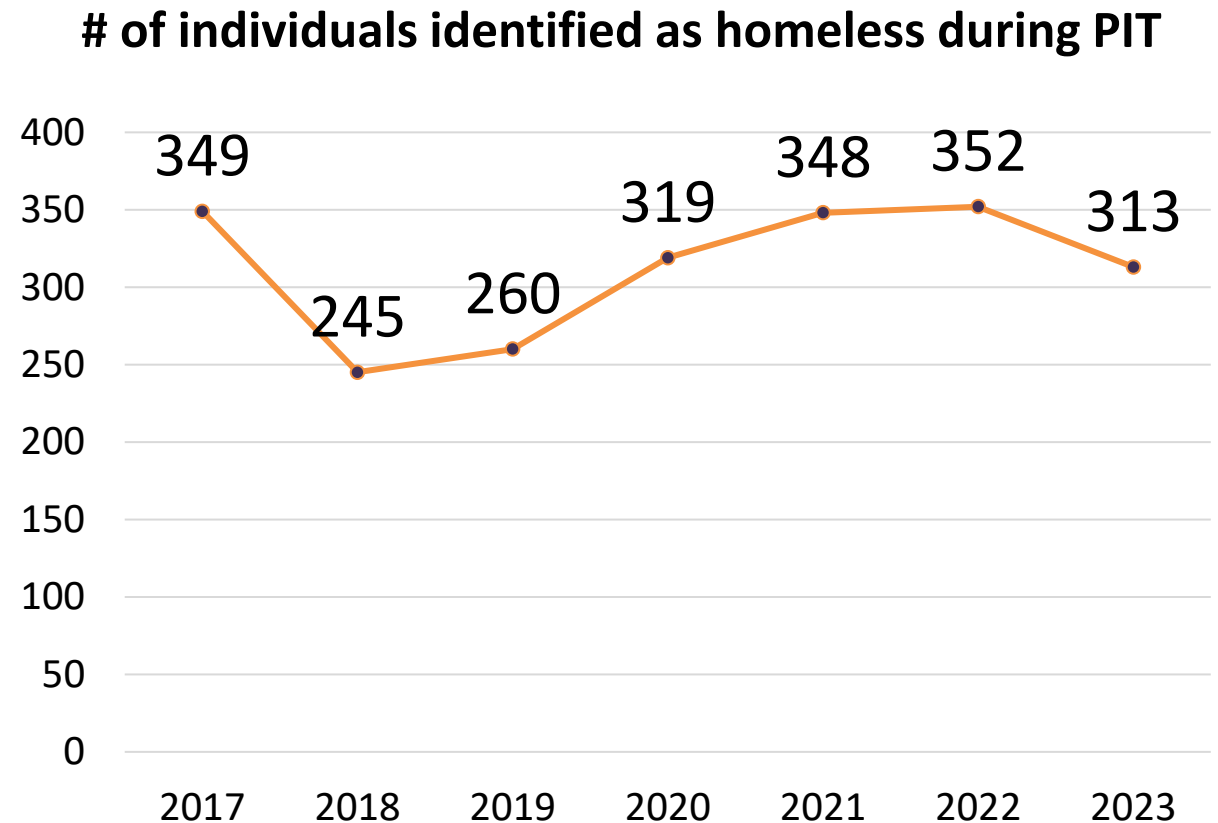
- Data
- Community engagement
- Best practices

# We are not seeing significant changes in our PIT numbers.

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count = One-day snapshot of the literally homeless population.

