



# Community Voice Matters:

## Conversations with People Experiencing Homelessness

---

Key themes and findings from  
community engagement activities  
that accompanied the Home by The  
Bay strategic planning process.

## Core Project Team Members

---

Aminah Elster, Couper Orona,  
Deyna Loveless, Kezia Martinis  
Stephany Ashley, Erin Kennedy,  
Earl Simms and Kelli Poole

## Report Compiled By:

---

Talent Poole Consulting



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Project Summary	03
Acknowledgements	03
Vision and Background	04
Methodology	05
Surveys	06
Characteristics of Survey Respondents	06
Respondents Experiences with Homelessness & Response System	07
Key Findings from Surveys	08
Focus Groups	12
Characteristics of Focus Group Participants	12
Key Findings from Focus Groups	12
Key Informant Interviews	14
Characteristics of Stakeholder Interview Participants	14
Key Findings from Stakeholder Interviews	14
Recommendations from Community Engagement Process	16
Appendix A	17

# PROJECT SUMMARY

---

This is a report that compiles themes and findings from a series of community engagement activities that were conducted to inform Home by the Bay, The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH)'s 5-year Strategic Plan. **Talent Poole Consulting** was contracted to lead this engagement process and assembled a core project team. The project team was composed of people with lived experience of homelessness, incarceration and deep expertise working with public sector and non-profit partners. The Core Project Team recruited a team of Community Liaisons, who had recent experience with being unsheltered, and who have navigated the San Francisco homelessness response system. Together, with the Community Liaisons, the project team gathered community feedback through surveys,

focus groups and key informant interviews. The team worked to specifically engage groups that have historically been excluded from community engagement processes and underserved by traditional systems including Black communities, Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming individuals, TAY (Transitional Aged Youth) and recently incarcerated community members.

What follows is a summary of the project findings. It is important to note that this report and the project findings are a product of Talent Poole Consulting and are being shared as a project deliverable. Any information or claims made throughout do not represent the official views of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing nor of any individual leader or official.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

We acknowledge that the activities of this project took place on the unceded ancestral territory of the Ohlone. We would like to acknowledge the Ramaytush Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone peoples, who are the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Ramaytush and Muwekma Ohlone elders, past, present, and future, who call this place their home.

We are grateful for the hard work and dedication of Aminah Elster, Couper Orona, Deyna Loveless, and Kezia Martinis who consulted as Community Liaisons and are members of the Core Team for this project. Under their leadership we created a trauma-informed, human centered approach to the outreach and engagement activities. They were constant champions for the voice of lived experience in every step of this process. The project, our

findings and the subsequent collaboration that have occurred are a direct result of their efforts and commitment.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the strategic leadership and guidance of Core Project Team members Stephany Ashley, Erin Kennedy, Earl Simms and Kelli Poole

To learn more about each of the core project team members see [appendix A](#).

Finally, we are grateful for the partnership and support of the many individuals, community partners and HSH staff and leadership who contributed to this effort. From your dedicated programs and strategy teams to the contracts and grants departments, we applaud your commitment to systematizing and prioritizing the voices of people with lived experience.

***We believe this is a first step in creating the type of programming and support that will truly lead everyone to a Home by the Bay.***

# VISION AND BACKGROUND

---

In 2020, The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing committed to a vision of creating a 5-year City-wide strategic plan for the city and its partners with the intent of accountability, healing and the goal of reducing homelessness. This vision was bold and comprehensive in spite of the challenges. HSH faced several challenges in implementing this vision including negative public perception, issues with equity, complicated systems and processes and a lack of resources. HSH continued its commitment to implementing strategies to increase trust, participation and efficacy in programs that will enhance its efforts to addressing gaps and barriers in the homeless response system.

The project focused on identifying gaps in service delivery and focused heavily on solutions derived from community voice. The Community Liaisons harnessed their expertise and relationships with those who are currently unsheltered to have authentic engagement conversations about the state of the current system and how to improve future processes.

Through this project, Talent Poole Consulting alongside HSH designed a scope of work for community engagement with the intent to:

- ⦿ Harness the expertise of those who have lived experience in being unsheltered
- ⦿ Create opportunities for co-learning and capacity building across HSH team members, other public sector departments, leaders and people with lived experience.
- ⦿ Involve community voice in the planning and implementation of the 5-year HSH Strategic Plan, a Home by the Bay.



