



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 1, 2019

### Contact:

Phil Pitchford

Public Information Officer

951-826-5975

[ppitchford@riversideca.gov](mailto:ppitchford@riversideca.gov)

## **2019 Point in Time Count Indicates Increase in Homelessness in City, County**

*Annual effort found 19.9 percent more homeless individuals in Riverside, 21 percent in the County*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The 2019 Point in Time Count found 19.9 percent more homeless individuals in Riverside than in the prior year, slightly less than the 21 percent increase that was seen across Riverside County.

The annual Point in Time Count (PITC), which is spearheaded by the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, was conducted on Jan. 29. More than 700 volunteers spread out to document the incidence of homelessness in communities around the county.

The data provided by the PITC is used to help formulate plans for reducing homelessness and for ensuring that the area receives the proper amount of resources to combat homelessness from the state and federal governments.

“The 2019 PITC provides us with data that will help us make better decisions to help our neighbors without homes takes steps towards becoming stable and ultimately self-sufficient,” said Mayor Rusty Bailey, who participated in the count again this year. “This statewide crisis is why the City of Riverside is pushing forward with new programs to address homelessness and its impacts.”

The PITC found 439 people living on the streets in the City of Riverside, which is roughly 1 out of every 5 unsheltered people in Riverside County. Countywide, there were 2,811 homeless individuals, including 2,045 who were not in a shelter of some type.

During the past year, the City of Riverside has increased its efforts to reduce homelessness and its impacts on the community, and there is more work planned. The city’s Office of Homeless Solutions, including a Homeless Outreach Team, actively engages with homeless individuals in an attempt to persuade them to accept human services and, when possible, housing opportunities.

The City Council voted unanimously last month to allocate \$3.45 million in Measure Z money to create a Public Safety and Engagement Team (PSET) Program. This multi-department approach is designed to maintain order in public places while also providing homeless individuals with a pathway

out of homelessness. Team members will specialize in providing resources and assistance while also addressing issues of unlawful panhandling, camping, abandoned personal belongings and vagrancy. One team will officially begin its activities in early May, with a second team expected to be in place by June.

For example, employees from the Office of Homeless Solutions, as well as from the Police, Community and Economic Development, and Parks, Recreation and Community Services departments will receive training on engaging with homeless individuals, mental health and public health. The City also will contract with a private company to clean up homeless encampments.

For the first time, the City partnered with a faith community, The Grove Community Church, to create four units of bungalow housing for homeless individuals on The Grove's property. That effort, led by the Office of the Mayor, is continuing as other faith communities are preparing to bring forth projects to increase housing opportunities for homeless individuals.

"Riverside is a leader in partnering with the faith community to create housing for our neighbors without homes," Mayor Bailey said. "I am eager to share that story with anyone in the nation who would like to emulate it."

The PITC is a snapshot from one day and does not represent a complete accounting of the homeless population. In conducting the count, the County advises that the actual number of homeless individuals likely is higher due to the challenge of locating homeless individuals, who are transitory by nature and may not want to participate.

This year's count also used mobile, web-based technology that allowed volunteers to cover a wider area in the allotted time period. A greater number of volunteers (more than 700 countywide), targeted their counting at known homeless encampments. Greater participation by city leadership around the county also could have led to higher numbers than last year, county officials said.

"While it is encouraging to know that we are getting more and better information about homelessness in our communities, it is imperative that we use this knowledge to reduce the number of people on our streets," Mayor Pro Tem Mike Soubirous said. "It's a statewide problem, and a significant issue in the County, but our residents are looking to the City for results."

About 18 percent of people counted had mental health issues; 24 percent had substance abuse issues; 18 percent had a physical disability; and 18 percent experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).