



FAQs: City of Palm Springs Homelessness Response System and Navigation Center Update

Homelessness in Palm Springs

Q. How many people are experiencing homelessness in Palm Springs and the Western Coachella Valley?

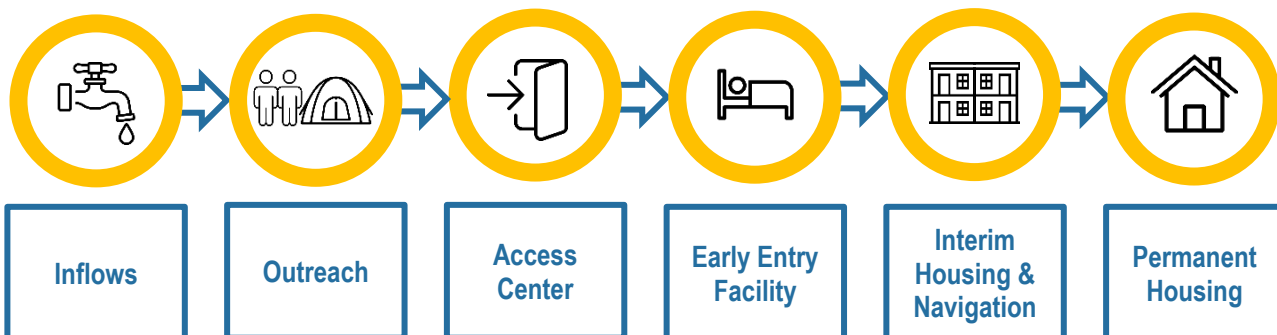
A. According to the 2022 Point-In-Time Count, there are 670 unsheltered and 424 sheltered homeless individuals in Supervisory District 4. The City of Palm Springs has 222 unsheltered individuals (an 18% increase from the previous count). When looking at the total (sheltered and unsheltered), Palm Springs has 276 people experiencing homelessness. Palm Springs has the second highest number of unsheltered individuals throughout the County, with the City of Riverside coming in first (514). Throughout the County, there was an overall increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness by 15% (from 2,884 in 2020 to 3,316 in 2022). The following subpopulations were also tracked throughout the County to determine increases/decreases among both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population from 2020 to 2022: veterans, Transitional Age Youth- 18-24 (TAY), Seniors (62+), and families with children. In total, there were 195 veterans (20% increase), 312 TAY (4% decrease), 243+ seniors (22% increase from 2020), and 128 families with children (83% increase). To learn more, [see the 2022 Homeless PITC Report here](#).

*The Point-In-Time Count is a snapshot in time, so it does not represent the total number of people experiencing homelessness over the course of the year. It is likely that the numbers are far higher than those listed above, considering it's completed in the winter (when people are likely seeking some sort of refuge) and individuals who are unsheltered typically like to stay out of sight for their own safety, etc.

General Questions

Q. What components make up the Homelessness Response System in the City of Palm Springs?

A. The City of Palm Springs has worked to develop a full continuum of care within the city to support people experiencing homelessness. This includes homelessness prevention activities to prevent new inflows into homelessness, street outreach services, access center, early entry facility and interim housing at the Homeless Navigation Center, and permanent housing.





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 a combination of factors including a shortfall of affordable and workforce housing, increases in the cost of living when compared to wages, gaps in mental health and substance use treatment resources, and a lack of state and federal funding.

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 homelessness issues, and is advancing “housing-first” programs with wrap-around supportive services that have proven to be more effective at lifting people out of homelessness.

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:

- Partnering 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 homelessness 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.
- Closing 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.
- Strengthening administrative regulations related to the secondary impacts of homelessness.
- Launching of “Operation Relentless Sun” on Feb. 1 by the Palm Springs Police Department, which has since 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 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 Coachella Valley. Fourteen individuals have been relocated to their original hometowns, with friends and 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.

Outreach

Q. What does homelessness street outreach look like in the City of Palm Springs?

A. The City of Palm Springs is in the beginning stages of implementing a new weekly outreach effort with the help of multiple city and county departments, local healthcare providers, and other local nonprofit organizations with the goal of offering assistance that includes housing, substance abuse, mental healthcare, and medical treatment for unhoused residents in Palm Springs. The new effort called R.I.S.E., stands for Resilience, Inclusion, and Support for Ending Homelessness. The initiative takes place every Wednesday from 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. The two primary focuses of the effort are located at the Gene Autry Wash and the Whitewater River Stormwater Channel along Dinah Shore, east of Crossley Road.

The City Council recently approved a \$1.2 million agreement with OFRS, Inc. to provide environmental cleanup services for encampments occupied by unhoused individuals. The company is a nonprofit that trains and hire homeless individuals who are interested in gaining employment. This service provides clean up and does not move unhoused individuals. A weekly supportive services team is onsite during these clean up efforts to provide outreach.

