

San Diegans Together Tackling Homelessness



Homelessness is a complex topic within our modern society. More individuals and families find themselves losing their homes due to many external and internal factors impacting their ability to find or maintain permanent housing.

This problem continues to exponentially increase with no signs of slowing down. The City wishes to resolve this unhoused crisis by analyzing the underlying causes of homelessness and taking proactive measures and strategies against these causes.

This document aims to illustrate an in-depth exploration into how San Diego can theoretically and feasibly resolve the homelessness crisis.

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CHAPTER 1: UNHOUSED DEFINITION

Background

Homelessness refers to a condition in which an individual or family lacks any form of stable and safe housing within a society. People experiencing homelessness often live in temporary or unstable situations that further degrade them into this state. This problem transcends demographic boundaries and can occur to anyone through a multitude of negative events out of their control.

Individuals experiencing homelessness find themselves in vulnerable states and struggle to meet their basic needs for food, water, hygiene, and safety. The experience of homelessness can be traumatic and filled with uncertainty, further compounded by societal stigmas against the unhoused.

Why is it Difficult?

Dealing with homelessness remains a profoundly challenging endeavor that requires a comprehensive and flexible approach. The main difficulty of addressing homelessness lies in its complex nature. The issue lies not solely on the matter of housing, but rather a complex web of interconnected challenges which include economic disparities and systemic inequities.

Addressing homelessness effectively demands tackling this intricate tapestry of issues within modern society and cultures. The complexities associated with homelessness are further compounded by the fact that the circumstances leading to homelessness are as diverse and the individuals and families that experience this condition. What works for one person might not work for another due to differing needs and challenges.

Resource constraints also limit organizations and nonprofits in assisting the homeless. The demand for affordable housing and social services often exceed the available supply. Stigmas surrounding the unhoused additionally hinder efforts to secure the necessary funding and resources.

Why is it Important?

Addressing homelessness remains paramount due to its profound impact on individuals and communities as a whole. Several reasons underscore the critical importance of resolving homelessness. One reason includes moral obligation and the basic human right to shelter. Another reason includes an increase to social and economic developments due to less strain on social services.

Whatever the reasoning, to best resolve this problem first requires defining all the ways a person can transition into homelessness to better brainstorm solutions and programs that work to resolve each specific cause.

CHAPTER 2: UNHOUSED CAUSES

Poverty

A state or condition in which one lacks the financial resources and essentials for a certain standard of living within a society. In the context of homelessness, this translates into the inability to afford any proper housing. Poverty is the biggest cause of homelessness within urban areas and can lead to many precarious situations:

Job Loss

Individuals and families can lose their source of income through various internal and external factors within or out of their immediate control. Most residents rely on constant and consistent paychecks to afford the costs of living; one missing paycheck could result in them losing their homes.

Financial Irresponsibility

Improper management of funds and resources could jeopardize one's ability to afford living costs and result in them losing their homes. Financial lessons and advice could help avoid these situations; however they are not taught in schools or readily available for most residents.

High Cost of Living

Major urban cities all have high costs of living caused by exorbitant housing and commodity prices that contributes greatly to the rise of homelessness within these cities. Low median pay and environmental factors can also contribute to high costs of living.

No Affordable Housing

Restrictive housing policies and unavailable space for land causes an artificial increase in pricing for housing in major urban cities. This leads to a surplus in expensive houses for sellers to make a profit and a lack of affordable housing for the middle and low class.

Lack of Jobs

Current and future jobs could be replaced by technology that kicks individuals and families out of the market and cuts off their source of income.

Disaffiliation

Refers to the loss to social ties and support from people and resources. This involves a conscious or unconscious disengagement from external help and can occur at different levels. This process can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnect from support systems. Disaffiliation can result in the following scenarios occurring:

Foster Kids

Some kids can get too old for the foster care system and get kicked out with no additional resources to prepare them for the real world. This can lead to many former foster kids living on the streets with no immediate family or friends to rely on for support.

Incarceration

Former convicts have a permanent record on their profile which can deter many businesses from hiring them for employment. This cuts off a vast majority of ways to earn any income and results in them resorting to living on the streets.

Discrimination

Negative bias against people based on certain attributes can prevent them from accessing or receiving appropriate support systems to help them. This problem worsen when becoming unhoused due to cultural biases against unhoused residents within our society.