**Between 2022 and 2023, overall homelessness decreased by 11%.**

2024 PIT numbers are still being verified.



# How people enter and exit our system helps us to better understand the full scope.

## Real-Time System Data for 2023:

1,656 households were literally homeless

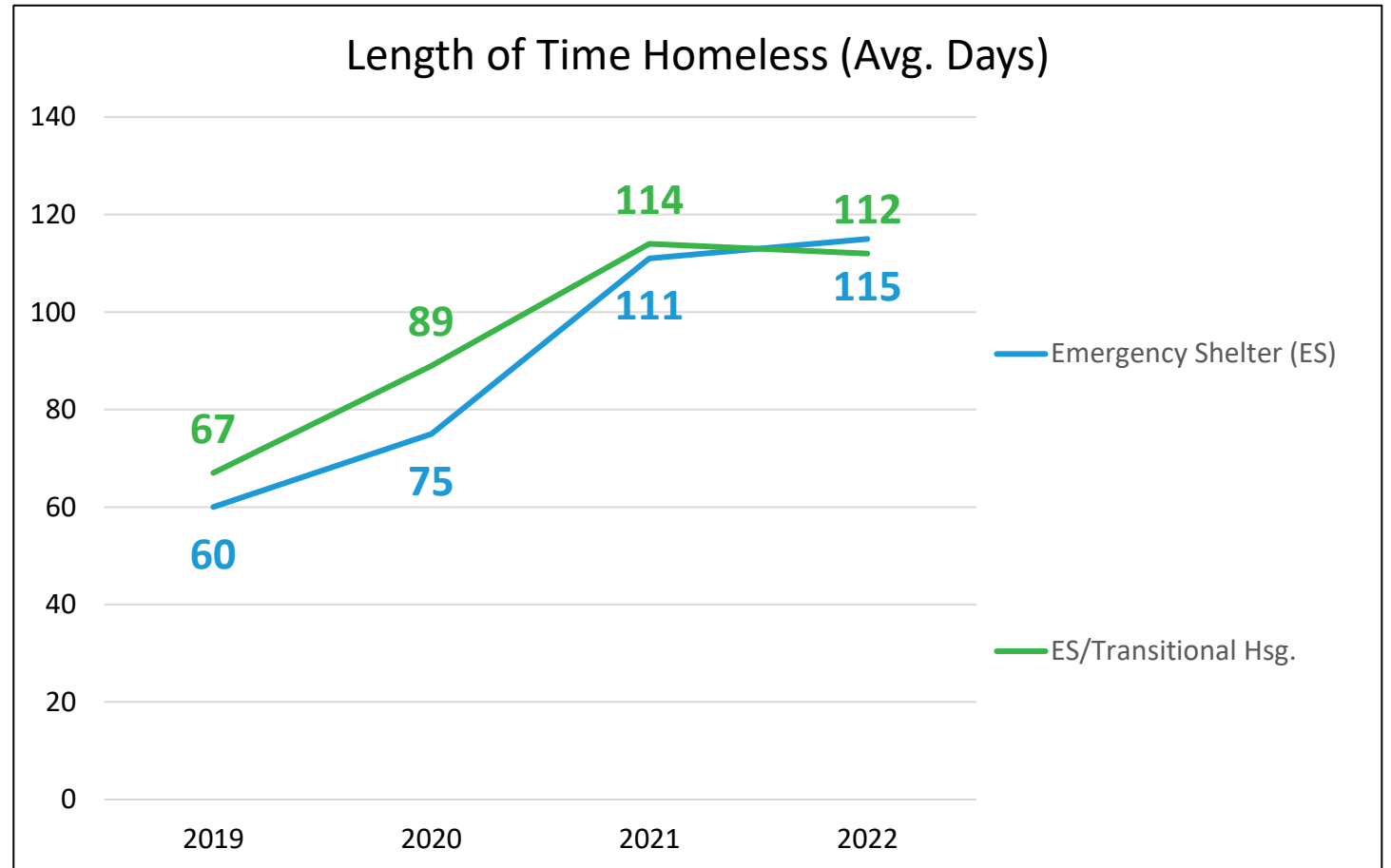
- Almost 48% became inactive
- 32% were housed (based on our system capacity)
- 3% exited to other destinations
- Almost 17% remained on prioritization list and rolled over to 2024



# The length of time people are homeless is increasing.

There are **176 total year-round shelter** beds in VB.

The average number of days people are staying in shelter and transitional housing has **almost doubled** in the last few years.



