Digging into the many other explanations for homelessness

But what about the many other factors we commonly hear cited as a root cause of our homelessness crisis - like mental illness and substance abuse? In their book, “Homelessness is a Housing Problem”, researchers Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern analyzed data from communities across the country and found a strong correlation between homelessness and high housing costs, but not for any other factor they studied:

Is there a correlation between high rates of homelessness and...

✔️ High Housing Costs?
❌ High Rates of Serious Mental Illness?
❌ High Rates of Substance Abuse?
❌ High Poverty Rates?
❌ Generous Public Assistance?
❌ Low Average Temperature?

“We investigate numerous - and popular - individual explanations for homelessness. In a strikingly consistent fashion, none of these explanations (poverty, unemployment, mental illness, drug use, and race) explains regional variation in homelessness.”

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3. Homelessness is a Housing Problem. https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com
WHY HOUSING IS CENTRAL TO SOLVING HOMELESSNESS

The Evidence is Clear: Housing Ends Homelessness!

Connect a person to housing and they’re literally no longer homeless. It’s not only an elegantly simple concept, there is ample research that shows that the vast majority of homeless individuals remain stably housed once connected to housing and key support services. Housing programs here in Santa Clara County have produced similarly impressive results (see below) - which have been confirmed by several independent evaluations, including a UCSF\(^4\) study of our county’s Permanent Supportive Housing program and a randomized control trial of our local Homelessness Prevention System conducted by Notre Dame University researchers.\(^5\)

Addressing our homelessness crisis requires an urgent and multi-faceted response, but we will only be successful if our strategy is centered on housing solutions. This is the approach embodied in the 2020-2025 Community Plan to End Homelessness,\(^6\) and thanks to the efforts of many partners, we’ve housed more than 10,000 of our homeless neighbors in the past few years AND we’re now starting to see rates of homelessness slowly beginning to decline. However, we are still not scaling these programs at the level needed to respond to the magnitude of the crisis.

We know that a commitment to affordable housing can both end a person’s homelessness and attack the root cause of our crisis. Let’s summon the will to invest in these solutions at the scale we need to truly end homelessness in our community.

What Kind of Housing Programs Have Proven Successful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permanent Supportive Housing</th>
<th>Rapid Rehousing</th>
<th>Homelessness Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide long-term rental subsidies combined with case management, medical and behavioral healthcare, and other supportive services to homeless individuals with disabilities and extensive histories of homelessness.</td>
<td>Rapid Rehousing provides a time-limited rental subsidy, as well as case management and supportive services to help a household find and stabilize in permanent housing.</td>
<td>Homelessness Prevention programs provide short-term financial assistance and other services to keep at-risk families and individuals from losing their housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94% Success Rate in Santa Clara County</td>
<td>73% Success Rate in Santa Clara County</td>
<td>94% Success Rate in Santa Clara County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to solve our homelessness crisis, we must:

- **BUILD** much more deeply affordable housing
- **EXPAND** rental assistance and subsidies for our lowest-income residents
- **ADOPT NEW POLICIES** to improve housing affordability and relieve the severe rent burdens in our community

We Must Continue Expanding Housing-based Solutions

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Advance these housing solutions. Join our Housing Ready Communities Action Network.

VISIT: HOUSINGREADY.ORG

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\(^5\) Notre Dame Study: https://news.nd.edu/news/targeted-prevention-helps-stop-homelessness-before-it-starts

\(^6\) Community Plan to End Homelessness: https://destinationhomesv.org/community-plan