Immigrants

Residents crossing borders into the nation may find themselves without any connections to family or friends which can restrict their ability to find housing. Language barrier can also play a role in immigrants finding difficulty in connecting with the appropriate support systems

Disabilities

Physical or mental handicaps can restrict one's ability to find employment or access support systems that can help prevent homelessness.

Abuse

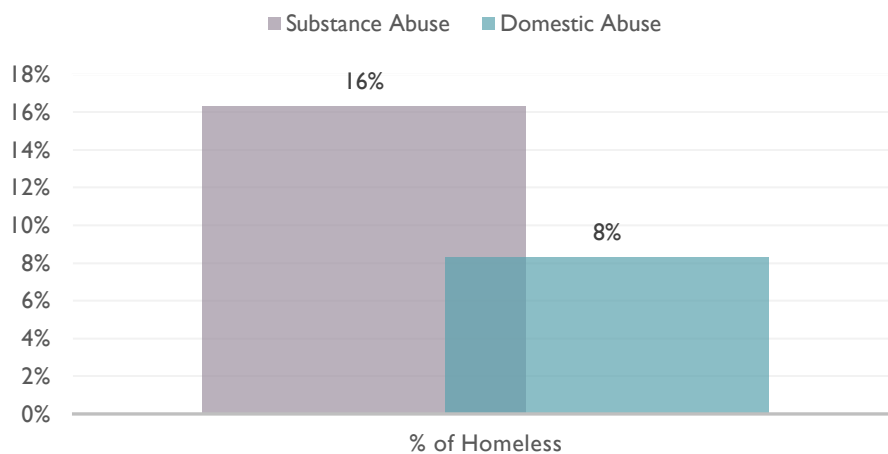
A condition or state in which one exposes themselves to physical or mental harm either from themselves or from other malicious parties. In the context of homeless, victims run away from home to avoid further harassment, manipulation, or harm. Abuse remains a major cause of homelessness and contributes to the following scenarios:

- *Domestic Abuse: behavior that intimidates or controls another person within a relationship setting*
- *Landlord Abuse: threat of eviction from landlords with either right or wrong intentions*
- *Substance Abuse: uncontrolled use of alcohol and drugs that affects normal daily life*
- *Mental Abuse: emotional pain brought upon either from oneself or other malicious figures*
- *Self-Harm: behavior that harms oneself intentionally through cuts or self-injury*

Abuse can come in other forms such as coercion or the threat of home evictions. [Studies](#) have shown women experience cases of domestic violence more frequently than men; the inverse is true for substance and drug abuse.

Vulnerabilities such as mental stability and substance control only increase in severity once individuals and families start experiencing homelessness. Comorbidity is common among abuse victims and can also increase the severity of homelessness for residents.

