

THE BLUE TARP PROJECT: WITHOUT A HOME IN SAN JOSE

In 2017, photographer Virginia Becker founded The Blue Tarp Project to humanize the 4,350 people experiencing homelessness in San José. To increase kindness towards and understanding of homeless people in our community, it is essential to raise awareness and correct the many commonly held misconceptions about homelessness. *The Blue Tarp Project: Without a Home in San José* exhibit features portraits of individuals currently or recently experiencing homelessness in our community. Displayed with permission and pride, each portrait shows an important member of our community just as they are, without makeover or staging.

“ I once believed that all homeless people live under blue tarps on the side of the road. I thought they chose to live that way. I thought they were dirty and dangerous. I was wrong.

— Virginia Becker

For four years, Virginia has partnered with Downtown Streets Team in their continuing efforts to bring dignity and empowerment to our unhoused neighbors. As a result, she got to know many of them and learned about each person's work to become a productive member of our community.

Previously separating “us” from “them” in her mind, Virginia began to realize that there is only one difference: housing. We basically all want the same things in life, including love and respect.

Virginia's photographic portraits capture a very different view of what homelessness looks like. The purpose of The Blue Tarp Project is to reveal this hidden population, to show this different view and tear down the stereotypes with which our society paints homelessness.

These individuals are part of our community. All of them once had a home, and many will return to a home in the future. They want you to hear their stories, to understand what happened, and to help integrate and welcome them back into our community. Thank you for accepting their invitation.

“ Every homeless person is somebody's someone... somebody's son, daughter, father, mother, grandfather or grandmother.

— Virginia Becker

WE CAN MAKE HOMELESSNESS RARE, BRIEF AND NONRECURRING IN OUR COMMUNITY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Blue Tarp Project: Without A Home In San José is presented by Destination: Home and The Family Album Project, with photography by Virginia Becker. First and foremost, as presenters of this exhibit, we owe a debt of gratitude to the subjects of The Blue Tarp Project portraits — the people who generously shared their image with others in order to change the conversation about homelessness in our community.

This exhibit would not be possible without Virginia and Albert Becker, Annette Hancock, Ray Watts, Lenz Arts and the Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo. We also are deeply appreciative of the support and partnership of Downtown Streets Team, HomeFirst, the Veterans Housing Facility, staff at City Hall and the Office of Cultural Affairs.

The Blue Tarp Project: Without a Home in San José is part of the City Hall Exhibits Program which provides the temporary display of artwork and artifacts in San José City Hall. The purpose of the program is to enliven the City Hall, to celebrate the creative and diverse community of San José, and to engage the public. The City Hall Exhibits Program is a project of the Public Art Program of the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs.

OUR HOMELESSNESS CRISIS CAN BE SOLVED

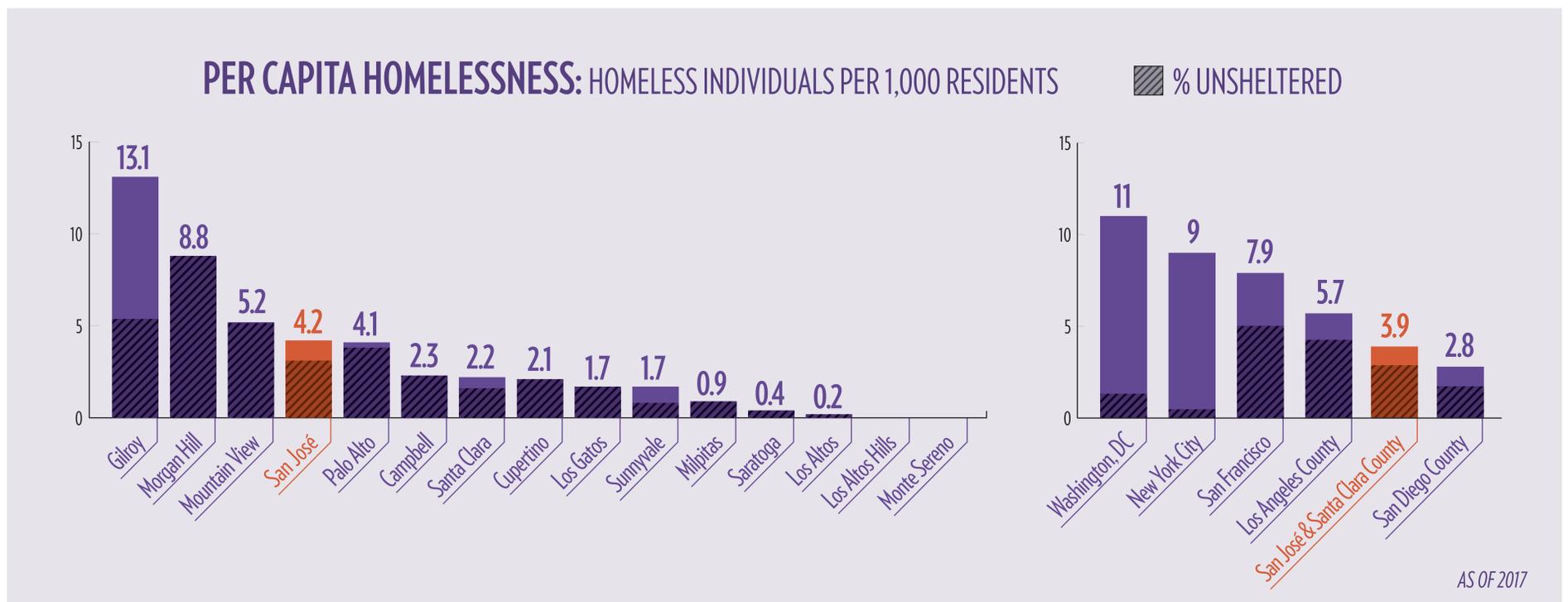
HOMELESSNESS IN SAN JOSÉ AND SANTA CLARA COUNTY