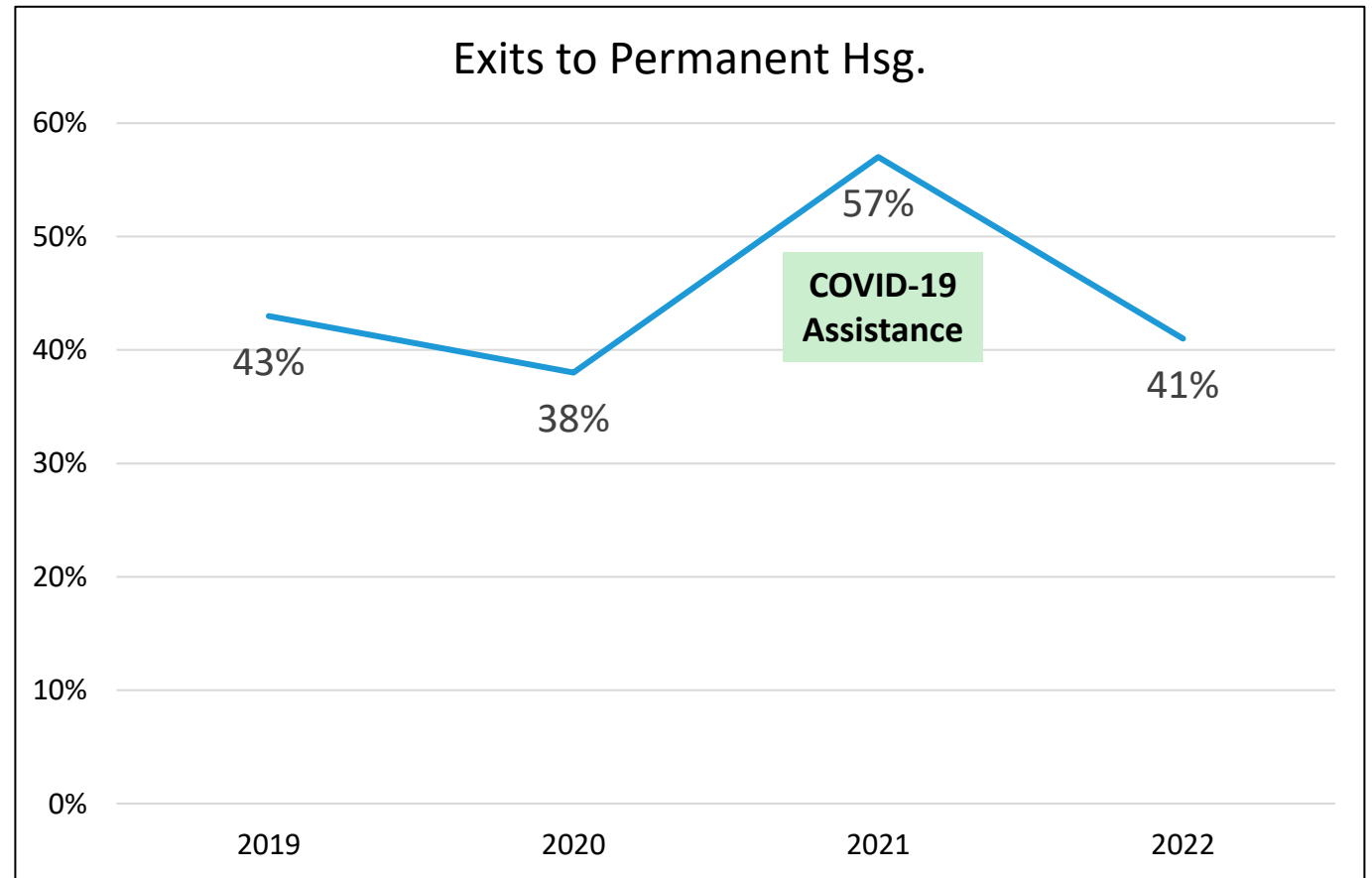


# Exits to permanent housing are not happening at a rate that shortens the length of time people are homeless.

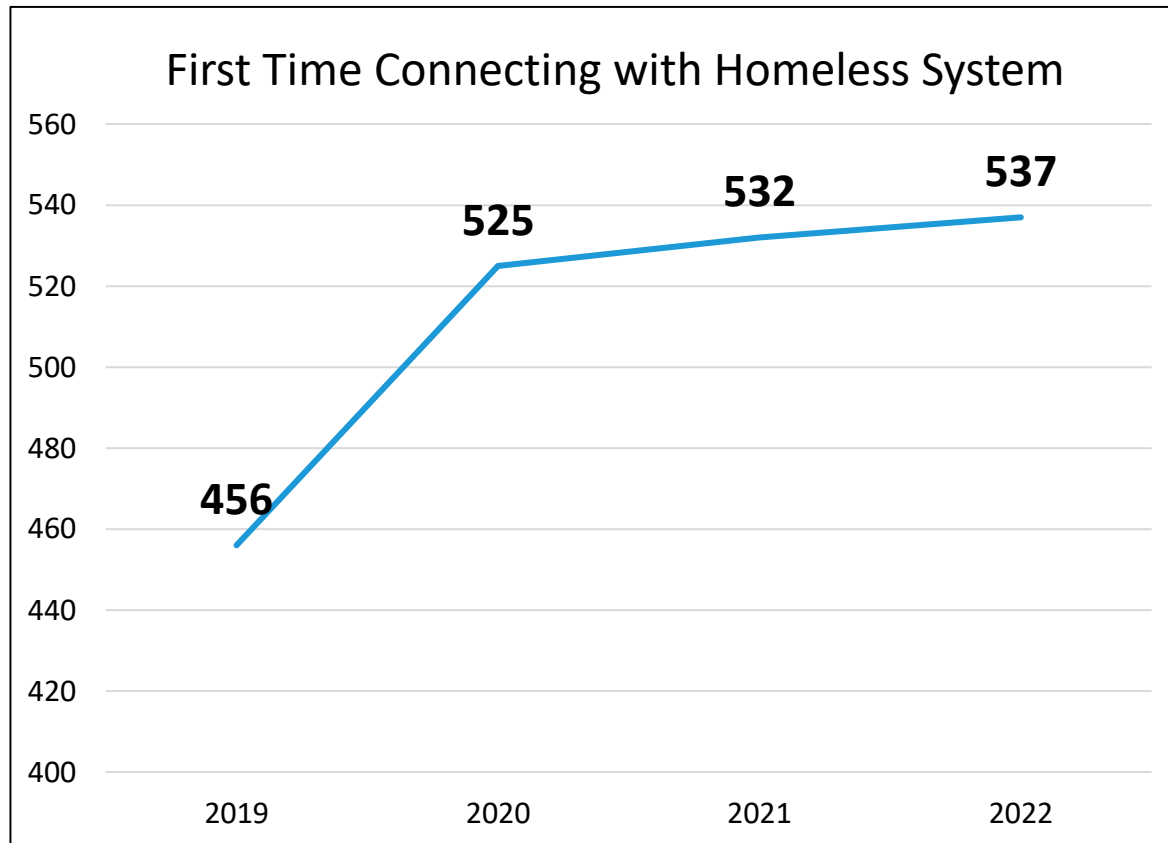
There are **818 total housing units** in our homeless service system.

There is not a “one-size-fits-all” housing solution for everyone.

Our ability to significantly reduce homelessness is **ultimately determined by how much permanent housing is available and suitable** to meet the needs of all who experience homelessness.



# The number of people experiencing homelessness and connecting with our system for the first time is increasing.



## Top 4 Reasons Households are Experiencing Homelessness:

1. Loss of housing, not evictions (could not afford to renew lease due to rent increase)
2. Evicted
3. Relational Issues
4. Insufficient Income



# Unsheltered homelessness remains a top community concern.

## 150 unsheltered households in VB at any given time:

### Small subset live in encampments:

- Approx. 75 people
- 21 encampments known to Outreach

### “Othering”:

- Presence of unsheltered individuals in places people would rather not see them
- Not considered a part of the community

## Misperception about Homeless Outreach Team’s role:

- Not an enforcement authority
- About building trusting relationships
- “Navigators” with focus on connections to housing and resources



# There are emerging challenges in addressing encampments.

## Primary reasons people are resistant to shelter:

- Do not want to leave belongings or pets
- Concerned about communicable illnesses
- Want autonomy
- Prefer housing or non-congregate setting

**Encampment residents were offered first opportunities for placement in expanded HRC shelter – none chose this option.**

## Addressing this issue involves balancing:

- Health and safety of surrounding community
- Our shelter and housing capacity
- Compassion
- Personal choice and service resistance
- Property ownership
- Legal precedents