Figure 1: U.S. Abuse Statistics

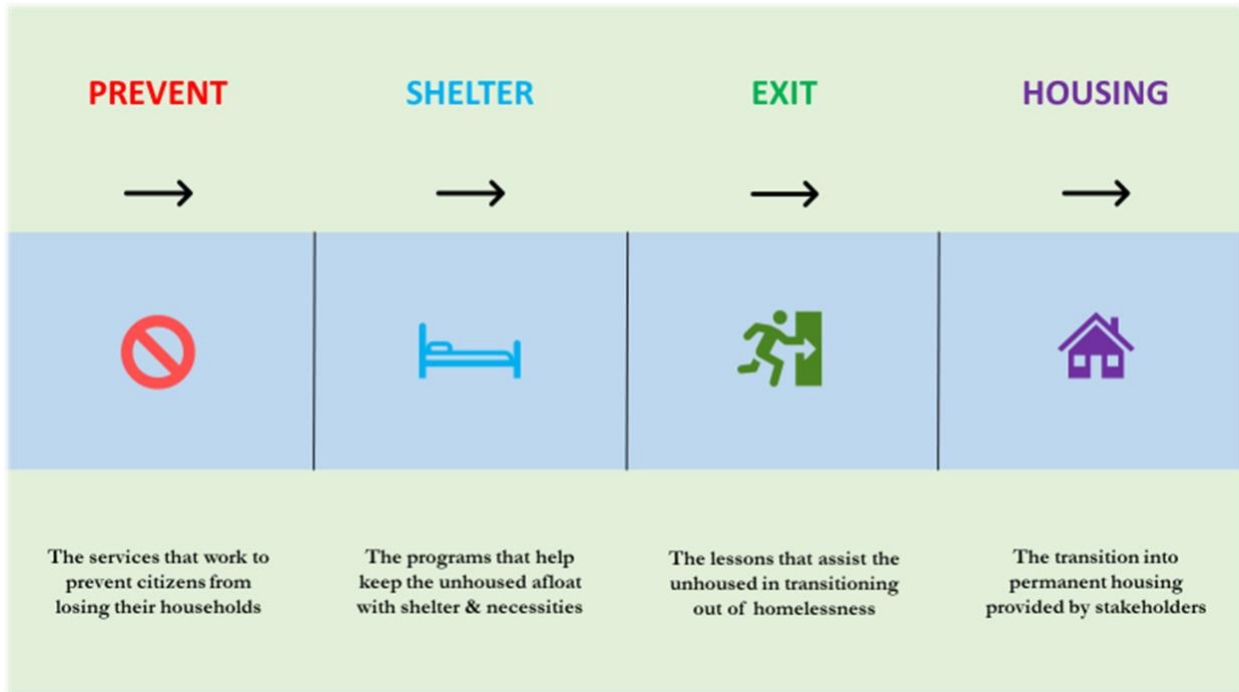


CHAPTER 3: UNHOUSED STRATEGIES

Four Pillar Approach to Homelessness

The transition into homelessness and the journey experienced remain consistent for most people. Many will encounter programs and outreach teams that work to provide the resources necessary to obtain some form of housing. These services exist to fulfill four distinct purposes: to **prevent**, **shelter**, **exit**, and **house** the unhoused residents.

Figure 2: Homelessness Journey Diagram



The majority of homelessness services primarily focus on shelter and exit protocols to directly assist and guide active unhoused residents. The main problem arises from the lack of significant attention and funding towards other protocols.

Most city governments tend to focus on temporary measures rather than address permanent solutions for dealing with the homeless. This results in prevention projects receiving less funding and attention, which in turn stagnates any progress towards lowering the rate of homelessness.

Decreasing the rate should be priority when trying to provide permanent solutions. Fewer cases means less strain on current shelter and exit programs, bolstering current and future [prevention protocols](#) with additional resources.

Housing First

This strategy centers on the principle that providing immediate and permanent housing to residents is the primary and essential method towards addressing unhoused needs. This approach prioritizes offering stable and safe housing without preconditions or requirements such as employment or sobriety.

The core philosophy behind this tactic hinges on the belief that housing is a fundamental human right. It recognizes that people experiencing homelessness often face complex issues and that resolving them is more attainable once housed.

Supplying housing reduces the length of time residents spend on the streets and contributes to costs savings for the community by reducing the utilization of emergency services and shelters, making the process more cost-effective and humane.



Figure 3: Permanent Housing

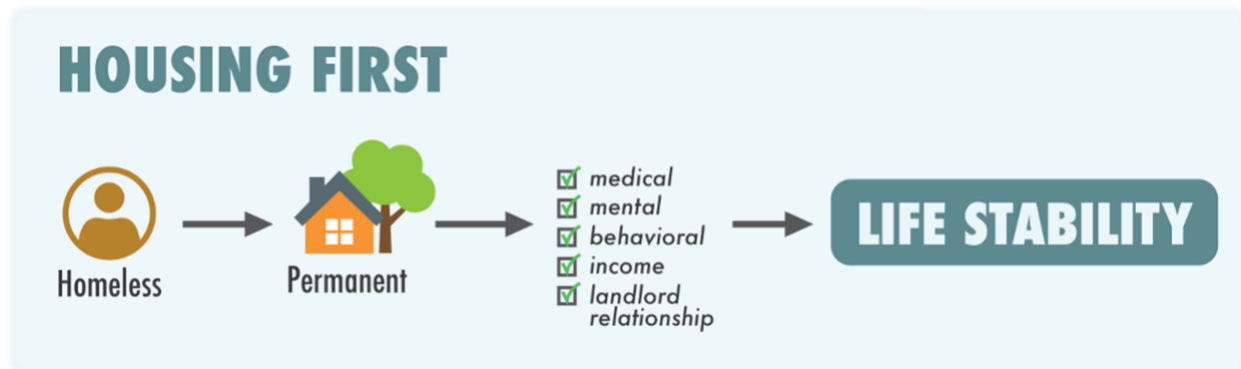


Figure 4: Housing First Illustration

[Housing First](#) also affects the dynamics of the housing market. A high demand and low supply of houses results in expensive housing costs, making it challenging for many residents to afford suitable housing in those markets. This contributes to social disparities for low-income individuals and families due to a scarcity of affordable houses available.

