



FAQs: How the City of Palm Springs is addressing Homelessness

Q. Why does homelessness seem to be worsening?

A. Homelessness is worsening nationwide and especially in California. We have seen an increase in Palm Springs, the Coachella Valley and Riverside County due to increased mental health and substance use problems, the lack of federal and state dollars, and the continuation of enabling environments.

Q. Is the city doing anything to address these issues?

A. Yes. The City is working with multiple partners, has secured state funds, is working to hire staff dedicated to homeless issues and is working to re-envision local services to steer away from services that enable homelessness and toward “housing-first” programs with wrap-around supportive services proven to be more effective at lifting people out of homelessness.

Q. Why can't the City arrest or get rid of homeless people causing problems in our community?

A. Firstly, this is a humanitarian issue worsening nation-wide. Unhoused residents often struggle with significant mental health and addiction issues. Services should not enable bad behavior but should utilize a blend of housing opportunities and comprehensive health and social services to lift people out of homelessness. Secondly, the current criminal justice system is not equipped to handle many of the issues surrounding homelessness. With that in mind, the City is working diligently to address these issues by partnering with the County and a host of other local agencies like Martha's Village & Kitchen to increase and maximize services for homeless individuals that will provide successful permanent outcomes and minimize the negative impacts to our community.

Q. What can the City do about homeless camps?

A. Court rulings, including [Martin v Boise](#), have held that cities may not arrest or punish people for sleeping on public property unless there is shelter for every person who needs it. While the City and County of Riverside are working to provide such shelter, there is currently not enough available in Palm Springs.

Q. How is the City spending the \$10 million grant it received from the State of California to address homelessness?

A. Palm Springs lobbied hard to be one of the only cities our size in the state to receive special funds to address housing and homelessness. The City has committed land and \$7 million -- \$4 million comes from the state grant -- to develop two affordable housing projects, [Aloe Palm Canyon](#) and Vista Sunrise II. The two projects provide a total of more than 50 units for individuals experiencing homelessness and leverage \$60 million in state and federal funding. The City is looking to spend the additional \$6 million from the grant developing more permanent and transitional housing with wrap-around services for those in need.

Q. What services are being offered at the Access Center (formerly Palm Springs Boxing Club) on El Cielo?

A. The City partnered with Martha's Village & Kitchen to open a new daytime Access Center for the homeless, which operates seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wrap around services, provided by case managers, include individualized case plans, client assessments, counseling and supported referral services increasing the clients' success in exiting homelessness to safe and affordable permanent and supportive housing; assist individuals with securing health, disability and Social Security benefits. Employment services support provides training in needed computer-related skills, including internet searches for employment, completing online employment applications, and interview techniques. Through employment services, clients will have the ability to receive assistance with the basic first aid and food handler's certificates as needed for employment.



Q. What else has the City done to address homelessness?

A. The City has developed a strong partnership with the County of Riverside and stepped up with more than \$12 million to find solutions that include:

- Partnered with the County for a new 24/7 seasonal (warm weather) shelter with homeless services at the United Methodist Church, operated by Martha's Village & Kitchen. This shelter served 208 unduplicated clients since its opening on July 6, 2021, and closing on Oct. 31, 2021.
- Funding the Palm Springs Access Center for unsheltered individuals at the former Palm Springs Boxing Club, operated by Martha's Village & Kitchen. Open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Partnering with the County of Riverside for Project RoomKey, which has permanently housed 87 Palm Springs residents.
- Funding two Homeless/Mental Health Crisis teams on the ground in Palm Springs.
- Funding homeless wrap-around services in partnership with Martha's Village & Kitchen, now being provided at the Palm Springs Boxing Club.
- Partnering with CVAG to implement the regional CV Housing First and CV200 programs, which have successfully transitioned homeless individuals to permanent housing over the past several years.
- Partnering with the County of Riverside to provide summer cooling centers for Palm Springs residents.
- Partnering with the County and United/Lift to provide rental assistance for eligible low-income Palm Springs residents in need.
- Creating an internal position to help address homeless issues.
- Recently hiring a housing and homeless services consultant to further evaluate and recommend practices to improve outcomes and reduce negative impacts.
- In addition, the City is actively partnering with the County of Riverside on potential plans to purchase a property to develop a new one-stop Navigation Center and Shelter for homeless individuals.
- Closed Baristo Park - which had become a homeless encampment, where illegal drug activity was also taking place - in mid-October, 2021. Security cameras were installed and the park has since reopened.
- Strengthened administrative regulations related to the secondary impacts of homelessness.
- The Palm Springs Police Department launched "Operation Relentless Sun" on Feb. 1, and since that time, PSPD has identified a total of 340 unhoused residents and conducted daily multiple camp clean-ups. As of late March, 68 people have been arrested, with 38 felony and 30 misdemeanor arrests. More than 300 people have been provided with a complete list of resources, with information on mental health, substance abuse resources, and emergency shelters. Twenty-four people accepted housing in various shelters throughout the Coachella Valley. Fourteen individuals have been relocated to their original hometowns, with friends & family.
- A groundbreaking is planned soon for the Homeless Navigation Center at 3589 McCarthy Road. The center, which will be operated by Martha's Village & Kitchen, will include 80 units of modular housing and provide wrap-around services for homeless individuals.
- An access center expansion is planned that will provide up to an additional 96 beds for those experiencing homelessness.

Q. What should I do if I observe a homeless encampment?

A. The City encourages residents to use the myPalmSprings app to report homeless encampments. The app can be downloaded in the Apple store or Google Play.



Q. Why doesn't the City pass a law outlawing panhandling?

A. Numerous court cases have determined that panhandling is protected by the first amendment. Ordinances against general panhandling in many cities have been struck down and cities held financially liable for damages.

Q. How else can I help?

A. Consider supporting one of the many partner organizations dedicated to improving outcomes for our unsheltered residents.

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