

Amy Blaisdell
Communications Director
(760) 323-8250

**Palm Springs Going Above and Beyond to Address Homelessness;
 City Council Allocates \$1.4 Million Over the Past Year**

May 3, 2019

The County of Riverside recently released the results of its **2019 “Point in Time Count”** homelessness assessment, a federally-mandated review required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, (HUD), to count and survey the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in cities and counties throughout the nation.

For the last several years, the State of California, including Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley, have experienced an ongoing homelessness and housing crisis. The report shows that the number of homeless persons in Riverside County increased 21% compared to 2018. In all, a total of 747 volunteers counted 2,811 individuals who are homeless compared to 2,310 in 2018. (2,045 unsheltered and 766 sheltered).

While the “Point in Time Count’ shows an increase in the number of homeless individuals, it is important to note that this year’s count was more accurate due in part to the record-breaking number of volunteers who were able to survey a wider area thanks to the use of a new mobile app that allowed them to work faster and count as many people as possible. State housing funds are allocated based on the number of people counted.

Of the 2,045 unsheltered in the county, 196 were counted in Palm Springs, a 55% increase over the count taken in 2018. In Palm Springs, 19% of those counted have mental health issues, 19% have substance abuse, 26% have physical disability, and 27% experience post-traumatic stress disorder. 76% are men, 20% women, 4% identify as transgender, gender non-conforming or unknown.

HUD defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied children who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters for the homeless; unsheltered homeless are defined as those who reside in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street.

“Solving the homeless crisis is the responsibility of the entire community,” according to Mayor pro tem Geoff Kors and Councilmember Christy Holstege, who serve on the City’s Homelessness and Affordable Housing Subcommittee. “While the County of Riverside is legally mandated and solely charged with the responsibility to address this challenge, the City of Palm Springs is going above and beyond to help solve this growing crisis by allocating \$1.4 million in additional funds while collaborating with local agencies to provide more assistance and attainable housing for those in need.”

In addition, thanks to ongoing discussions with Assemblymen Chad Mayes and Eduardo Garcia, a request has been submitted to Gov. Gavin Newsom to include \$10 million in the State budget for additional homeless services that would primarily support the western Coachella Valley.

In January, the City Council approved a development agreement with Community Housing Opportunities Corporation, (CHOC), for a 60-unit multi-family housing project that is contingent upon federal funding. The project could break ground in 2020. In addition, the



Council recently allocated \$100,000 for a new Housing Voucher Program to help those whose current vouchers do not cover the cost of rent.

Over the last year, the City Council has allocated **\$1.4 million** to help fill additional gaps the County has not addressed:

- **\$330,000 for two County Mental Health Crisis Response Teams, in partnership with Desert Healthcare District**
- **Martha’s Village: \$146,000 for wrap-around services to assist unsheltered persons, in partnership with Desert Healthcare District.**
- **CVAG/Path of Life: \$100,000 for homeless prevention, diversion and crisis stabilization housing.**
- **Well in the Desert: \$75,000 for support services and operation of a cooling center**
- **CVAG Bus Passes: \$3,000**
- **Palm Springs Police: \$800,000 for three police officers and two community service officers to respond to calls specifically related to homelessness.**

Finally, the City Council recently took the following important steps to increase attainable housing:

- **Adoption of a Density Bonus Ordinance:** Allows an increase in the number of units on a site and waives certain development standards, which reduces the per unit cost for housing, making it possible to finance affordable housing developments.
- **Adoption of a Mixed-Use Ordinance:** Encourages development of housing in commercial areas by allowing additional residential density in the downtown area, reducing parking, setback and lot coverage requirements.
- **Adoption of Dwelling Unit Ordinance:** Further reduces the challenges to developing accessory dwelling units (often called casitas) in single-family neighborhoods. Property owners no longer have to file a Land Use Permit to build and parking for the unit can be waived in many circumstances.
- **Adoption of Small Lot Ordinance:** This allows for reduced lot size of 5,000 square feet for single-family residential subdivisions. The smaller lot size can assist in reducing the cost of housing and provides a product that may be more affordable to working families.

“The City Council is committed to going above and beyond when it comes to finding solutions to the challenges surrounding homelessness and attainable housing that are affecting the quality of life in communities throughout California,” said Kors and Holstege. “We must all work together.”