An increase in supply thanks to the Housing First strategy would decrease the demand for houses within the market. This would result in cheaper costs and provide residents more flexibility in obtaining permanent forms of housing.

Community Support

Local residents play a pivotal role in addressing homelessness within the community. Many people do not know the major impact volunteers and residents can have on the unhoused populace either through direct or indirect actions. The effort to resolve homelessness requires contributions from both the government and local residents to make a sizable difference in the effort.

Volunteering

Volunteering time and resources to local shelters and outreach programs can make a significant impact in assisting the unhoused. Many organizations dedicated to homelessness prevention and assistance rely on community supports to provide essential services. More community events and opportunities can help expand ways for local residents to contribute.

Raise Awareness & Policymaking

Many local residents do not know about the complexities and severity of the unhoused crisis afflicting the entire nation. This results in many misconceptions about the situation and paints a false narrative to local community and area. Educating residents and raising awareness through community forums, events, and social media campaigns helps foster empathy and understanding.

Residents can also engage in conversations with local policymakers to influence sustainable and compassionate policies for the unhoused. The community can also voice their opinions through these policymakers to eliminate restrictive policies that inhibit housing. Ensuring that our voices are heard can help create collaborative efforts that create lasting change.

Increase Community Empathy

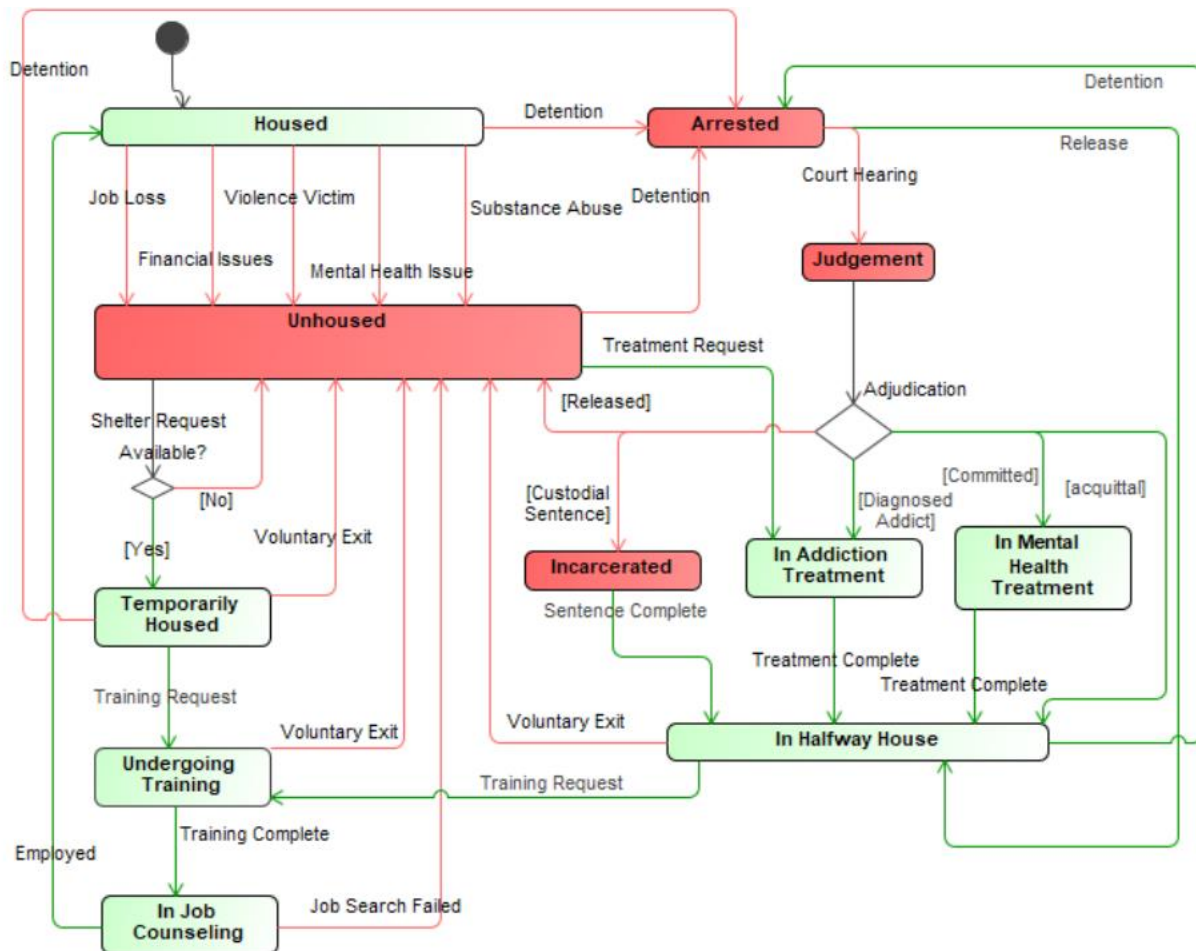
Stigmas against the unhoused through negative stereotypes and cultural biases leads to feelings of disdain and contempt that decreases community empathy. Introducing programs to increase empathy and combat these stigmas to overturn this negative view of them.

