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Lemon Grove ~~Homeless~~ Action Plan



Executive Summary

Homelessness in Lemon Grove reflects a national crisis. Our community faces significant challenges in addressing housing instability, as evidenced by the 2025 Point-in-Time Count identifying 110 individuals sleeping outside, and the Lemon Grove School District's report, that noted 264 housing-insecure students.

The City of Lemon Grove is committed to addressing this humanitarian crisis through a Strategic Homeless Action Plan that aligns with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH), San Diego County initiatives and coordination with the east county cities.

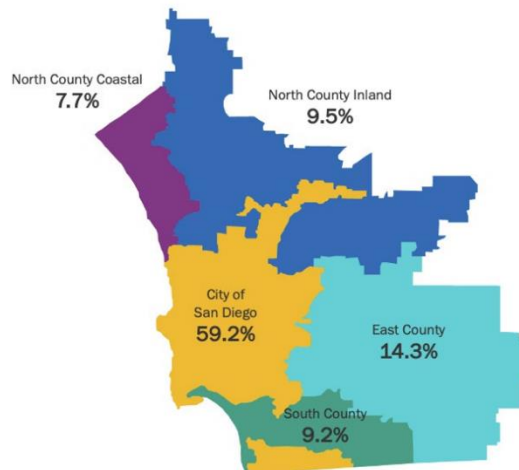
This plan outlines essential goals to address homelessness:

- Move people out of encampments and into homes with the necessary support to maintain their housing.
- Increase public awareness and knowledge about housing and homelessness, and encourage constructive civic engagement opportunities.
- Collaborate with other East County cities, the County Office of Homeless Solutions, the District 4 Supervisor's office, school districts, and other organizations.
- Obtain additional funding to expand homeless outreach and housing programs.
- Prevent additional residents from becoming unhoused through diversion programs.

By partnering with the County of San Diego, RTFH, and other East County cities, Lemon Grove aims to provide immediate relief and long-term solutions. These efforts align with the East Region Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Unhoused Residents: Point-in-Time Count (PIT)

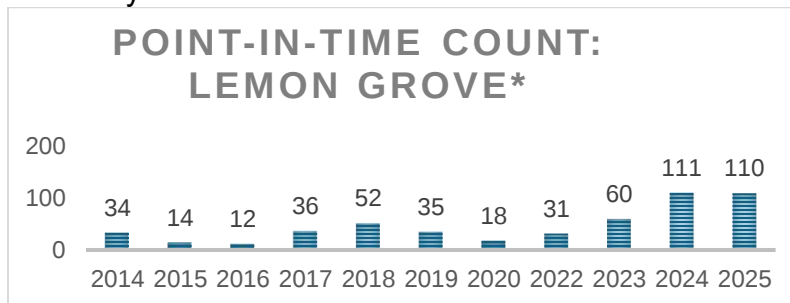
According to the Regional Task Force on Homelessness's annual 2025 Point-in-Time Count, East County has the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness outside the City of San Diego:



The annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), estimates the number of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County. This count includes both those living in homeless shelters and those staying unsheltered, such as on the streets or in other places not meant for habitation. San Diego's Regional Task Force on Homelessness organizes the PIT, which usually takes place on the last Thursday in January from 4:00 to 8:00 AM.

It's widely recognized that the PIT significantly undercounts the number of unhoused residents. Not all homeless individuals are accounted for. It excludes those who are doubled up, staying with friends or family. It also omits homeless individuals in jail or the hospital, those couch surfing, individuals paying for a cheap motel room for the night, or those that volunteer counters can't locate.

The annual one-day tally on January 30, 2025, found 110 people sleeping outside or in vehicles in Lemon Grove. This count reflects only unsheltered individuals, as Lemon Grove has no shelters within its city limits.



Unhoused Residents: Homeless Students

Individuals and families without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence are defined as experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Established in 1987, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law in the United States that guarantees educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This law helps ensure educational stability, opportunity, and dignity for students in crisis. It addresses homeless children and youth, and expands the definition of homelessness to include shared housing, trailer parks, camping grounds, abandonment in hospitals, and substandard housing.

According to data from the California State Department of Education, Lemon Grove School District has 264 children who are housing-insecure enrolled. Additionally, 52 students experiencing homelessness are attending Helix Charter High School.

Unhoused Residents: 211 San Diego¹

The County of San Diego's 211 Program provides vital services, outreach and support to individuals in need. 211 San Diego statistics show the City of Lemon Grove has 297 of 2,162 clients (13.7%) that were identified as homeless in 2024.

Housed Residents: At Risk

2-1-1 San Diego Client Profile Reports for the City of Lemon Grove

In Lemon Grove (91945), 15 clients (5% of those assessed) were in unstable housing, indicating significant housing insecurity despite incomes that may exceed the federal poverty guidelines (FPG). Additionally, 99 clients (33% of assessments) reported utility needs, with 84% having past-due bills and 16% facing shutoffs, signaling financial strain not captured by the FPG.

Housing Choice Vouchers

The County of San Diego Department of Housing and Community Development Services (HCDS) administers Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) for the City of Lemon Grove. This program, commonly referred to as Section 8, provides rental assistance to eligible very low- and low-income households. The subsidy covers the difference between the rent that exceeds 30% of a household's monthly income and the actual rent charged. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds the program.

County HCDS is assisting 350 recipients with Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) in Lemon Grove. Additionally, 805 of the 56,180 applicants on the HCV Waiting List report that they reside in Lemon Grove.

