



TOGETHER 2026

5-year plan to end homelessness in Alameda County

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive summary



This Home Together 2026 Community Plan (the Plan) lays out the goals, strategies and investments needed to dramatically reduce homelessness in Alameda County by 2026 and combat racial disparities in homelessness by fully centering equity. The Plan's overarching goals and time frame align with **Alameda County's Vision 2026**, which holds as one of its primary objectives to "ensure the availability of diverse and affordable housing for all residents with the goal of eliminating homelessness in Alameda County."

Alameda County

Alameda County is home to more than 1.6 million residents and includes 14 cities and six unincorporated communities. Nonprofit organizations, public entities, and a range of interested parties, including those with direct experience of homelessness, work together in a Continuum of Care (the Oakland-Berkeley-Alameda County Continuum of Care, or CoC) to seek new resources and coordinate housing and services funding for addressing homelessness. The CoC is led by a representative Leadership Board, supported by a number of committees and staffed by EveryOne Home.

The County's Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC), formed in early 2020 within the Health Care Services Agency, participates in CoC Leadership and coordinates with residents, providers, other County agencies and local jurisdictions around strategic planning and service delivery. Cities across Alameda County participate in the CoC and dedicate local resources to funding, siting and supporting shelters, housing, and services within their communities. This Plan seeks to serve as a playbook for all of these parties working together, recognizing that each jurisdiction will need to make specific decisions regarding the resources under their authority. Specific annual action plans are developed for the county and for cities in conjunction with this framework.

Foundations for this plan

This Plan builds upon many sources and efforts, particularly the 2020 **Centering Racial Equity in Homeless System Design** report (CRE) prepared by partners in the Continuum of Care and informed by a homelessness response system needs analysis and focus groups with persons of color who have experienced homelessness. The CRE process modeled what an optimal system to respond to all homelessness and reduce racial disparities would look like and what gaps need to be filled. The Plan is also responsive to requirements laid out in the California Comeback Plan to draw down key state housing and health funding. It is informed by and consistent with other local and regional efforts, including the **All Home Regional Action Plan, Plan Bay Area 2050** and local city plans to address homelessness. Companion county and city-specific plans that align with the Home Together 2026 Community Plan will speak to the specific roles of local jurisdictions in co-leading efforts to address homelessness, and the key roles of County agencies, community partners and specific resources.

The community of Alameda County adopts this plan and vision at a time when the future is uncertain. New resources received, both one-time and ongoing, provide the groundwork for supporting this plan and its outcomes, but alone are not enough to realize its vision. The response to COVID-19 has shown that this community can pull together and work at speeds we have not seen before, a strong foundation to build from.

However, we face continuing challenges including uncertainties from COVID-19, unpredictable housing markets, future state, federal and local budgets, and a strained public and non-profit sector with significant capacity needs. All of these challenges require continuing the current level of unprecedented collaboration and coordination, building on the progress made to unify the community response and forge an aligned response system centered in racial equity.

Homelessness in Alameda County

On any given night over 8,000 people experience homelessness in Alameda County, a number that grows to approximately 15,000 people over the course of a year. More than 90% of homeless households in Alameda County are adults without minor children.

The homeless population does not reflect the demographics of the county. Dramatic racial disparities exist in Alameda County as in the nation, in which African Americans experience homelessness at more than four times their representation in the population (47% vs. 11%). Native Americans, multiracial people and Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islanders are also vastly overrepresented in homelessness, among those newly homeless, and in the rates at which they return to homelessness even after getting housing. These disparities call out the need to invest, both more and differently, in creating solutions that meet the needs of those overrepresented. Special populations such as transition age youth, veterans, older adults, survivors of intimate partner violence, people with behavioral health needs and people who have had involvement with the criminal justice system have additional risks and vulnerabilities leading to homelessness and require targeted resources and responses specific to their needs.

Estimated number of housing solutions, by type, needed by 2026

4,195	Additional supportive housing units
3,190	New supportive housing units for older/frail adults
10,070	New dedicated affordable units or subsidies
5,240	New shallow subsidies
1,645	Additional rapid rehousing slots
24,340	Total units & subsidy slots

Source: CA-502 System Model, Abt Associates, 1/20/2022

Homelessness response system needs analysis

A systemwide needs analysis conducted in 2019-20 and updated in 2021 points to significant gaps in the current homelessness response system in the type and availability of housing resources to help people leave homelessness. Today, only an estimated 36% of those experiencing homelessness can be supported to end their homelessness with local resources or are able to find housing on their own. Each year, thousands of people remain homeless and new people who become homeless join them. Without significant effort and investment this trajectory will continue, and homelessness will continue to grow in Alameda County.

Importantly, focus groups with local stakeholders and people of color who have experienced homelessness and research on racial equity strategies informed the needs analysis. This expertise was used to develop the proposed new program models and pathways out of homelessness through new investments at every level. Housing investments needed to address the deep disparities include:

- Create significant additional affordable housing dedicated specifically for people experiencing homelessness
- Develop supportive housing for people who need increased supports, such as older and frail adults
- Grow the supply of transitional housing for youth
- Fund shallow and flexible rental assistance to fill gaps for people with limited incomes
- Expand current program models such as Rapid Rehousing and supportive housing¹
- Expand targeted behavioral health services throughout the system
- Improve and expand targeted homelessness prevention

The 2021 update to the analysis explored different scenarios related to anticipated new homelessness and levels of investment to determine what will be required to fill significant system gaps. The scenario selected for this Plan seeks to reduce new entries to homelessness by prevention when possible, and to create a more robust response system with enough housing resources at the end of five years to provide a pathway out of homelessness to every person who does enter the homelessness response system.