One example is introducing a program that gathers residents to participate in an unhoused simulation within a controlled environment to experience the daily struggles of homelessness. Participants would realize how difficult and miserable the experience is and feel more empathy towards the unhoused, leading to more volunteers and efforts to address homelessness.

Homelessness Roadmap

Underlining prominent causes of homelessness allows us to detail and capture the journey individuals and residents undergo during the unhoused transition and exit process. Illustrating the process helps determine when and where to coordinate resources to help the unhoused at crucial points of the experience across all residents within the city.

Figure 5: INCOSE Homelessness Roadmap



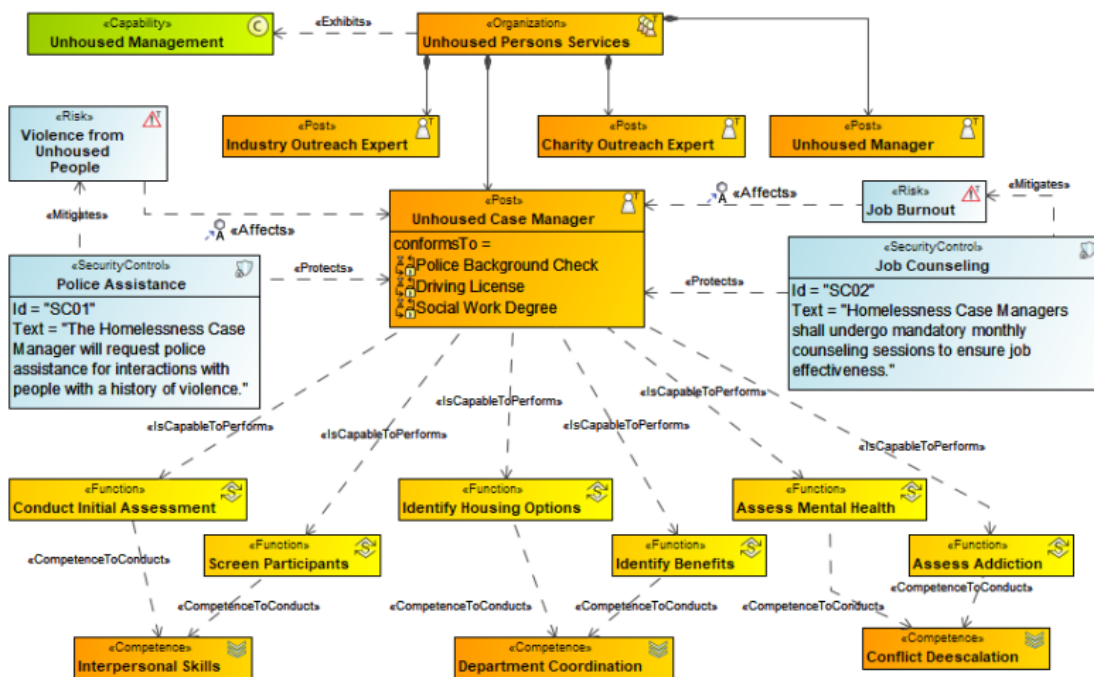
The [figure](#) above illustrates all the potential routes an individual or family can undergo during the unhoused experience. The red indicates the causes and transition into homelessness and the green represents the path into permanent housing.

While homelessness is much too complex to form a perfect roadmap, the ideas laid out can help any stakeholders locate specific areas in which to assist the unhoused. These roadmaps can also help formulate strategies to tackle key issues presented within these diagrams.