# METHODOLOGY

---

The research employed the model of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Participatory action research is a framework for creating knowledge that is rooted in the belief that those most impacted by research should take the lead in framing the questions, designing, analyzing and determining what products and actions might be most useful in effecting change. Utilizing this methodology allowed HSH to demonstrate its intention to allow equity and inclusion to drive the design and implementation of the 5-year citywide strategic plan.

## Surveys

Community Liaisons conducted 319 surveys at 11 locations throughout the City from December 2022 to January of 2023 at a variety of locations including outdoor encampments, shelters, clinics, mobile outreach units and community-based service providers (CBO's). The Liaisons collectively formalized and created the research questions that were included in the survey tool. The questions were formed with the intention of scaling and included strategies that were less likely to box people into restricted responses.

The survey's primary goal was to solicit feedback about ways to improve the City's current homelessness response system. The survey contained 31 questions including: eight (8) related to demographics, seven (7) related to individuals' personal experiences with the homelessness response system and other City services, five (5) questions related to improvement of the system, and five (5) questions about the experience of individuals with justice involvement in the system. Community Liaisons used paper surveys and provided support to respondents when needed including using motivational interviewing techniques to encourage completion, assisting

with reading and writing responses when necessary and providing surveys in a variety of languages and translation on-site.

## Focus Groups

The project team conducted 5 focus groups between October of 2022 to January of 2023. Focus Groups were facilitated by consultants with Lived Experience of both homelessness and incarceration. Notetakers gathered feedback provided by participants. The goal of the focus groups was to inquire about ways to improve the homelessness response system informing the 5-year Citywide strategic plan, with a focus around the intersectionality of justice involvement and homelessness. Focus groups were held with community members who have experienced homelessness as well as with individuals working on the front-line providing services.

## Stakeholder Interviews

The project team conducted 5 Key Informant Interviews between October of 2022 to January of 2023. The purpose of the interviews was to overall gather input for the 5-years strategic plan. Interviews were held with key stakeholders from the justice system, county agencies and community-based organizations serving people experiencing homelessness, with a focus on justice-involvement and transitional aged youth. Interviews were conducted by people with lived experience and a notetaker gathered responses. A total of 11 people participated in 5 interviews. The focus of the interviews was to inquire about solutions for those experiencing homelessness, especially those with additional barriers including justice involvement and transitional aged youth.

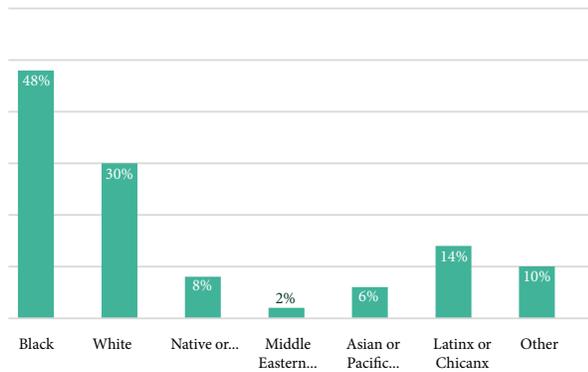
# SURVEYS

## A. Survey Respondent Characteristics

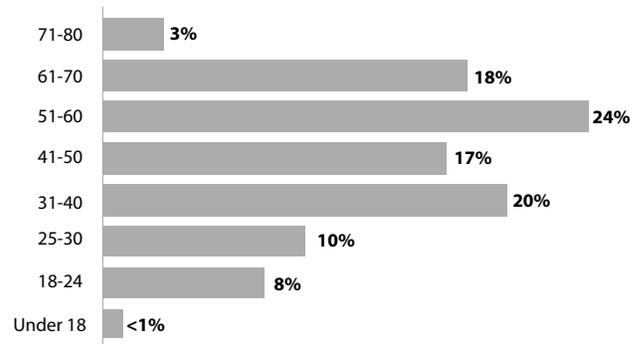
Respondents were primarily people of color, the most represented group being Black or African Americans 48%, followed by 30% White, 14% Latinx or Chicax, 10% Other, 8% Native or Indigenous, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander and 2% Middle Eastern and/or North African. Less than 1% of respondents were under 18, 18% were 18-24, 10% were 25-30, 20% were 31-40, 17% were 41-50, 24% were 51-60, 18% were 61-70, 3% were 71-80. 46% of respondents

identified as men, 39% identified as women, 2% identified as Transgender Man, 9% as a Transgender Woman, 2% as gender non-conforming, 2% as Two Spirit, 1% as Intersex and 2% as other. \* ~40% of respondents reported having children, while only 9% reported living with their children. Many respondents who did not reside with their children stated that they could if they had different housing.