TOTAL: 7,394



On any given night, approximately 7,394 people are experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County (4,350 in San José), according to the *Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey* and the US Census Bureau.

74 percent of those in San José are living and sleeping outside without the benefit of an emergency shelter or housing. 83 percent were living here before they became homeless.



HOUSING REDUCES THE PUBLIC COST OF HOMELESSNESS

Our homeless neighbors in San José live in precarious and often unhealthy situations, sometimes leading to use of public services (including health care, social services and the justice system) at a higher rate than the general population.

According to the report *Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley*, we spend over \$500 million per year (every year) providing critical safety net services to persons experiencing homelessness.



For 103 homeless residents who were housed through a Housing First pilot, the estimated average annual pre-housing public cost was \$62,473. The estimated average post-housing cost was \$19,767, representing a reduction of \$42,706 per year.

Have questions?
Want to get involved?
Learn more at
bluetarproject.com
destinationhomesv.org

THE SOLUTION TO HOMELESSNESS IS A HOME

“ Our community’s Housing First approach centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible, and then providing services needed to maintain their housing and address underlying issues around mental health, addiction, medical care, income, and education.

—Community Plan to End Homelessness in Santa Clara County

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First supportive housing models result in long-term housing stability, and improved physical and behavioral health outcomes. Supportive housing models that use a Housing First approach have been proven to be highly effective for ending homelessness, particularly for people experiencing chronic homelessness who have higher service needs. Housing First models also reduce use of crisis services such as emergency departments, hospitals and jails.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive Housing has been proven to be the solution to ending chronic homelessness. It looks like any other apartment building, but includes flexible support services to help new residents stay housed and live productively in the neighborhood. Services are designed to build independent living skills, help with community interaction and integration, and make it easy to get treatment based on each resident’s needs.

PEOPLE IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WHO REMAIN STABLY HOUSED



RAPID RE-HOUSING

Rapid re-housing is an effective response to episodic homelessness. It is designed to help community members experiencing repeated homelessness who are having difficulty stabilizing their lives. Most homeless families are similar to other poor families and become homeless because of a financial crisis leading to losing their home. Usually, rapid re-housing includes help paying rent (for two years or less) to keep people in their homes. Like supportive housing, rapid re-housing includes support services.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Homelessness is first and foremost a housing crisis and can only be addressed by providing safe and affordable housing.

All people experiencing homelessness, regardless of their housing history and duration of homelessness, can achieve housing stability. Some need support for a brief period of time, while others need more intensive and long-term support.

Many people experience improvements in quality of life, health, mental health, substance use, and employment, as a result of being placed in supportive housing.

People experiencing homelessness have the right to self-determination and should be treated with dignity and respect.