In February of 2023, the Palm Springs Police Department implemented a new program called “Operation Relentless Sun,” with important goals of establishing a true point-in-time count of unhoused residents living in Palm Springs, providing outreach and resources to those in need while continuing to enforce the law and arrest those victimizing our homeless population and the Palm Springs community. Of the 480 unsheltered individuals identified by Palm Springs police, 340 residents are chronically homeless; 36 have been housed or provided with emergency shelter; 24 have been reunited with their families or place of origin.

Q. Why can't the City arrest or remove people experiencing homelessness in our community?

A. Firstly, this is a humanitarian issue worsening nation-wide. Unhoused residents often struggle with significant mental health and substance use 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 people experiencing homelessness that will provide successful permanent outcomes and minimize the negative impacts to our community.

Q. What can the City do about homeless encampments?

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. 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 from 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 with cities held financially liable for damages.

Access Center

Q. What do access services look like in the City of Palm Springs?

A. The City currently partners with Martha's Village & Kitchen to operate the Access Center at 225 El Cielo Road on a drop-in basis during the daytime, providing a variety of wrap-around services, such as individualized case plans, client assessments, and counseling. Other services offered are referral services, which increase the clients' success in exiting homelessness to safe and affordable permanent/supportive housing and benefits procurement, which 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 basic first aid and food handler's certificates as needed for employment. However, the Access Center does not provide sufficient space for overnight shelter on a continuing basis. A description of the Access Center amenities and operations is below.

- 30 beds
- Complete wrap-around services
- Operates seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Referral from PD, Access Center staff, County
- May stay up to 30 days
- Walk out/drive out allowed (with staff approval)

Early Entry Facility - Homeless Navigation Center

Q. How is the Early Entry Facility going to work?

A. Building 8 is planned to be utilized for an Early Entry Facility where individuals can transition from the Access Center on El Cielo Road to the Navigation Center. Having the Early Entry Facility integrated with the Navigation Center allows individuals to receive wrap-around services at the Early Entry Facility while working toward more independent living in the residential modules at the Navigation Center.

The Early Entry Facility, in conjunction with the Navigation Center, will create a path to housing where individuals can exit life on the streets, work toward independent living in the residential modules of the Navigation Center, and receive wrap-around services, job training, and case management. Beds in the Early Entry Facility will be also available for the Palm Springs Police Department to refer individuals to the Navigation Center campus. **Neither the Early Entry Facility nor the Navigation Center will provide walk-up services;** instead, individuals will be referred from the El Cielo Access Center, referred by the Police Department, or referred by one of the City's partner organizations.



- 50 beds (in cubicles)
- Complete wraparound services (on site)
- No walk-up services available. Referral required from El Cielo Access Center
- May stay up to 180 days (until private unit is available)
- Guests transported to transit facilities (or drive out allowed with staff approval)

When people experiencing homelessness in Palm Springs need to access an overnight shelter or interim housing, the closest location of beds in the Coachella Valley are the residential facilities in Indio operated by Martha's Village and Kitchen (MVK) and Coachella Valley Rescue Mission (CVRM). However, the distance to these shelter facilities adds unnecessary complications. The Access Center on El Cielo Road will provide limited shelter beds; the Early Entry program will be the second step in the process to assist in providing housing for people experiencing homelessness and will be part of the progression into the Navigation Center interim housing modular units, with preparation for being placed in permanent housing after the Navigation Center. Without an adequate number of emergency, interim, and transitional housing beds, people experiencing homelessness are forced to find shelter in encampments, tents, cars, and other places not meant for human habitation.

Interim Housing & Navigation - Homeless Navigation Center

Q. What is the Homeless Navigation Center?

A. The Homeless Navigation Center and Early Entry Facility on McCarthy Road will include 80 prefabricated residential interim units and two rehabilitated buildings on the Site (Buildings 8 and 24). The residential units will include kitchenettes and bathroom facilities. 65 units are designated for the general population of persons experiencing homelessness, and 5 units are designated for families experiencing homelessness. An additional 10 units are designated for TAY experiencing homelessness (18-24). The Homeless Navigation Center also includes a children's play area, general parking, green space, hardscape, and landscape. Building 8 will be used as an Early Entry Facility, housing individuals who are waiting to be placed in the independent living modular units. Building 24 and Building C will include operations and services.