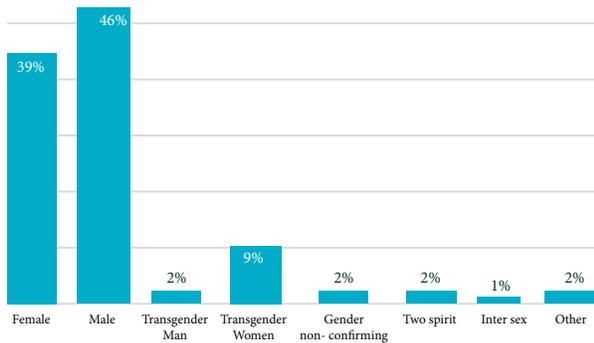
### RACE



### AGE

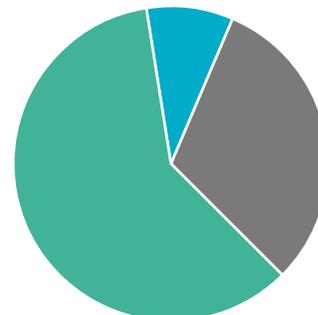


### GENDER



### DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN

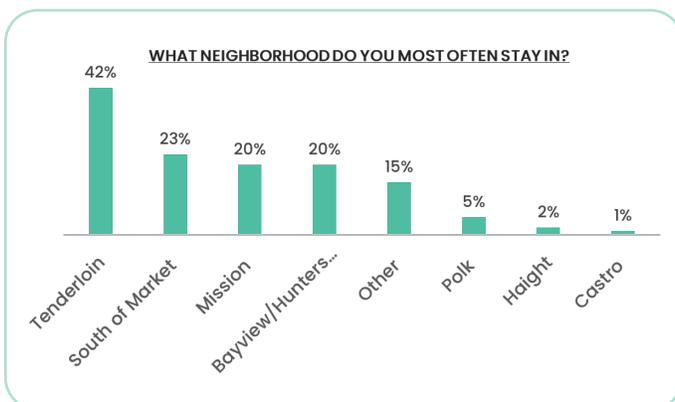
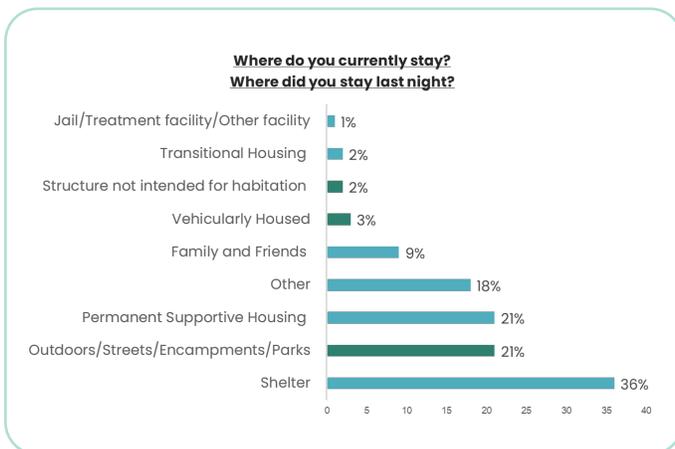
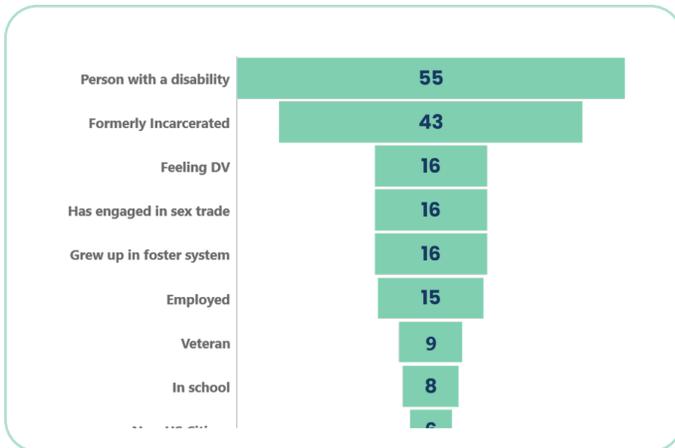
- Yes, and they are staying with me now.
- Yes, but they are not staying with me.
- No, I don't have children