Stakeholder Committee

Many organizations offer help to the homelessness but act independently from one another. The lack of coordination between stakeholders results in labor and time inefficiency when providing resources for the unhoused residents. Precise coordination and clear communication through a central figure would bring more efficiency in supporting the unhoused.

Figure 6: INCOSE Unhoused Case Manager Diagram



The figure above showcases the rough premise of an unhoused case manager and the responsibilities that come with the job. The central figure would coordinate all available resources to establish a centralized resource network focused on the unhoused.

This is achievable through a system called the [Community Information Exchange](#) that works to transform health and social services through information sharing and coordinated care. This network also shares data among partners to promote educated community planning and decision making.

Through the Community Information Exchange and the Stakeholder Committee to monitor and operate this centralized resource network, essential social services can reach the unhoused in a faster and more efficient manner to better address the homelessness crisis.

CHAPTER 4: STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders refer to any individual, group, organization, or entity with a vested interest or concern over a particular project, issue, or endeavor. These parties can be affected by the outcomes of a specific outcome or have the ability to affect it directly.

Their roles include decision making, offering insight, and providing resources to impact the direction of an initiative. Some stakeholders include government officials, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and housing authorities.

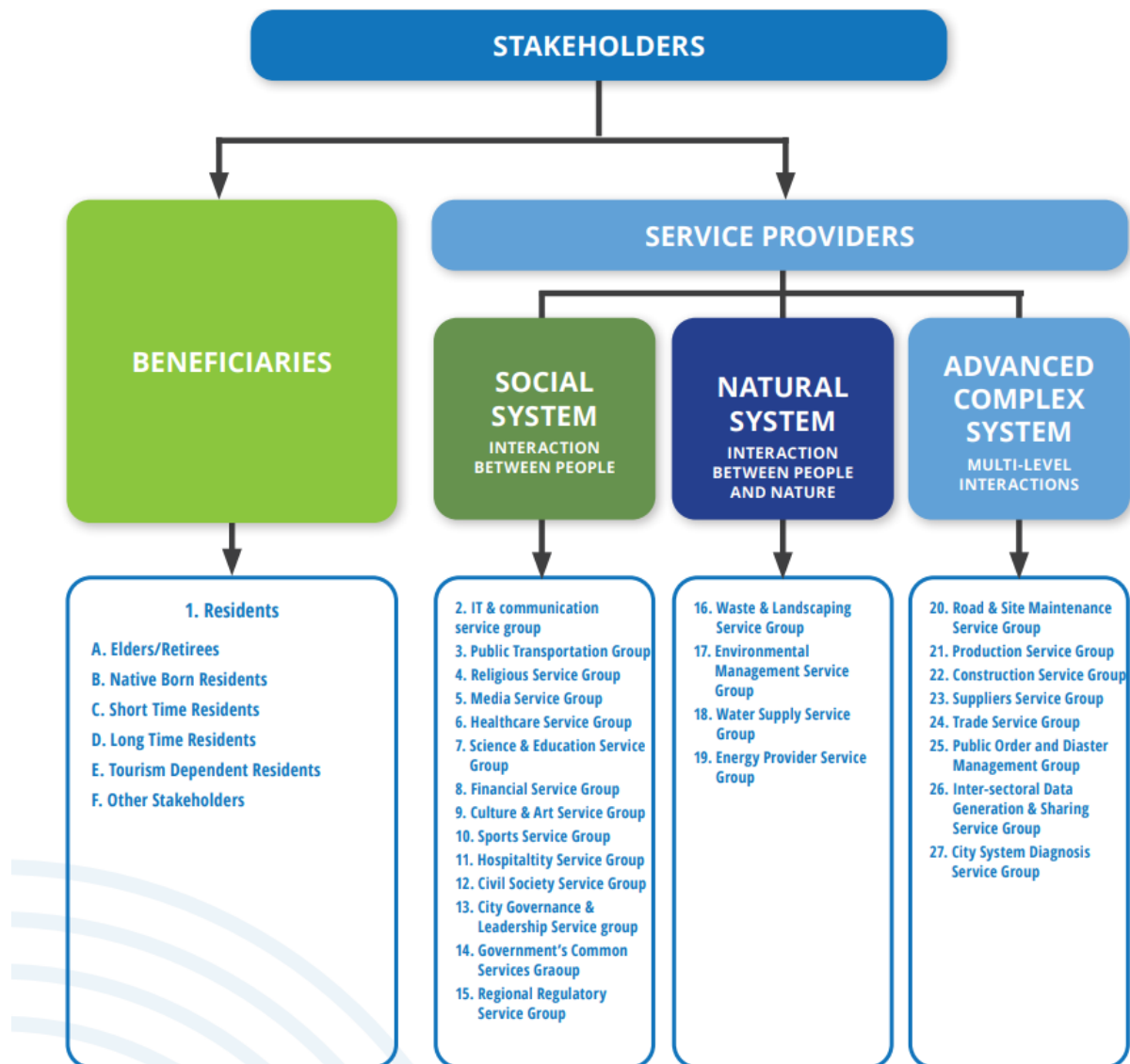


Figure 7: INCOSE Stakeholder Classifications

Prevention Services

Social programs that focus on early intervention protocols to prevent cases of homelessness by providing accessible social services. Nonprofits and government policies actively help residents keep their homes and provide the necessary resources to accomplish this. These social services are categorized under the following four types:

Financial Assistance: programs that work to prevent poverty within low-income individuals and families. Prevention groups can offer rent assistance or job training opportunities; some even build and supply affordable houses.



Specialized Support: services tailored towards specific demographics to help them establish ties and connections with support systems. These demographics include veterans, seniors, foster kids, immigrants, and incarcerated residents.