- 80 residential interim housing units
- Complete wrap-around services (on site)
- Referral required from either El Cielo Access Center or Early Entry Facility
- May stay until permanent housing is available
- Guests transported to transit facilities (or drive out allowed with staff approval)

Q. What services will be provided at the Homeless Navigation Center?

A. Services provided will include:

- Assistance with obtaining permanent housing and housing, and/or program placement
- Assistance with securing health insurance/benefits, disability, Social Security, and other benefits
- Assistance with job and employment related services, skills training, and application assistance
- Coordination of access to other support services like cash and non-cash benefits
- Case management to clients based on their individual needs and desires; case managers will continue to follow up with clients up to 6 months after they leave the facility
- Family reunification program
- Transportation assistance



- Assistance with food stamps, birth certificates, and identification cards
- Vouchers for clean clothes and laundry service
- Utilization and management of Homeless Management Information System, a data tracking system
- Collaboration with other agencies to offer many specific services, like physical/behavioral health services, including medical care, dental care, and counseling
- Operation of a commercial kitchen within the facility to serve meals to those living there

Q. Why do we need a homeless navigation center for our homeless residents?

A. Palm Springs is a small city facing a significant homeless population. Short-term housing options, like shelters, are responses that result in short-term solutions. An effort to find a long-term solution, or a stable, permanent home, requires acquiring basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and self-esteem. Once people experiencing homelessness are stabilized with a roof over their head and the supportive services they need, the outcomes drastically improve. For example, in MVK's experience, they have an enormously high success rate of 84% for moving individuals experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. It takes all the services that the new Homeless Navigation Center has to make that happen. MVK's 84% success rate is one of the best percentages of any provider in the country, and the City of Palm Springs is proud to partner with them in this new Homeless Navigation Center. The new Center is expected to serve as many as 80 unhoused residents at any given time. MVK also has one of the highest rates in the County for the clients placed in housing staying housed, ending their cycle of homelessness. Some of the community benefits include:

- Interim housing/emergency shelter for those who need it
- Reduced housing and service gaps
- Reduced number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- More accessible services for people experiencing homelessness (PEH)
- More rapid placement to permanent housing
- Centralized and diverse services
- Better resources for partnering agencies in Palm Springs and Riverside County
- Reduced impacts of encampments, loitering, and waste throughout the community
- Significantly reduced costs of emergency services and the burden on local infrastructure

Q. Who will be operating the Homeless Navigation Center?

A. [Martha's Village & Kitchen](#) is responsible for the services and operation of the Homeless Navigation Center. The Center will provide on-site access to social services, behavioral health services, medical/dental services, and workforce development. MVK has utilized the proven successful "[Housing First](#)" model in providing the Coachella Valley with homeless housing and wrap-around services since its inception in 1990 and will continue to use this model in Palm Springs. MVK is well known for connecting homeless individuals quickly and successfully to the appropriate housing and supportive services needed to move them into permanent, stable housing.

MVK's Indio facility is regarded as the first and only resource center of its kind in the region. Among the services offered at their Indio center are medical/dental care and drug counseling. MVK is the only nonprofit certified by the state to provide workforce development services in the Coachella Valley and is a state-licensed childcare facility.

Over the past year, 554 homeless children and adults were provided housing at MVK, according to data included in the staff report. About 84% of those clients moved directly from homeless housing into permanent housing, and



70% of the individuals who completed an employment program offered by MVK obtained work. Martha's Village & Kitchen also operates the Palm Springs Access Center.

Q. What does the development schedule look like?

A. Construction, sitework, and utility infrastructure work is scheduled to begin in July 2023. Design of the modular units is complete and is currently going through State Department of Housing and Community Development Approval process. Production of the modular units is underway with delivery scheduled for Fall 2023. The redesigned Building 8 (Early Entry Facility) is tentatively scheduled to be completed by February of 2024. It is anticipated that Building 8 will use the existing power source on the site, and it will be the first component of the Navigation Center facility to open for residents. The delivery of the power source equipment required to power the rest of the facility is not anticipated until May of 2024. After the power source is delivered, the contractor will finalize the construction of the remaining facilities and deliver the completed project to the City in July 2024.

Q. What are the total contributions provided by the City of Palms Springs and its partners?

A. The table below outlines the total contributions.

Funding Sources	Amount	Percent of Total
Homekey Grant (City/County)	\$16,035,202	40%
ARPA (County)	\$8,000,000	20%
IEHP/Molina (County)	\$7,500,000	19%
City	\$8,160,000	21%
Total	\$39,695,202	100%

Q. Why are there cost increases?

A. The cost increase is due to several factors including:

- Number of Bids Received – The contractor has noted that a significant number of their regular subcontractors did not bid on the project due to timing issues and the complex nature of the work. The result is a notable increase in construction costs.
- Construction Phase bid costs vs Design Development Phase estimates – The cost increase is partially due to the drawings not being fully developed at the design development phase.
- Electrical Costs – During the design development phase it was anticipated that the site may have to operate for about 4-6 months on temporary power as a means to house patrons at the site as quickly as possible. The temporary power costs alone exceeded \$4,900,000.
- Site Infrastructure – The site requires extensive infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the buildings and services being added to the Navigation Center. As the project moved from the design phase to construction drawings, the infrastructure upgrades became more evident.
- Service Provider and Community Input Design Features – Third-party service provider and community input were incorporated into the design throughout the process. These include walk-in refrigeration systems, large multi-purpose rooms, recuperative care, loading dock and trash compactor, extensive landscaping and hardscape, dog park features, shade and screening from the public. These requested features also increased construction costs.