## B. Survey Respondents' Experiences With Homelessness & The Response System

We gathered a significant amount of demographic and experiential data about the experiences of people experiencing homelessness. Over 50% of respondents either stayed at a shelter (36%) or outdoors/vehicle/structure not fit for human habitation (26%). 21% of respondents stayed in Permanent Supportive Housing. 9% stayed with Family or Friends, 2% stayed in

Transitional Housing, 1% in jail/institution, and 18% other. \* 56% of respondents indicated that they had been homeless for over 1 year. Many respondents indicated that they had been chronically homeless for 10+ years. 50% of respondents identified as having a disability and 43% of respondents identified as having been previously incarcerated. 50% of respondents identified as having a disability and 43% of respondents identified as having been previously incarcerated.



**~26%**  
of people we spoke to reported being unsheltered.

**>56%**  
Reported being homeless for more than 1-year.

**88%**  
Said they would accept permanent housing if the City offered it today.

## C. KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS

### What Can the City Do Better?

In addition to providing information about their personal experience of homelessness, survey respondents were asked various questions evaluating the current homeless response system and providing feedback about solutions. Clear themes emerged about what the community believes is needed to make the system more responsive to their needs.

“*Outreach with actual available assistance. ‘Come with me and I can help you with food, shelter, medical, mental, stay on the path from improvement.’*”

### Respondents believe the city can better support those experiencing homelessness by

- ⦿ Overhauling current shelter and SRO programs. Providing direct access to appropriate programs and services tailored to the specific needs. (Mental Health, addiction, Domestic Violence, gender, families) “Scrutinize shelters: how they are run, who is employed and how the money is spent?”
- ⦿ Create clear communications on what is available and what are the eligibility requirements. More transparent processes. “Providing me with the right information, not sugarcoating things.”
- ⦿ For those who are eligible for programs the city should make them more accessible; this includes less waiting time to be enrolled.

One of the resounding themes that continuously came up was to prioritize hiring people with lived experiences of homelessness and incarceration. Additionally, respondents noted a need for training for across the board but specifically in support of peers who have lived experience.

- ⦿ Stop breaking up families who want to live together (including the exclusion of pets)

“*Interact more with us.*”

“*Stay faithful in helping me.*”

The vast majority of respondents said they would take housing if offered. We specifically asked survey respondents whether they would take housing if it were offered to them by the city today. 88% of respondents indicated that they would take housing if it were offered by the City.

Survey respondents do want to live in safe, clean locations that aren’t triggering for those seeking to be in recovery. Respondents want housing with the following characteristics:

- ⦿ For those who have been in SRO’s for a long period should be prioritized for the newer and cleaner buildings. Existing buildings need to be cleaned and updated
- ⦿ The need for privacy with their own bathrooms
- ⦿ Safer environments, buildings equipped with keys to lock their doors, due to safety concerns.
- ⦿ Freedom to move with less restrictions, some sense of autonomy
- ⦿ Housing where they are able to buy and make their own foods

**Respondents ranked what they believed the City’s Top 5 priorities for addressing homelessness should be over the next 5 years and the majority identified the following**

**12. What should be the City’s Top 5 priorities (areas of focus) for addressing homelessness in the next rank in order of importance:**

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution
Improving the housing options (BETTER housing)	1	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Making it easier or faster to get housing	2	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Creating more housing options (MORE housing)	3	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Improving the shelter system (note: this includes congregate shelters, navigation centers and SIP hotels)	4	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Improving case management services	5	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Creating more of the following opportunities for emergency shelter (shelter, navigation center beds, etc.)	6	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Improving or expanding mental health services	7	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Making sure access to programs and services are fair and equitable	8	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Creating more job opportunities for people experiencing homelessness	9	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Improving or expanding outreach services to people on the street	10	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Improving or expanding substance use services	11	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Creating more educational opportunities for people experiencing homelessness	12	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Other	13	★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

**1. Improving housing options**

*“ House us, get us off the street. They house people in the TL, but not out here (in the Bayview) and we don’t all want to be in the TL.”*