LOCAL and REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Shared local and regional challenges include:

- Housing Costs
- Cost of living and stagnant wages
- Misunderstanding of government roles
- Housing inventory
- Misinformation about homelessness
- Unhoused individuals who refuse assistance

¹ Evidence from the 2024 2-1-1 Report.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Proven methods include housing first, permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, trauma-informed care, prevention, diversion, and cross-system collaboration. The East Region is responding in multiple ways that we can build upon:

	El Cajon	La Mesa	Lemon Grove	Santee	County
Emergency shelter	X				
Transitional housing for youth		X			
Safe Parking					X
Funded outreach	X	X		X	X
Rent subsidy		X			X
Other counts				X	
By Name List (BNL)		X	X	X	

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOMELESS ACTION GOALS

Emphasizing homeless outreach, proven housing approaches (like permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing), prevention and diversion efforts, collaboration, and focused communication strategies to keep all residents informed.

These goals align with the RTFH Regional Plan to End Homelessness and the County's initiatives by leveraging the East Region Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and focusing on immediate relief efforts, prevention, and long-term housing solutions.

Goal: Move people out of encampments and into homes with the necessary support to maintain their housing.

Strategies	Activities	City Department(s)	Partners	Target # of residents	Target completion date
Increase homeless outreach and house unsheltered residents (street to home approach)	Launch a geographic By Name List (BNL)	City Manager	RTFH, Caltrans, County OHS, and City of La Mesa		Aug 2025
	Address unsheltered homelessness along SR-94 (ERF Grant)	City Manager	RTFH; PATH	Rapidly rehouse 102 individuals	Aug 2027
Establish a plan to build affordable housing for purchase and rent	Work with planning department	City Manager/Planning	TBD	TBD	TBD
Identify additional housing units	Shared Housing	City Manager	RTFH; Townspeople		TBD
Establish a Family Reunification Program	Reconnect individuals experiencing homelessness with families and loved ones	City Manager	City of El Cajon; Salvation Army	10	TBD

Goal: Increase public awareness and knowledge about housing and homelessness, and encourage constructive civic engagement opportunities.

Strategies	Activities	City Department(s)	Partners	Target completion date	Status
Notify community about ERF Round 3 program and timelines	Draft press release	City Manager; Communications	RTFH; CalTrans; County OHS	Align with state PR	Completed 3/3/2025
Launch information series on housing and service program opportunities for Lemon Grove	Focus group meetings with residents	City Manager; Community Development	RTFH; Sheriff;	Hold first meeting on or before Sept 2024	First meeting held 8/26/2024; second meeting held 10/26/2024
	Share insights, data, stories and progress about ERF grant efforts	City Manager; Communications	ECHTF; RTFH; local media	Ongoing	
Increase information outreach about City's housing & homelessness efforts	Refresh "Homeless Services" webpage	City Manager; Communications		June 30, 2025	Complete
	Quarterly "Homeless Services" webpage review and update	City Manager; Communications		Sep 30, 2025 and ongoing	
	Feature stories in "The Zest"	Communications		Quarterly	In process
	Develop a social media plan for housing & homelessness (education, grant updates, etc.)	Communications		October 30, 2025	Not started
Launch special populations, outreach, and other awareness campaigns to educate the public homelessness and reduce stigma	Presentations to City Council	City Manager; Communications		2026	

Goal: Collaborate with other East County cities, the County Office of Homeless Solutions, the District 4 Supervisor's office, school districts, and other organizations.

Strategies	Activities	City Department(s)	Partners	Target population/# of residents	Target completion date
Establish a working relationship with the East County Cities	Develop agenda and invite partners	City Manager	Cities of El Cajon, La Mesa, & Santee; County OHS; D4 staff	N/A	May 27, 2025

Goal: Obtain additional funding to expand homeless outreach and housing programs.

Strategies	Activities	City Department	Target population/# of residents	Target completion date
Identify funding options from Measure T funds	Presentation w/recommendations	City Manager	Measure T Oversight Committee	May 7, 2025
Apply for grants in collaboration w/other agencies	+Regional grant opportunities	City Manager; Community Development; RTFH; County	Veterans; people with behavioral health issues	Ongoing
	Research grant opportunities	City Manager		Ongoing

Goal: Prevent additional residents from becoming unhoused through diversion programs.

Strategies	Activities	City Department	Target population	Target completion date
Identify funding options from Measure T funds	One Time Diversion Funding	City Manager	Housed residents on the brink of homelessness.	FY 26-FY 27 Council Budget Meeting
Apply for grants in collaboration w/other agencies	Diversion Funding	City Manager; Community Development; RTFH; County	Housed residents on the brink of homelessness.	Ongoing
Allocate the \$250,000 Council Set aside for homeless services	Diversion Funding	City Manager	Housed residents on the brink of homelessness.	Ongoing

Conclusion

The City of Lemon Grove is steadfast in its commitment to addressing the complex and pressing issue of homelessness, recognizing its impact on the entire community. Through this Homeless Action Plan, the City aims to deliver immediate relief and sustainable solutions by moving individuals from encampments into stable housing with tailored support, increasing public awareness, securing additional funding, and fostering regional collaboration. By implementing proven strategies, such as Housing First, permanent supportive housing, and prevention, and by leveraging partnerships outlined in the East Region Memorandum of Understanding, the City is committed to creating a future where all residents—housed and unhoused—can thrive in a safe, affordable, and inclusive community.