Abuse Counselling: sessions that help prevent abuse victims from spiraling into homelessness by providing therapy and treatment. Many forms of abuse can lead individuals into leaving their homes to escape the pain and stress.



Policy Advocacy: organized groups influencing the creation of policies that would introduce or improve support systems targeting the homeless. These groups initiate discussions about homelessness and raise awareness on the matter.



The [San Diego Housing Commission](#) is a notable example of a prevention group. They specialize in financial assistance by building affordable houses and offering rent assistance programs for the low and moderate-income residents within San Diego.

Another example is the [Regional Task Force on Homelessness](#) local in San Diego. They specialize in data collection and analysis on the unhoused situation to advance effective strategies and policy development focused on resolving the unhoused crisis.

The [San Diego County](#) government also provides multiple social services that help residents prevent them from losing their homes; their specialty lies in mental health support.

Shelter Structures

Structures that provide temporary shelters for the unhoused to reside in until obtaining some form of permanent housing. Some notable examples in the City of San Diego include [People Assisting The Homeless](#), [Alpha Project](#), [Father Joe’s Village](#), [Urban Street Angels](#), [LGBTQ Center](#), and the [Dreams For Change](#). They currently operate and manage an ever-expanding shelter network that comes in three major components:

Temporary Shelters: safe and convenient temporary shelters with supportive services connecting individuals and families to permanent housing; some house specific demographics such as women or transitional youth.



Safe Parking Structures: designated parking lots for people staying in their vehicles to park overnight with supportive services. Ideal for residents that cannot afford housing, but still have some form of income.



Safe Sleeping Programs: safe and legal camping sites with supportive services designed towards helping the unhoused. Large masses of tents housing residents make up these camping sites and are placed throughout the city.



Figure 8: City of San Diego Homeless Strategies & Solutions Department FY24 Budget

Intervention	Funding	% of Budget
Shelter	\$ 52,926,696	68%
Outreach	\$ 6,185,000	8%
Administration	\$ 4,086,220	5%
Safe Parking	\$ 3,556,173	5%
Supportive Services	\$ 3,199,258	4%
Storage	\$ 2,877,166	4%
Housing	\$ 2,743,178	4%
Prevention	\$ 2,250,000	3%
Diversion	\$ 500,000	1%
Total	\$ 78,323,691	100%