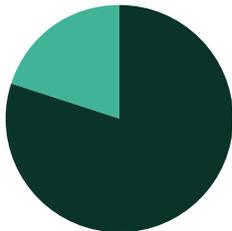
We asked survey respondents whether they felt safe where they are staying now. 56% indicated that they did feel safe, while 32% did not. Among those who identified as living in Permanent Supportive Housing, 38% did not feel safe. Survey respondents who identified as living in Permanent Supportive Housing describe a variety of disturbing conditions including being physically and sexually violated, being victims of theft, drug and gang activity, guns, harassment

from neighbors, pest infestations, dirty conditions and unresolved maintenance issues. When asked what would make them feel safer, respondents identified being housed, having locked storage, better language access and communication, less drug use and activity, being away from the Tenderloin and having a more secure site.

## 2. Making it easier or faster to get housing

**“** *Help me get my housing quicker, but one that I can feel safe in (not an SRO). Assist me with resources to help me with finding work.”*

## 3. More housing options



**88%**

Said they would accept permanent housing if the City offered it today.

## 4. Improved shelter system

Survey respondents identified the importance of having more services on-site and having more tailored shelter and navigation options depending on need.

**“** *More customized programs. Not one-size fits all. Get mental health treatment for people. Don't put them with anyone else if they need specialized services.”*



## 5. Improved case management services

**“** *More ethnically and sexually diverse case managers (trans folks, Latin, trans women of color and more people with lived experience)”*

Respondents also identified the following as important priorities: more emergency shelter and navigation center beds, improving/expanding mental health services, making sure access to programs and services are fair and equitable, creating more job opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and improving or expanding outreach services.

Respondents were asked how the city could improve various systems including Outreach, Case

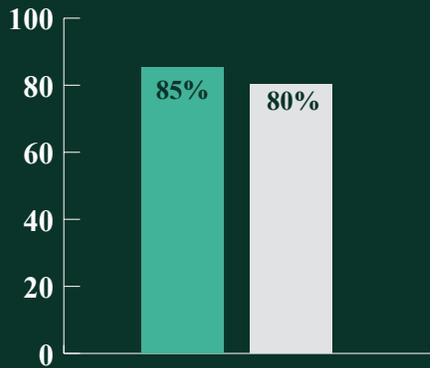
**“** *Mental health outreach services should include coaching type counseling. ... and where are they? Have them come to us, not us come to them”*

Management, Coordinated Entry, Housing, DPW and Law Enforcement. Respondents identified a need for more Street Outreach and Case Managers with better training and more relevant, current and available resources. Respondents consistently asked for more training to increase empathy among law enforcement and Department of Public Works staff.

## Returning from Incarceration

43% of survey respondents self-identified as having been previously incarcerated. Of those respondents who identified as being previously incarcerated, 56% were over 40 years old. 61% reported being homeless for over a year. About 36% of these respondents identified as living outside, in a vehicle or a structure not fit for human habitation. 33% stayed at a shelter, 16% in Permanent Supportive Housing, 14.2% with family and friends and 2.5% in transitional housing. 42% identified as living in the Tenderloin, 23% in the Mission, 22% in Bayview Hunters Point, 22% South of Market.\* 51% identified as men, 42% identified as women, 3% identified as a transgender man, 2% transgender

woman, 3% gender non-conforming, 3.4% Two-Spirit and <1% intersex. 50.4% identified as Black or African American. 39% White, 11% Latinx or Chicax, 7% Native or Indigenous, 3% Middle Eastern or North African, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander. About half of these respondents identified as having children, but only 12% of respondent's children were staying with them. People who experienced incarceration also had a variety of other experiences that created challenges in obtaining and maintaining housing and employment including, but not limited to having a disability and fleeing domestic violence.



**85%**

of survey respondents who reported being previously incarcerated reported that they were not connected to housing upon release.

**80%**

were not on probation or parole

Overarchingly, previously incarcerated respondents say they need a variety of housing options and support upon release including permanent supportive housing, housing with health supports, transitional housing, sober living environments along with employment resources and problem

solving for the next steps in their reentry journey. Permanent housing was most often cited as a need among this group of Respondents. The Respondents who identified as being previously incarcerated identified "Making it easier or faster to get housing" as a top priority for the city over the next 5 years.

## Hopes and Goals for the Future

The Community Liaisons felt strongly that it was important to ask Respondents where they want to be in 5 years to harness their own powers to transform and see themselves beyond their current situation. Respondents described a wide variety of dreams, goals and ambitions.

