

Lake Merritt Community Cabins

FACT SHEET

The Homeless Crisis

- The 2019 point-in-time count estimated that there are **4,071 homeless people in Oakland**, up 47% from two years ago. This represents about half of the total number of unsheltered residents in Alameda County.
- The City is investing in a wide variety of critical efforts to shelter and house individuals. This includes establishing Community Cabin sites.
- Community Cabin sites are an **emergency intervention** designed to serve as a **temporary bridge from the sidewalk to services, from the street to housing**.
- This intervention addresses the significant safety and sanitation impacts to both unsheltered residents *and* their sheltered neighbors that arise from encampments.

Lake Merritt Community Cabins (LMCC)

- The LMCC Street Community Cabins site were the 3rd site to open since December 2017:
 - The first site at 6th & Castro opened in December 2017
 - The second site at 27th & Northgate opened in May 2018
 - The third site at Lake Merritt opened October 2018
 - The fourth site at Miller Ave opened January 2019
 - The fifth and sixth sites were both at Mandela and opened in July 2019
 - The seventh site at Oak street opened in
- Each location was chosen in response to persistent public health and safety hazards at an existing large encampment.
- The LMCC site has **19 cabins** and **38 beds** (2 per cabin). This site serves the unsheltered communities who were living around Lake Merritt.
- The LMCC site is managed by the non-profit **Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB)**, which also operates two Safe RV parking sites for the City and the new Home Base trailer site for people at high risk from Covid-19.
- To date, 196 individuals have been served by the LMCC program.
- The outcomes for the LMCC are positive –39% of exits were to permanent housing and 54% of client exits were to either permanent or temporary housing,

(LMCC) Covid Response

A number of protocols have been put in place since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure the health and safety of site residents and staff.

- One cabin is being held open for anyone who needs to be isolated.
- Additional meals are being provided to the site to reduce the need for people to come and go.
- Staff do regular wellness checks / symptom screening of all residents.
- Staff encourage residents to stay on site as much as possible.
- PPE (masks, hand sanitizer) is available on site for all staff and residents.
- Any residents who are symptomatic, exposed, or test positive are immediately referred to one of the County's covid response hotels.

Community Cabin Sites Prove to be Effective and Compassionate

- there are **now 232 Community Cabin beds** in Oakland
- Community Cabins offer the 4 P's: accommodations for *pets, partners, possessions*, and a lockable door for *privacy*. Insulation protects from noise and the elements, and each cabin has a low-voltage power outlet for phone charging.
- The Community Cabin model has been an effective and compassionate intervention focused on **increasing people's health, stability, dignity, and safety** while service providers intensively work with people to help end their unsheltered status.
- In just two years, the Community Cabin sites have served over 700 people:
 - Overall, 56% of all exits to date are positive, meaning program participants exited to housing or a longer-term program, and 41% of total exits were to housing.

Community Cabin Sites are a Temporary Bridge to End Unsheltered Status

- The sites provide a **safer and healthier respite from the streets** where unsheltered residents receive wrap-around services to help them end their unsheltered status, including onsite housing navigators (housing-focused case managers) who connect participants to vital needs:
 - Linkages to healthcare, mental health, and addiction recovery services
 - Linkages to the mainstream homeless services system
 - Assistance securing benefits, acquiring California ID, and seeking jobs
- The goal is for people to **move in, receive services, and move on** to the next step towards housing.
- The program is **100% voluntary**, and people can come and go 24/7. The sites are designed to be extremely low barrier, with minimal rules. Participants are asked to abide by a Code of Conduct that is designed to maintain a healthy and safe community. The current encampment has to be closed due to the construction-there is not room for the two to coexist safely.

