

Dear Neighborhood and Ward 6 Coalition leaders,

Thank you again so much for joining our “homelessness huddle” last week. I appreciate having the chance to share summary data that the city uses to help inform our efforts, what we’ve accomplished (often in partnership with others) over the past year and some of the upcoming priorities for 2025-26. (photos of presentation/dialogue notes attached).

Before I recap, a participating leader shared this with me just after we met:

[Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets – The White House \[whitehouse.gov\]](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2025/01/22/ending-crime-and-disorder-on-americas-streets/)

In her words:

This will affect efforts going forward. There are civil rights issues associated with commitment. There's no funding for all of the court proceedings related to commitment. There's a huge shortage of behavioral health beds, worsened by recent Medicare/Medicaid funding. I could go on but will end by saying the outcomes of this EO are likely to be negative all the way around.

I wrote this follow-up before the EO was released.

To your credit, Ward 6 leaders, there’s a clear understanding on your part that homelessness stems from many causes and will continue to require a broad range of approaches—including new ideas and efforts.¹ I have recently been most focused on chronic homelessness because, as we look at local data:

- a larger share of unsheltered people (versus those in shelters or supportive housing) have been outside for more than one year
- a larger share of unsheltered (versus sheltered) people likely suffer from serious mental illness (SMI) and/or addiction (making our collaborations with the Pima County Health Department, AHCCCS/Medicaid and specialized agencies all the more important)
- as people survive longer outdoors, they often seek stability by trying to establish “homes/camps”, their mental health and addictions can worsen,

¹ Ideas (good ones) regarding affordable housing were shared during our “huddle”. Co-ops, micro housing, shared housing, etc. can stretch dollars for greater impact. Given the County’s newly adopted housing investment program (funded through a property tax adjustment of 1.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation), Tucson/Pima County will be able to sustain work to develop more affordable (and innovative) units over the coming ten years. We need more affordable housing so that, as people do find jobs, secure disability benefits, and/or pursue behavioral/physical recovery, they can progress into housing and make way for others still outside.

and the tensions-conflicts with, and impacts upon, housed neighbors and the broader community often escalate.

- resistance to trusting and accepting help can diminish (some have already tried unsuccessfully several times to leave the streets) so our approaches need to recognize that (mutual aid groups and those establishing trusting relationships are key)
- Tucsonans have compassion but cannot stand by when homelessness fuels nearby blight, “nuisance” or disturbing behaviors, vandalism/thefts or other crimes—undermining their own sense of safety and peace²

There are two things I consistently hear from the majority of Ward 6 residents and businesses:

- Do more to reduce homelessness and help those suffering AND
- Do more to protect my area’s security and quality of life even as homelessness persists

Some things we’re doing are proving successful. The paid work crews staffed by people from the streets (both Old Pueblo’s Homeless Work Program and Primavera Works) clean up the city and engage workers in other paths to meaningful help (shelter, healthcare, treatment, steady work). The Transition Center at the Pima County Jail helps people leaving to find shelter/housing and help (notably reducing the rates of re-offenses and recidivism). Every scarce dollar we can invest that simultaneously accomplishes both of our objectives (reduce homelessness/suffering and improve community security and quality of life) will hold the greatest return and impact.

Thank you for sharing more ideas and models that we should explore as we move ahead.

I have already seen many of you share your notes and the link to the Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness (TPCH) planning survey with your neighbors.

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/acd9c8a45dba47b7819afd627ac316e3>

Thank you for doing that as well. TPCH collaborates to submit our large interagency proposal to the federal Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for funding to

² No one believes all patterns of blight, nuisances or crime tie to homelessness—wildcat dumping, drug/theft “rings”, and much more contribute to declining quality of life. A thorough review of how city court handles misdemeanors (and data on outcomes) as well as TPD’s innovations and recommendations can guide us.

address homelessness.³ With widespread input we can most effectively prioritize and coordinate for impact. Also, here's the link to their home page:

<https://tpch.net/>

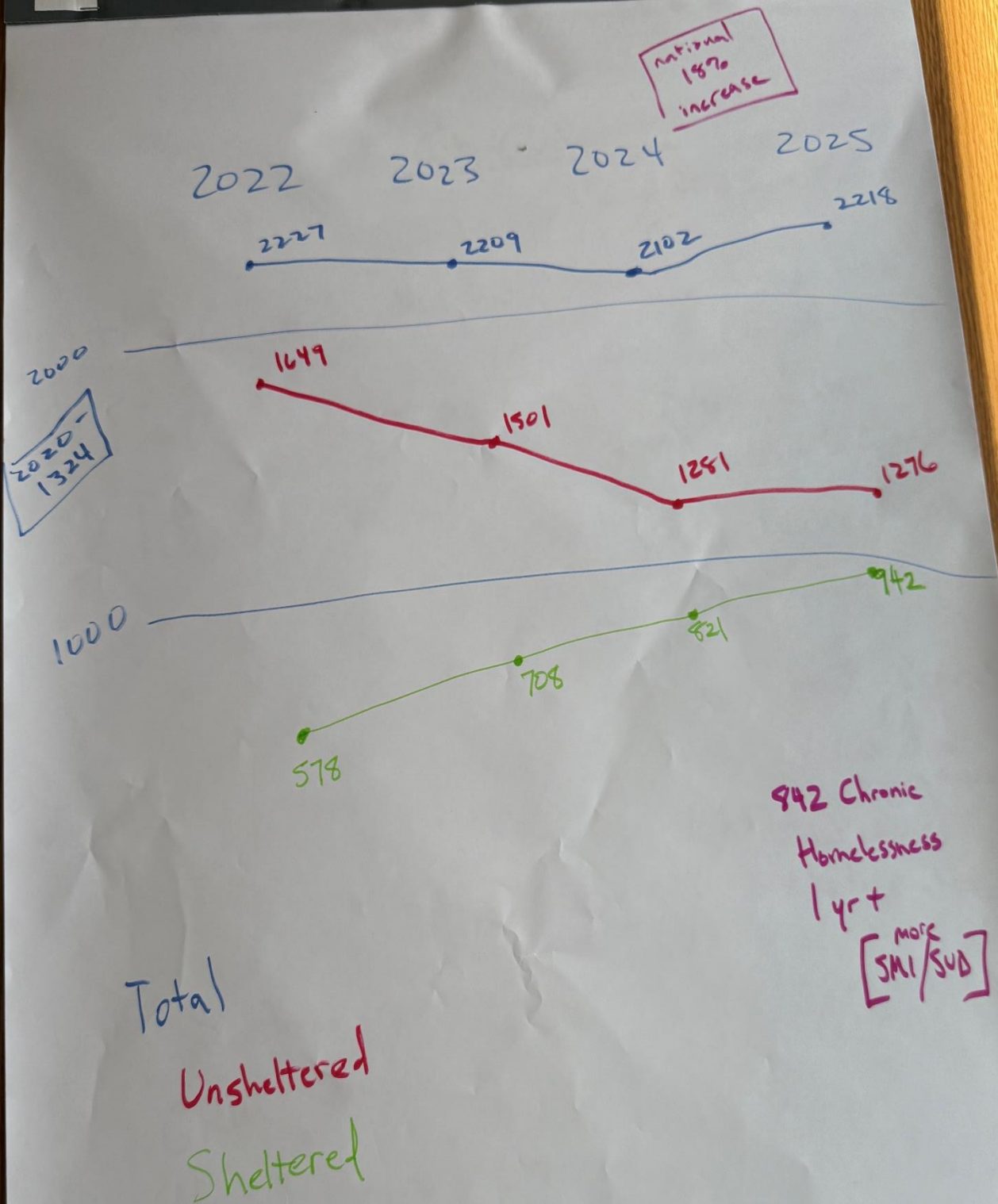
If you scroll toward the bottom of the home page you can review the full applications submitted in 2024 involving the City, County and a dozen partner nonprofits across the community. The TPCCH Strategic Plan/Survey will help TPCCH as it prioritizes future funding requests.

One clear objective of the City and County's work on homelessness will be to continue broadening collaboration with groups beyond those in TPCCH applying together for federal funding. Faith-based organizations and volunteer mutual aid groups, for example, play a huge role and mobilize impressive levels of donations and volunteers.

I know the dialogue after my brief presentation was wide-ranging, and I do apologize that time ran out before I could ask folks who did not yet speak to share thoughts. My goal was to hear from the full range of neighbors across the Ward (stretching from downtown to Park Mall, roughly from Speedway/Grant to 29th), and to give you all a chance to hear from each other. I promise if you're open to reconvening that I'll structure our time around specific questions and facilitate better. The gathering was valuable to me, and should be to all who devote their time and ideas.

I genuinely appreciate your participation and your ongoing leadership for the betterment of Tucson. Thank you again.

³ I think some people believe that "Housing First" means give people a roof/home and call it good. Actually "Housing First", an evidence-based approach adopted at the federal level, means that addressing the underlying causes of a person's or family's homelessness can be most effective if they can live somewhere inside, with safety and more stability, in order to then successfully seek employment, treatment, disability benefits, healthcare, or the other kinds of services that target root causes. Tucson's approach to Housing First incorporates outreach, low barrier and conventional shelters, and a range of housing plus support services geared toward specific population's needs. The federal/HUD focus may shift more toward treatment for mental illness and substance/addiction. At the same time cuts to Medicaid may mean even fewer are reached and assisted. (see federal Executive Order subsequently released)



2024

City-County

2025

+Low Barrier Shelters

Jail added Detox

Transition

Safe "Camp" Pilot
(nonprofit partners)

Sobering Center
(Pima Co. Opioid Fund)

Primavera Works (FY26)
cleanup crews (W6)

Pima Co. Housing Bonds
(1.5 cents/\$100)
property taxes

~~SB1257~~ did not pass
in state legislature

Private Sector

Sister Jose's expansion

GRM Cafe training

Homing Project

Oxford House

TPCH Strategic Plan Survey

<https://survey123.arcgis.com>

Safety - Enforcement

Mental Health

Churches [Deep Freeze yrround?]

Parking RVs - Working Pool

Housing Co-op / Shared Housing* - Range of Rental
Middle Income

VRBO's → incentives for rental
licensing?

Section 8

AHCCS - Waiver / SMI Focus
COT? entry?

Safety
Officers
live in city?

Relationships - Apple Days - Mutual Aid Grps

Drugs - Safe Space

Vets Stand Down