**The majority stated that they wanted to be healed, housed and in community with family and their support system.**

# FOCUS GROUPS

---

## A. Focus Group Participant Characteristics

- ⦿ Community Advisory Board for DISH, a permanent supportive housing provider. (8 Participants who have experienced homelessness)
- ⦿ Assertive Case Managers from San Francisco Pretrial (5 participants)
- ⦿ Community-based service providers (CBO's) contracted with Adult Probation (8 participants)
- ⦿ Community Members African American Individuals from Fillmore with a history of homelessness and/or justice involvement. (5 participants - all currently or have experienced levels of homelessness)
- ⦿ NoVA (No Violence Alliance) Supportive Service Providers @ Jail (15 attended and 9 participated)

## B. Key Findings From Focus Groups

Key themes emerged from the focus groups including the following:

### **More housing (various types) and culturally responsive services needed across the board.**

- ⦿ Bilingual services and programs are needed.
- ⦿ Peer support is important.
- ⦿ Gap in housing for families and people who are working homeless in SF. People in these situations are often doubled up, living with parents and grandparents) There is a sense that the focus is on those with addiction/chronic homelessness while younger people whose families have resided in the city for three generations are being displaced from SF. who can't find affordable housing but can work and may have justice involvement.
- ⦿ More mental health treatment options needed, especially for dual diagnosis.
- ⦿ Housing programs for TAY high utilizers of systems should be specialized and should have a clinical component, including a Nurse Practitioner on-site to manage medications.

**“No permanent housing in SF - transitional housing is available, but what's next? Back to the streets. Agencies try to hold people as long as they can.”**



## Housing and Justice Involvement:

- ⦿ Improper prioritization and bias in the Coordinated Entry Assessment tool continue to make it difficult for formerly incarcerated individuals to be prioritized for housing.
- ⦿ There are continuing barriers for individuals who are housing insecure and have been impacted by the criminal justice system. These include not being able to live with others on probation/parole; criminal history preventing housing applications; being lower on priority list.
- ⦿ In-reach, reentry planning and a warm handoff is critical. More coordination is needed.
- ⦿ The location of housing is very important for justice involved people and essential to have safe, non-triggering locations to reside to reduce recidivism.
- ⦿ Abstinence based programs are needed in addition to Housing First approaches.

**“ High utilizers are addicted to fentanyl, meth; problem with the jails; people coming out of jails are addicted to suboxone and methadone and can't be placed into programs because they have been using. They get it prescribed in the jails. The suboxone doesn't stop fentanyl use. They come out addicted or with mental health issues.”**

## Improving System Performance & Achieving Equity in Access:

- ⦿ There was an overall call for increased trust between HSH and community-based service providers (CBO's). Providers stated that they would like more transparency about what housing and services are available and the actual process for accessing it.
- ⦿ CBOs don't feel they can adequately advocate for their client's housing needs with the current Coordinated Entry System (CES).

**“ Minimum qualifications prohibit people from accessing housing; we have clients that have done well and can't get housing; there needs to be more transparency around how we are prioritizing who should go into housing and who should not?”**

## Permanent Supportive Housing

- ⦿ Physical conditions at housing sites often need improvement. Safety also needs to be improved. Need for tailored supports for different populations.
- ⦿ Some individuals need some interim housing solution that helps them prepare for permanent housing to prevent destruction of property.

# KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

---

A select group of key informant interviews were held to further clarify findings and to add additional information. Key themes emerged from the interviews including the following:

- ⦿ Not enough housing or supportive services for the need. More housing options and services needed across the board, especially for those with dual diagnosis.
- ⦿ Better coordination is needed among agencies and CBOs to help with housing placements - case conferencing needed.
- ⦿ More bilingual staff and services needed across the board.
- ⦿ One-size does not fit all. Tailored housing and services are needed (e.g.: Veterans, Trans, Women, TAY)
- ⦿ Subsidies should be paired with transitional housing.
- ⦿ Peers are key and should be employed in positions within government agencies and community-based organizations. People with lived experience should lead efforts and be deeply involved at all stages of the process, from planning to implementation to evaluation.
- ⦿ Expand Emergency Housing Vouchers - these have been very useful for Veterans.
- ⦿ Coordinated Entry needs to be implemented in a more equitable and accessible way.