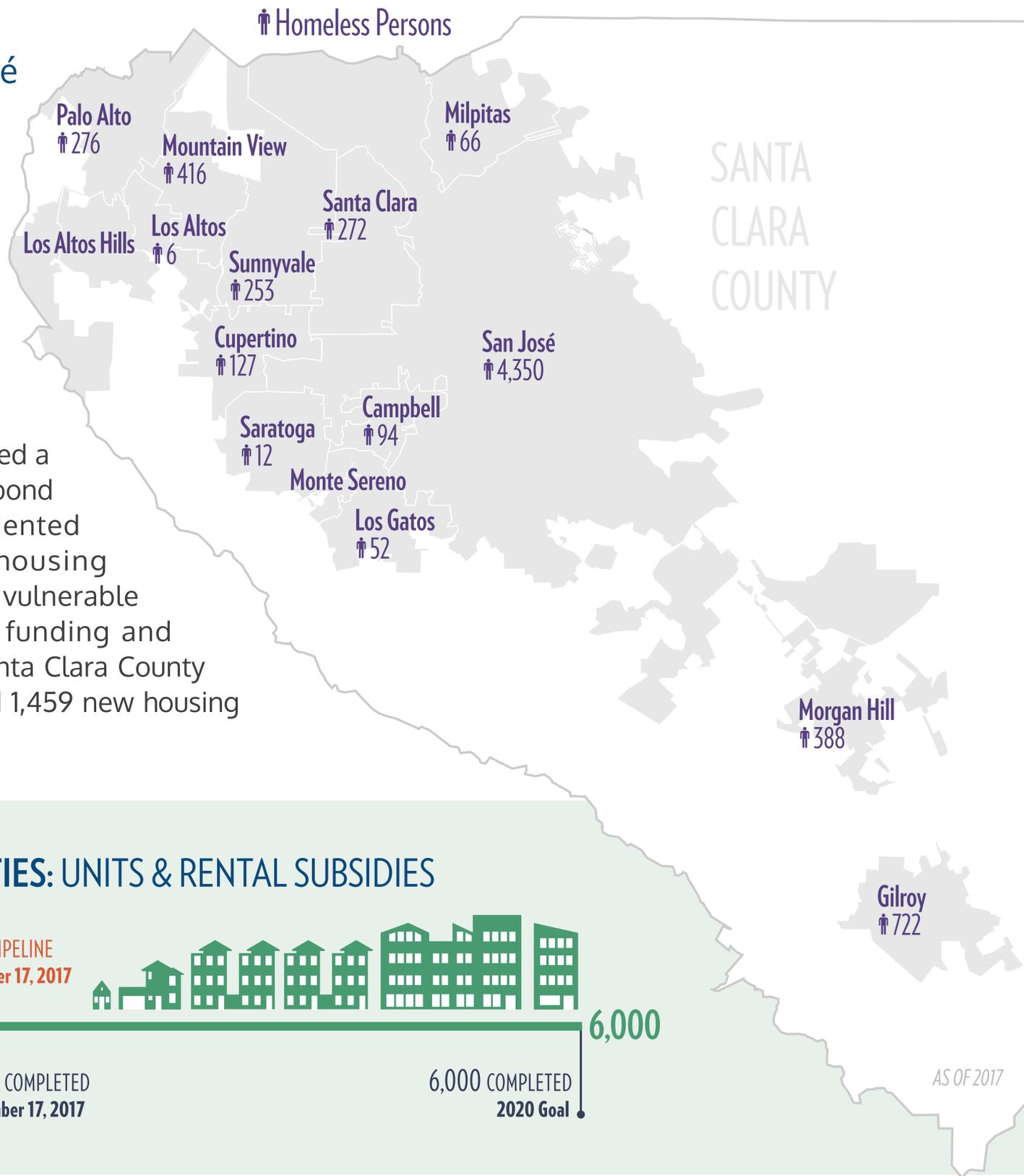


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WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

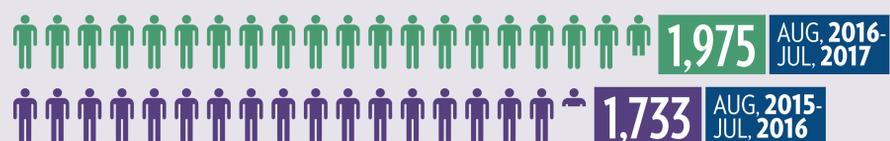
People are experiencing homelessness in all San José districts and throughout Santa Clara County. To address our homelessness crisis, we will need to support and build new supportive housing throughout our community.

Santa Clara County voters approved a \$950 million affordable housing bond in 2016 providing an unprecedented opportunity to address the housing needs of our poorest and most vulnerable residents. Thanks to this new funding and efforts by San José and other Santa Clara County cities, our community has created 1,459 new housing opportunities since 2015.



While these apartments, homes and rental subsidies have provided housing for 3,708 people, we need to create 4,541 additional opportunities by 2020 to meet the goals of the *Community Plan to End Homelessness*.

TOTAL PERMANENTLY HOUSED



PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

In addition to building supportive housing, our community also provides families with resources to prevent them from falling into homelessness. These services include emergency help to pay rent, financial literacy training, help negotiating with their landlord, job training, child care and transportation. The community also provides temporary, emergency and cold weather shelters and is planning to develop temporary bridge housing communities.