# “Community of One: All In” Draft Strategic Plan (FY 25-30)



- **Reaffirmation of our community’s commitment to work together**
- **Maintain and enhance** what’s working
- Rallying call to fully invest in partnerships and resources towards effective solutions that addresses challenges and significantly **reduces homelessness**



# Three broad goals...

## **Goal 1: Create safe and healthy neighborhoods by reducing impact of unsheltered homelessness**

- Increase year-round shelter beds
- Increase access to basic need services
- Convene providers across service sectors
- Increase access to mental health and substance abuse recovery services

## **Goal 2: Increase system capacity to address primary causes of homelessness**

- Ensure adequate supply of affordable housing for low-income households
- Ensure access to livable wage employment for able-bodied adults
- Eliminate disparities in access, services and outcomes

## **Goal 3: Preserve and increase prevention and permanent housing programs to meet demand**

- Target prevention resources to most vulnerable
- Ensure adequate supply of housing for all homeless populations



# ...shaped by listening and learning.

- BEACH workgroup meetings
- Food and Feedback Forum for individuals with lived experience
- Public meeting and unsheltered homelessness panel discussion
- **SpeakUp VB online survey**
- Homelessness consultant



## 251 survey participants; 173 comments

- **Goal 1:** 85% Support
- **Goal 2:** 77% Support
- **Goal 3:** 83% Support

## Key themes:

- Prioritize mental health/substance abuse
- More assistance for families
- Address affordable housing issues
- Need for more public education
- Does not address safety and crime
- Concerns about costs to implement plan





# Goal 1: Create safe and healthy neighborhoods by reducing impact of unsheltered homelessness

## Strategy 1.1 -- Increase the number of year-round shelter beds



- Keep all shelters open and allow participants to stay in the room during daytime hours
- Increase non-congregate sheltering opportunities for unsheltered families and seniors when year-round shelter beds are full
- Ensure all shelters are low barrier and welcoming, utilizing trauma-informed care practices
- Utilize available space in the HRC to create a small overflow shelter program from April to November (similar to the winter shelter)

*-- Input from Food & Feedback Forum*





# Goal 1: Create safe and healthy neighborhoods by reducing impact of unsheltered homelessness

## Strategy 1.2 -- Increase access to basic need services



- Expand HRC day services hours to include weekend hours
- Build partnerships to provide storage of personal items for unsheltered individuals who are working toward housing
- Enhance outreach to encampments by investing in a tool to map and track sites and improve opportunities to provide targeted services and support (Show the Way app)
- Provide employment opportunities for two individuals with lived experience to provide peer support outreach

-- Input from Food & Feedback Forum



# Goal 1: Create safe and healthy neighborhoods by reducing impact of unsheltered homelessness

## Strategy 1.3 -- Convene providers across the service sector to address the needs of our unsheltered residents



- Develop multi-departmental strategy to ensure compassionate, client-centric approaches to the clearing of encampments that present health and safety issues
- Partner with pet agencies to provide pet support for pet owners experiencing homelessness
- Educate businesses and community associations about resources for unsheltered population

-- Input from Food & Feedback Forum

-- Input from unsheltered homelessness forum



# Goal 1: Create safe and healthy neighborhoods by reducing impact of unsheltered homelessness

## Strategy 1.4 -- Increase access to mental health and substance abuse recovery services

In 2023, 41% of those who presented as literally homeless indicated dealing with mental health challenges.

- Increase staffing and hours of mental health and peer recovery street outreach to support individuals challenged with severe mental illness and/or substance addiction
- Provide access to a non-clinical mental health support group focusing on coping strategies at the HRC



## Goal 2 – Increase system capacity in Virginia Beach to adequately address the primary causes of homelessness

### Strategy 2.1 – Ensure adequate supply of affordable housing targeting low-income households (up to 30% AMI)

- Research opportunities to simplify and streamline the permitting and review process to allow for an increased density of affordable housing
- Provide incentives for housing developers and landlords to set aside units in existing projects for individuals experiencing homelessness

**“Cost-burdened households with extremely-low income (30% AMI and below), and severely cost-burdened households with very-low income (50% AMI and below), are at risk of homelessness due to housing unaffordability.”**