**“ People overlooked are those who have a job but can’t afford rents. Subsidy programs are challenging.”**

**“ Methods don’t recognize the potential - shifted control from prison guards to case managers. It just looks better. Goal should be independence. Housing is not solving problems people are experiencing.”**



## Key Themes from Individuals on Housing and Justice Involvement

- ⦿ There was an overall sentiment that the limited housing options, in-custody operations and resource allocations play a key role in the success of people are released from jails.
- ⦿ Everyone is deserving of housing, including those with restrictions or special limitations on their housing type or location.
- ⦿ Jail custody operations can be improved to support successful reentry including discontinuing middle of the night releases from custody, creating and appropriately resourcing in-reach programs, and increasing the quality of post-release referrals including a variety of housing options and step-up programming.

**“** *Need more longer-term beds for people because the short term (housing options) brings about more stress around what people will do next; These beds have to come with wrap around supports.”*

**HSH should have a concerted team focused on housing and supported justice involved individuals. A real strategy starting with when someone is in custody; people can go to that team and that team would have in house expertise and can problem solve and fix gaps. HSHs needs an advisory group that is paid to help inform this team as well**



## LIMITATIONS

The consulting team was contracted to administer an initial scope of 300 surveys and 5 focus groups. That later expanded to additional focus groups and a series of 1-1 interviews. While this context provided valuable insight, we acknowledge that it is not representative of the entire population of unsheltered individuals across San Francisco. We also acknowledge that there was limited input from monolingual Spanish speakers as well as other languages.

Additionally, the scope of the questions was limited to general questions about the system overall. The project was structured as such to give HSH input into the Strategic Plan. However, because the project was so high level it is difficult to pull specific recommendations and apply them to all parts of the homeless response system. Future work should be done to ensure appropriate representation as well as in-depth examination of individual system parts.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

---

It is our summary that the work of responding to and ending homelessness is deeply nuanced and interconnected to a number of systemic and historic factors. It will take years of sustained commitment and increased resources to effectively address the needs of unsheltered community members and ensure that everyone can have A Home by the Bay. We know that time is necessary and, in the interim, make the following recommendations:

- ⦿ Continue to involve people with lived experience in systems design, implementation and evaluation. Build genuine working relationships that center the experiences of those who have navigated the system and work alongside them to make changes.
- ⦿ Transparency in processes and true honesty. Survey and focus group respondents continually requested more transparency around the housing prioritization process and also wanted an honest answer about what system housing resources are actually available. HSH should work to create an updated inventory list and be honest about what is available to people at any given time.
- ⦿ Strengthen cross-system collaborations in efforts to improve outcomes for system impacted individuals. We heard from a number of justice involved individual about their challenges in accessing housing and services post-release. We encourage HSH to strength its relationship to other City Departments, including criminal justice partners, and family social services, in order to better respond to and coordinate the needs of multi-system users.
- ⦿ Continue and deepen the conversation. These community engagement efforts were the beginning of an intentional conversation between HSH and people directly impacted by homelessness and users of HSH’s homeless response system. It is our recommendation to continue this conversation and, once the final strategic plan has been finalized, work with people with lived experience to identify and gather systems improvement recommendations that more robustly recommend changes to specific system components such as outreach, shelter, CES and housing types.



# Appendix A

---

ACore Project Team Members who created, administered and evaluated this project include,

**Aminah Elster** (she/her) is a systems-change agent, legal advocate, and researcher with years of experience managing programs, leading policy advocacy work around criminal justice reform, and driving participatory action research initiatives. She is committed to fighting the impacts of decades of systemic oppression and liberating criminalized survivors. Aminah is skilled at facilitating group training and workshops and building relationships with local and national community-based organizations, policymakers, and system partners. Aminah is committed to centering incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women of color, and comes to this work with a gender-specific lens. She holds a bachelor’s degree in legal studies from the University of California, Berkeley.



**Couper Orona** (she/her) is a firefighter who was injured on the job, and now lives with disabilities, who now supports herself on a small monthly disability check. After her injury and a divorce, she could no longer afford an apartment in the Bay Area, and subsequently found herself living on the street. She’s known by houseless people throughout the city because of the way she shares resources, cares for and advocates for their rights. She uses the skills she practiced as a firefighter to assist fellow encampment residents who don’t seek medical help from hospitals for a variety of reasons, such as shame, feeling judged or mistreated by hospital staff. Couper is also known for the film “Couper was here” that captures her journey of caring for fellow unhoused San Franciscans, and her quest to find permanent housing in the city.