Outreach Teams

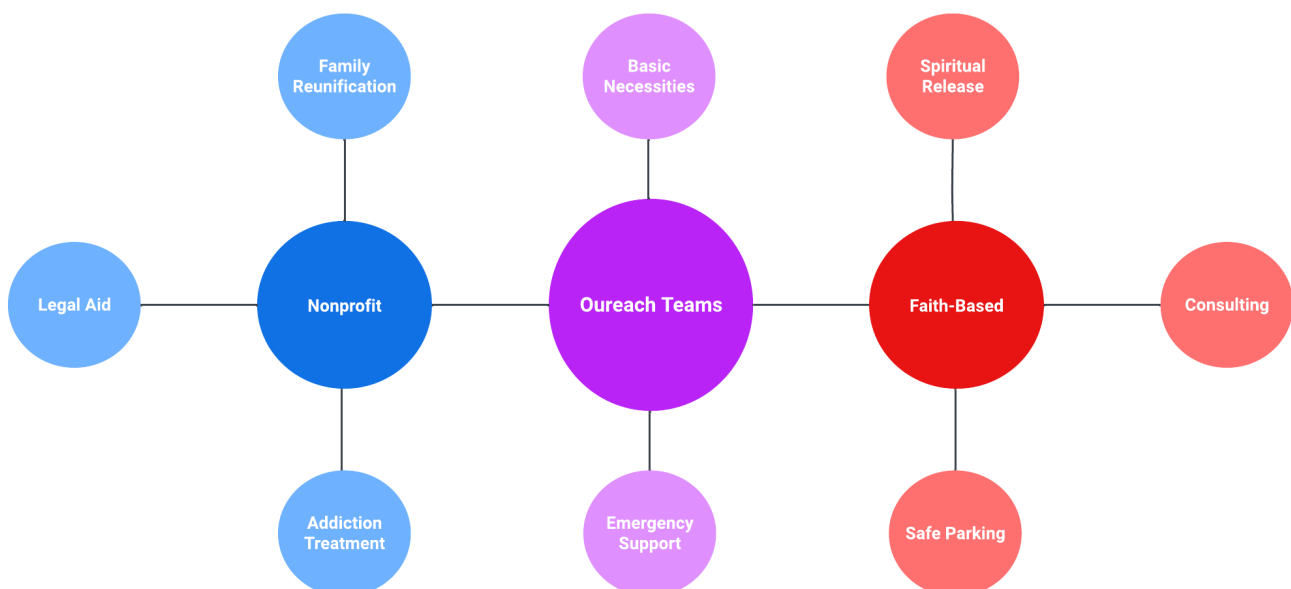
Social service teams that focus on providing resources to the unhoused to assist their exit or transition into permanent forms of housing. Stakeholders frequently use outreach teams to reach the unhoused residents and provide niche services. Through outreach teams, the unhoused often get sent to shelters provided either by the City or nonprofits in the area. Each outreach group differs from one another by targeting specific goals when supporting the unhoused. Some are categorized as follows:

Nonprofit Teams

Exit groups that encompass a variety of services to support the unhoused living on the streets or within shelters. These services can range from simple activities such as food provision to complex services such as legal expertise and addiction treatment. Some notable examples in San Diego include [Clean and Safe](#), [Episcopal Community Services](#), and [We See You](#).

Faith-Based Organizations

Religious groups that offer teachings about their faith to address the spiritual needs of the unhoused who feel lost and without purpose in life. Many residents use religion to cope and provide guidance through their unfortunate predicament. Some examples in San Diego include the [San Diego Rescue Mission](#), the [Catholic Charities Diocese](#), and the [Salvation Army](#).



Grant Foundations

Foundations or government entities that provide funds align with their goals and objectives of resolving the homelessness crisis. They operate to assist stakeholders directly involved with the unhoused by offering grants and resources to fund and operate important projects and initiatives. Some notable examples for homelessness in San Diego include:

[San Diego Foundation](#): enable donors and nonprofit partners to tackle the most critical needs facing San Diego residents. They dedicate their mission to establishing a just, equitable, and resilient community within the city.



[Padres Foundation](#): devoted to improving many lives throughout the San Diego community by working alongside organizations that share their vision. They make positive impacts in the community by prioritizing health, education, and fitness, particularly for those in underserved communities.



[Lucky Duck Foundation](#): dedicated to improving the lives of residents experiencing homelessness and addressing the core issues plaguing the city. They collaborate with local partners to provide funding towards progressive initiatives that directly or indirectly help the unhoused.



Research Institutions

Research Institutions that dedicate themselves to conducting research on ways to advance society by exploring new ideas and pioneering solutions towards a wide range of scientific disciplines. While current institutions don't specialize in resolving homelessness, their research can contribute to the creation of innovative solutions and strategies.

- [UCSD Homelessness Hub](#): engages in applied, collaborative research responsive to community needs and provides critical insight for public unhoused policies
- [Stanford Economic Policy Research](#): while not local to San Diego, can provide research into how state and local economic policies can contribute to resolving homelessness

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