

Homelessness is Expensive

It takes a toll on the economy, environment, health care and criminal justice systems, and the lives of fellow human beings.

We cannot afford to allow homelessness to continue.

Financial Cost

Homelessness costs Santa Clara County \$520 million a year, as high as \$83,000 per chronically homeless individual, according to the [Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley](#).

As demonstrated through Care Coordination Project, housing first program, the direct cost to taxpayers is an average of \$62,473 for high users of the system while homeless, whereas the average post-housing cost is estimated at \$19,767, resulting in annual cost reduction of \$42,706 for those who remained housed.

Health Care System

Health care costs accounted for 53% of expenditures for homeless people. However, the costs of medical care for the homeless population are heavily skewed toward a comparatively small number of frequent users of public and medical services. For example, for all Santa Clara County residents experiencing homelessness in 2012, the average annual cost per person was \$5,148. However, individuals with costs in the top 5% accounted for 47% of all costs and had average costs of over \$100,000 per year.

Serious healthcare issues both cause homelessness and result from homelessness. Healthcare issues such as addiction, psychological disorders, HIV/AIDS, and a host of ailments require long-term, consistent care. Homelessness inhibits this care, as housing instability often detracts from regular medical attention, access to treatment, and recuperation. The inability to treat serious medical conditions can aggravate a person's health issues, thus contributing to cost.

Environmental Impact

Recently, attention has been focused on the ecological impact of homelessness. Trash, human waste and other refuse from homeless encampments pollute waterways and our public city spaces. Since public restrooms and trash receptacles are limited, and because many businesses prohibit the homeless from accessing restrooms, homeless people are forced to use whatever location they can find to dispose of their trash and other waste. This phenomenon results in a public health hazard and contributes to additional city costs.

In 2014, the Santa Clara Water District released a report showing that it, with the City of San Jose, spent \$275,542 last year and removed 2,011 cubic yards of debris from homeless encampments along creeks and rivers in Santa Clara County. When the Story Road Encampment in San Jose, colloquially known as the “Jungle Encampment,”² closed on December 4, 2014, city officials removed 600 tons of trash and over 1,500 pounds of human waste. While the Jungle is an extreme example, it speaks to the severe impact trash and human waste have on our environment.

Criminal Justice System

People who are homeless spend more time in jail or prison than the general population due to violations of quality of life crimes, resulting from their homelessness. This is tremendously costly to taxpayers throughout the state and in cities with high instances of homelessness. Often, time served is a result of laws specifically targeting the homeless population, including regulations against loitering, sleeping in cars, and begging.

According to University of Texas’ two-year survey of homeless individuals, each person costs taxpayers \$14,480 per year, primarily for overnight jail. A typical cost of a prison bed in a state or federal prison is \$20,000 per year.

Social Cost

No one should live on our streets; homelessness is detrimental to our community, disempowers those experiencing it and affects the quality of our city life and accessibility to public space. Moreover, marginalization and isolation from our community leads to a sterile society that perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Anyone can become homeless at any time. The 2013, [U.S. Federal Reserve survey](#) of more than 4,000 adults found that many household’s savings accounts were depleted after the Great Recession. Among those who had savings prior to 2008, 57% said they’d used up some or all of their savings in the Great Recession and its aftermath. What’s more, only 39% of respondents reported having an emergency savings account adequate to cover three months of expenses, and only 48% of respondents said that they could completely cover a hypothetical emergency expense costing \$400 without selling their possessions or borrowing money

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