¹ This Plan uses the term “supportive housing” to refer to all housing types that include ongoing subsidy and continuously available services, often referred to as “permanent supportive housing” or “PSH” in other contexts.

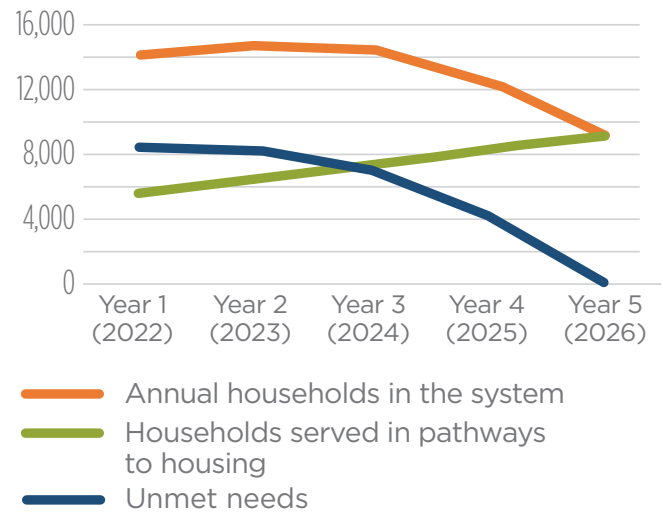
Building a system where people are rehoused quickly

Overall, increased investment in prevention and the addition of more than 24,000 housing opportunities in a variety of program models are needed to reach a point within five years at which the number of people who become homeless in a year and the number who are able to leave homelessness in that time are in balance. These 24,000+ interventions include everything from short-term support to prevent homelessness to ongoing rental subsidies and supportive housing with services.

In addition to the significant need for housing, because 79% of people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County are unsheltered, the Home Together 2026 Community Plan proposes a significant increase in shelter in the first two years, followed by a slow decline in shelter as more housing resources become available and less shelter is needed. Some added shelter will be able to be converted to much needed housing in later years, as has been demonstrated by successful Project Roomkey to Project Homekey transitions, which have created new permanent housing by renovating hotels used as shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic. By Year 5 the amount of shelter needed on an ongoing basis is expected to be slightly less than what is available today if all housing resources are in place.

The total cost of increasing the shelter and housing inventory over the coming five years to fully meet the need would be approximately \$2.5 billion. This includes roughly \$430 million for additional shelter capacity, \$1.68 billion for permanent housing such as dedicated affordable housing and supportive housing, and \$388 million for prevention, rapid rehousing and shallow (more limited) subsidies. This does not include the one-time development costs for acquiring or constructing new buildings, but covers operations and services, and subsidies to help people rent existing housing. The new investments should be made in alignment with the household types experiencing homelessness; roughly 10% (\$194 million) is needed for expanded inventory and resources for households with minor children, and 90% (\$2.3 billion) for the inventory and resources to serve adult only households, including transition age youth (ages 18–24 years). A range of federal, state and locally generated resources are needed to fill the gap. Without a significant federal investment in targeted Housing Choice Vouchers or similar rental assistance, meeting the dedicated affordable housing goal will be particularly challenging.

Impact of increased investment on homeless system outcomes



Source: CA-502 System Model, Abt Associates, 1/20/2022

Goals and strategies

To reach the expansion goals while decreasing racial disparities, the Home Together 2026 Community Plan recommends specific action steps in four categories.

Taken together, the significant increase in investment and the creation of new program models and pathways out of homelessness will lead to decreases in new homelessness, improved racial equity in outcomes, shorter lengths of time being homeless, and a reduced rate at which people return to homelessness.

The Home Together 2026 Community Plan adopts bold, ambitious, and measurable goals for Alameda County, both for reducing homelessness and for achieving greater equity. To bring these new programs and solutions into being will take every partner committing every available dollar from various sources in ways that uphold performance and invest in working and desired models. With these commitments and agreements for joint accountability we will, by 2026, be home, together.

1

Prevent homelessness for our residents

1. Address racial disparities in mainstream/upstream systems to prevent racially disproportionate inflow into homelessness
2. Focus resources for prevention on people most likely to lose their homes
3. Rapidly resolve episodes of homelessness through Housing Problem Solving
4. Prevent racially disproportionate returns to homelessness

3

Increase housing solutions

1. Add units and subsidies for supportive housing, including new models for frail/older adults
2. Create dedicated affordable housing subsidies for people who do not need intensive services
3. Create shallow subsidies for those who can exit or avoid homelessness with more limited assistance
4. Add new slots of rapid rehousing for those who can pay full rent over time
5. Ensure new housing funding is distributed across the county according to need
6. Reduce entry barriers to housing and ensure racial equity in referrals and placements

2

Connect people to shelter and needed resources

1. Expand access in key neighborhoods and continue improvements to Coordinated Entry
2. Lower programmatic barriers to crisis services such as prevention, problem solving, and shelter
3. Prevent discharge from mainstream systems to homelessness
4. Significantly increase the availability of shelter, especially non-congregate models, to serve vulnerable adults and families with children and to reduce unsheltered homelessness
5. Provide accessible behavioral health services to people with serious mental illness or substance use needs and who are unsheltered, in shelter, or in supportive housing programs

4

Strengthen coordination, communication and capacity

1. Use data to improve outcomes and track racial equity impacts
2. Improve messaging and information availability
3. Build infrastructure to support and monitor new and expanded programs