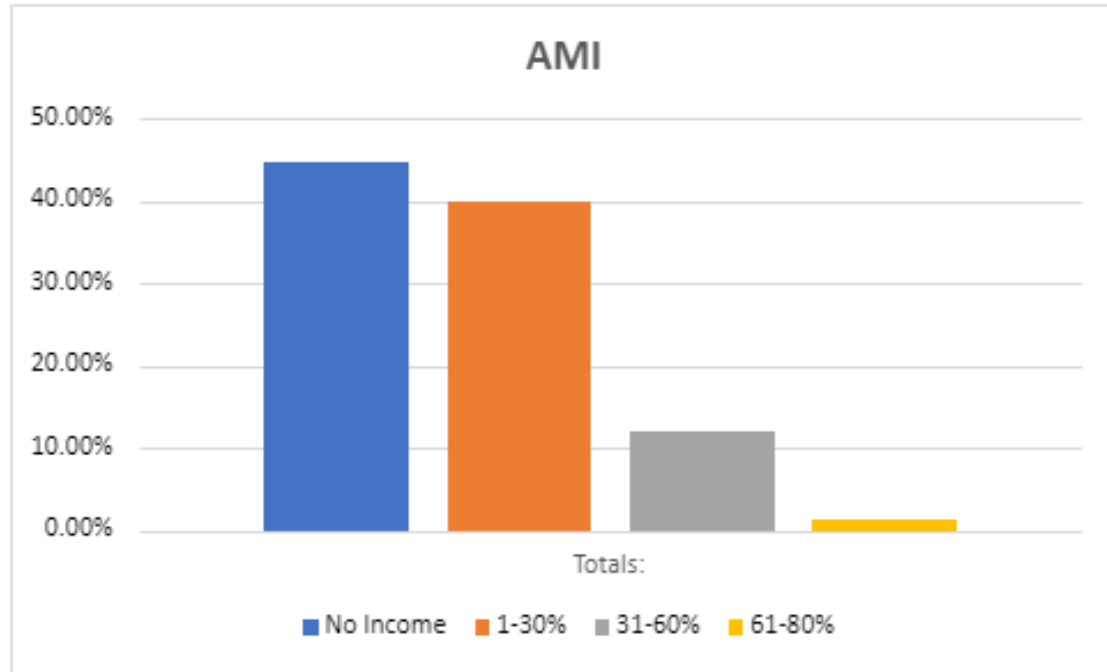
*-- 2024 VB Housing Study Report*

#### **Top Reasons Households are Experiencing Homelessness:**

1. Loss of housing, not evictions (could not afford to renew lease due to rent increase)
2. Evicted



## Goal 2 – Increase system capacity in Virginia Beach to adequately address the primary causes of homelessness



*Area Median Income of Literally Homeless Households (2020-2023)*

### Top Reasons Households are Experiencing Homelessness:

#### 4. Insufficient Income

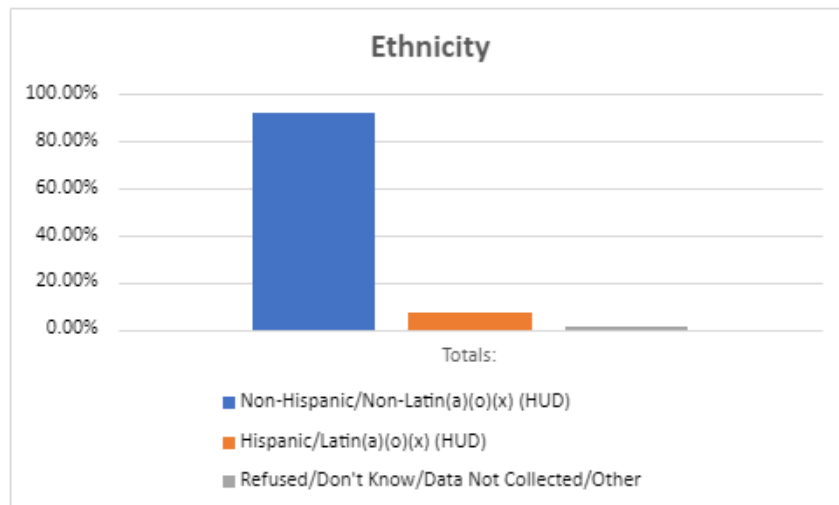
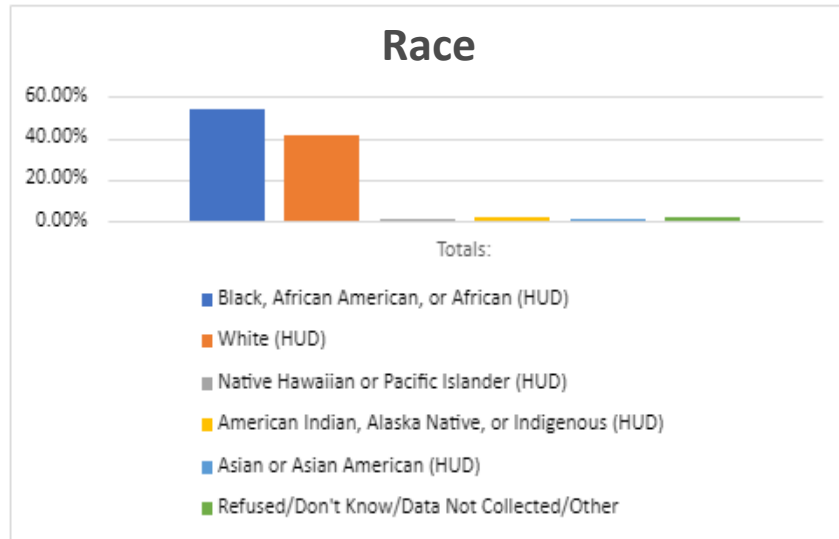
### Strategy 2.2 – Ensure all able-bodied adults experiencing homelessness have access to livable wage employment

- Partner with agencies to develop customizable employment programs targeting households who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Partner with businesses interested in offering programs to increase the technical and soft skills of individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness





## Goal 2 – Increase system capacity in Virginia Beach to adequately address the primary causes of homelessness



### Strategy 2.3 – Eliminate disparities in access, service provision and outcomes in overrepresented subpopulations in the homeless system of care

- Coordinate a racial equity committee under BEACH to review and analyze data and assessment tools, to ensure equitable outcomes for BIPOC (black, indigenous and other people of color) households

*Demographics of Literally Homeless Households (2020-2023)*



## **Goal 3 – Preserve and increase prevention and permanent housing programs to meet the demands of households who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Virginia Beach**

### **Strategy 3.1 – Ensure prevention resources are targeted to households who are most vulnerable to homelessness**

- Invest in family mediation training for diversion specialists to provide support to host families that house relatives at risk of homelessness