**Deyna Loveless** (she/her) has lived in California since she was 18 years old she has been a strong advocate for Trans youth in the community. She is an HIV and Hep C advocate certified through Planned Parenthood. As a trans woman Deyna knows the difficulties of finding stable work and housing in San Francisco she has been employed with Larkin Street Youth Services and the shelter programs she advocates for trans women and all women that are houseless. This is just a small part of her story she is thankful for the opportunities in hopes that this project will make a difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.





**Kezia Martinis** (she/her) was born and raised in the San Francisco foster Care system. She was released from the foster care system at 18 and was left to fend for herself and her 7-month-old baby. Zia is a mother of 3 who experienced homelessness, was eventually housed and then lost her house during the foreclosure crisis of 2008. Zia has been a staunch advocate for women, victims, non-working classes, and sex workers. Zia secured housing after criminal justice involvement and was able to successfully navigate and position herself to have a roof over her head through the continuum of housing, which has subsidized her rent and an SRO. Zia is currently in school to be a social worker and plans to use her skillset and lived experience to assist others to find safe and stable housing and navigate the system better.



**Earl Simms** (he/him) is the Executive Director of Restorative Community Solutions, which centers healing divided communities through individual, group and community coaching. Earl grew up in Los Angeles, and paroled to Oakland after serving 22 years in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. He works to battle the disease of violence, disease that he had himself, and that has designed him to be effective in connecting and empowering others who are also battling it. Earl has worked in the non-profit sector since his release and has served in roles ranging from a Health Navigator with Roots Community Health Center, to an Intensive Life Coach with Oakland Unite while at Roots, and Bay Area Regional Director for Timelist Group, a housing provider. In addition, Earl is a member of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), a senior consultant with the Bright Star Research Group, and a member of multiple community advisory boards including the Formerly Incarcerated Advisory Board (FIA) for the San Francisco District Attorney George Gascon and the CAL-ICH Racial Equity Workgroup.



**Erin Kennedy** (she/her) is a lawyer, consultant and Board Chair of Restorative Community Solutions a Bay Area nonprofit organization serving justice-involved people. Erin is an advocate for systems change, particularly in the criminal legal system, and advancing community-based responses. Erin has previously worked at grass-roots nonprofits in the Bay Area including Roots Community Health Center where she led a multi-agency collaboration to help hundreds of patients access critical legal services to remove barriers to reentry. Erin has also worked at Northeast Medical Services and more recently as Chief Compliance Officer at the Timelist Group, a housing provider for justice involved people in Los Angeles. Erin is skilled at compliance, operations, program and fund development and policy advocacy. Prior to moving to California in 2014, Erin had a solo law practice in Lawrence, Kansas, where she accepted criminal appointments at the District and Municipal Court level and practiced in the areas of family law. Erin is licensed in Kansas and California.



**Stephany Ashley** (she/her) is a writer, facilitator, and consultant living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her life's work is to reduce the immediate suffering caused by poverty, stigma and criminalization, while inspiring people to believe that another world is possible and initiating new models for society. She is the former Executive Director of St. James Infirmary, an Occupational Health & Safety Clinic serving current and former sex workers, former Legislative Aide to Supervisor David Campos, and former Campaign Manager of Tipping Point Community's Chronic Homelessness Initiative. Additionally, she served as the Northern California Director of Housing Services at Brilliant Corners, where she helped to launch the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool. She currently serves as a Lead Trainer for the Soul Focused Group, and Chair of the Board of the Transgender, Gender-variant, and Intersex Justice Project.



**Kelli Poole** (she/her) believes strongly in dismantling systems of oppression to build a future that values equity and inclusion. She is the Founder and namesake of Talent Poole Consulting where she consults with public, private and philanthropic organizations to help them realize their grandest visions of organizational excellence. Kelli is particularly skilled contract negotiations, strategic planning and creating customized consulting teams that meet the needs of diverse communities. In addition to leading the day-to-day operations of Talent Poole, Kelli directs the Racial Equity in Homelessness Initiative at Social Justice Partners Los Angeles, a multi-year, multi-million-dollar initiative focused on transforming workplace culture from recruitment to retention. Kelli is an alumnus of the Los Angeles African American Women's Public Policy Institute (LAAAWPPI) and received her B.A in Sociology from Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina.