Q. What precautions will be put in place to assure the surrounding neighborhoods that their quality of life



will not be affected?

A. Martha's Village & Kitchen is required to provide security 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Similar to the safety protocols at the Palm Springs Access Center operated by Martha's, clients will not be allowed to loiter outside the facility, and security staff will monitor daily and report incidents of loitering; there will be a 24-hour contact number visible and available to the public to report any disturbances or issues related to the facility, and video surveillance cameras will be installed at the facility. MVK will coordinate heavily with the City and Palm Springs Police Department. MVK does not act as the police but works in conjunction with the police to ensure a safe environment for all. The security plan will be reviewed and approved by the Palm Springs Police Department.

Additionally, the City of Palm Springs and its network of service providers will explore opportunities to extend homeless street outreach services to the adjacent community of the Homeless Navigation Center to ensure that loitering does not take place on a regular basis and that any people experiencing homelessness on the outskirts of the Homeless Navigation Center are connected to resources quickly.

Q. How has the City engaged community members around site selection and development of the Homeless Navigation Center?

A. Potential sites for the homeless services centers were publicly discussed at open City Council meetings since June 2021. The McCarthy Road site was one of seven sights considered for such services. Acquisition of the McCarthy Road site was discussed at three separate City Council meetings (October 28, 2021, November 4, 2021, and November 18, 2021). The purchase of the property was not completed until January 31, 2022. Planning and scheduling of community outreach meetings began immediately after completing the purchase of the property.

The City has utilized a multi-method approach to community engagement to get feedback on the development of the Homeless Navigation Center. The City has sent out a community-wide online feedback survey and completed two in-person community outreach meetings at the James O. Jessie Desert Highland Unity Center and one virtual community outreach meeting. The City has facilitated multiple stakeholder interviews and surveys to collect feedback. The City has received feedback from a diverse set of stakeholders that include, but are not limited to, the adjacent community, neighborhood associations, local businesses, community leaders, hospitality/tourism sector, nonprofits, homeless service providers, healthcare sector, and people currently experiencing homelessness. The City has obtained a wide array of feedback from this community outreach related to site design, safety & security, location & access, and services & operations.

The City has also implemented a Resident Advisory Working Group to share community input and feedback regarding site design, services and operations, and neighborhood impacts. This feedback will be discussed with the City of Palm Springs, the County of Riverside, and Martha's Village & Kitchen (the Homeless Navigation Center service provider) and allows for the exchange of information and questions among the group. This working group will convene throughout the Homeless Navigation Center development from site design and programming to Homeless Navigation Center opening and operations. The City provides updates and notices about community events and information related to the Homeless Navigation Center on the City's webpage.

Q. Can the City restrict access to the Homeless Navigation Center to only Palm Springs residents?

A. No, the City cannot restrict access to the Homeless Navigation Center to only Palm Springs residents. While other communities have attempted to focus only on local residents, it opens cities up to litigation. As per the



[Shapiro vs. Thompson](#) court case, you can't deny services due to lack of residency.

However, people like to stay in the communities of their choosing where they have established connections with family, friends, and community members, familiarity with resources and services, and roots of growing up or living in community. This is no different for people experiencing homelessness.

Currently there are no overnight shelters in the City limits, so residents of Palm Springs that are experiencing homelessness now need travel to other areas in Coachella Valley or Riverside County in order to access shelter services. Many prefer to stay in their respective communities, on the streets, encampments, cars, or RVs, instead of traveling to another community. We want to provide meaningful shelter, interim housing, and permanent housing opportunities to those in our community. We expect the majority of participants will be local to Palm Springs and the Western Coachella Valley.

Permanent Housing

Q. How is the City of Palm Springs increasing permanent housing options?

A. The City of Palm Springs has invested in affordable and permanent supportive housing. Sites include the Monarch Apartments, Vista Sunrise II, and Aloe at Palm Canyon. In addition, people experiencing homelessness can utilize Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) or other homelessness rehousing rental assistance programs.

The two affordable housing projects, Aloe Palm Canyon and Vista Sunrise II, will 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 it received from the State of California to develop more permanent and transitional housing with wrap-around services for those in need.