- Each site serves approximately 40 people at a time. The sites include:
 - Security and privacy (one or two people per unit with a lock on the door)
 - Basic sanitary services such as porta-potties and handwashing stations
 - On-site shower service through Lava Mae once per week
 - Garbage service
 - 24/7 site security
 - Secure storage for personal items
 - Low-voltage electricity to each cabin
 - Community tent with television, microwave, and water
 - Ability for people to bring in their pets
 - Limited food service (breakfast and dinner)

- Each site also has approximately \$125,000 in flexible housing funds to assist clients in overcoming any barriers to housing, including security deposits and a few months of rent subsidy, clothing for job interviews or a new job, and transportation assistance related to employment or reunification with friends or family. These flex funds contribute to greater housing outcomes through the Community Cabin sites than would be possible for the general population of people living in encampments.

- Each Community Cabin site costs \$850,000 / year to operate. Funds to operate each site have come from a variety of sources including Alameda County, the City of Oakland, Kaiser Permanente, and CA State HEAP funds.

- The Community Cabin sites have also been made possible through the generous support of local charitable partners and private funders who have collectively contributed nearly **\$1.3 million** in monetary and in-kind support, including **Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, Oakland Builders Alliance**, the **Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce**, **Jim Moore** of Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods, and **Pyatok Architects**, in addition to the philanthropic efforts of local Oaklanders who have raised money in their neighborhoods and communities.

Interventions at Other Homeless Encampments

- The City has also provided health and safety interventions at all other encampments around the City through Homeless Mobile Outreach programs that include health and hygiene programs, street-based case management, street medicine teams, and harm reduction services.

- The health and hygiene program includes providing portable toilets, wash stations, weekly garbage service, and concrete rails for safety when needed. It currently operates at 21 street-based sites as well as the Community Cabin and Safe RV Parking sites. In addition, the City contracts with Dignity on Wheels to provide 10 mobile shower and laundry service sessions per week primarily at locations adjacent to Community Cabin or Safe RV Parking sites.

- These interventions at encampment sites have:
 - Significantly reduced dumping and garbage build-up within and surrounding the sites
 - Significantly reduced hazardous health conditions (human waste, debris, syringes, etc.)
 - Increased engagement in services with outreach, health, and case management providers

- Increased safety from vehicle traffic

Community Cabin Sites are One of the Many Approaches to End Homelessness

The City of Oakland is investing in a wide variety of critical efforts to house individuals. In addition to the Community Cabin program and a long-standing system of backbone homeless services, as the crisis has escalated over the past three years, the City:

- Formed an interdepartmental Encampment Management Team that responds to homelessness
- Implemented a more coordinated approach to providing services to unsheltered residents that prioritizes those most in need and increased the numbers of outreach workers and housing navigators working directly with people on the streets
- Expanded winter shelter beds to a Year-Round shelter serving up to 100 individuals per night
- Expanded housing navigation and street outreach
- Opened the first Safe Parking sites for people living in cars and RVs. Three Safe RV Parking sites—one in West Oakland adjacent to the Mandela Community Cabins, one in East Oakland next to the Coliseum BART station—accommodate 62 RVs, and a third site on High Street near I-880 accommodates another 45 RVs.
- Worked to create more transitional and permanent affordable housing:
 - Acquired and refurbished a former SRO hotel - The Holland –to provide more transitional housing and services with the goal of rapidly re-housing people
 - Measure KK (City of Oakland) and Measure A1 (Alameda County) provide critical funds for the development of all types of affordable housing, including for very low income residents and permanent supportive housing.
- Secured large youth rapid re-housing grant
- Invested in anti-displacement, rent arbitration, eviction prevention, and critical prevention efforts
- Offered financial incentives for Oakland-based landlords to rent to Section 8 voucher holders
- Opened a 60 bed family shelter
- Opened a 128 bed trailer site for people at high risk of serious illness or death due to covid-19

The Regional Housing Affordability Crisis Has Deepened the Homelessness Crisis

- In the past decade, the Bay Area added one unit of housing for every eight jobs created, and very little of the housing built was subsidized enough to help people in need.

- While the homeless population is rising, the federal government decreased its financial support for emergency shelter strategies, and the State eliminated redevelopment funding in 2011, which was the primary funding source cities used to build affordable housing.

Housing is the Solution to Homelessness

- The solution to homelessness in Oakland is to provide housing that is affordable to people with no income or very low income (0-20% of the area median income), coupled with supportive services offered to those who need them.