#### **Top Reasons Households are Experiencing Homelessness:**

3. Relational issues



## **Goal 3 – Preserve and increase prevention and permanent housing programs to meet the demands of households who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Virginia Beach**

### **Strategy 3.2 – Ensure an adequate supply of housing that meets the needs of all populations experiencing homelessness**

- Collaborate to implement plans that address permanent housing needs and funding for youth aging out of foster care and returning citizens (formerly incarcerated) to prevent homelessness
- Increase the supply of Rapid Re-Housing for the general population of homelessness

**Exits to housing in 2023 was 32%.**

-- Based on prioritization list







# Measures of Progress & Success



**25% reduction** in the number of households entering the **homeless service system**



**30% increase** in the number of households exiting the system to **permanent housing**



**40% reduction** in the number of households experiencing **unsheltered homelessness**



**Functional end to chronic homelessness** by 2027

We will also be evaluated by HUD's metrics.







## Key Takeaways

- VB is a caring community.
- We can't do this work without our partners.
- Council and City leadership support is making an impact.
- We're making progress.
- We cannot significantly reduce homelessness without more housing.



# Next Steps

Staff will request Council approval of draft plan next quarter.

# Thank You

Your questions and comments

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[www.VirginiaBeach.gov/Housing](http://www.VirginiaBeach.gov/Housing)

[www.BEACHCommunityPartnership.org](http://www.BEACHCommunityPartnership.org)