



**ENDING STREET
HOMELESSNESS IN
SAN FRANCISCO
BY 2020**

March 16, 2018



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San Francisco can't afford another decade of the same failed policies on homelessness. It's time we commit to tackling homelessness once and for all. *As Mayor, I will end street homelessness by 2020.*

MARK LENO FOR MAYOR

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Ending street homelessness means a dramatic reduction in the number of chronically homeless people in San Francisco, by ensuring that everyone sleeping without shelter on the street or living in a tent will have a bed in a shelter or a navigation center.

As Mayor, I will:

- Immediately move at least 1,000 people off the streets and into permanent supportive housing
- Reform our homeless shelter system to increase capacity and improve rates of re-housing
- Move as many people as possible off the streets by quickly expanding our navigation center system
- Take advantage of our Small Site Acquisition program to move more people from the street and into housing
- Bring all families and children in off the streets
- Establish a Mental Health Justice Center to stop recycling homeless people in and out of jail
- Create Universal Mental Health Care for all
- Create 15,000 units of affordable, workforce, and permanent supportive housing to move people off our streets and under a permanent roof
- Protect at-risk tenants to keep people in their home
- Create new tools to hold city government accountable to meeting district-specific criteria and benchmarks
- Fix our broken system of supportive services
- Do a top-to-bottom audit of homeless dollars to stop and prevent waste
- Pass a comprehensive regional housing and homelessness bond measure
- Make use of the \$100 million dollars I secured as State Senator to create 400 units of permanent supportive housing
- Leverage statewide connections to fund homeless resources

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Over 7,000 homeless people live on San Francisco's streets, in our shelters and jails, and in tents and public parks. According to the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, over 20,000 people experience homelessness in San Francisco each year. But San Francisco didn't get here by chance — City Hall has failed us.

As a result, we have streets covered in tent encampments and littered with garbage, human waste, and used needles. We can't solve this problem by working backwards to clean up our streets first and then house the homeless people living on them later. As long as we allow people to sleep on our sidewalks, we will have garbage and dangerous waste dirtying our streets. Spending \$30 million a year to clean up waste and needles is not an acceptable answer to homeless encampments. As Mayor I will be laser-focused on bringing people inside, so that public dollars aren't wasted on a perpetual cleaning cycle that gets us zero results.

San Francisco needs a Mayor willing to take bold actions, try new and different solutions, and lead regional collaboration to end homelessness. We must finally recognize that we are in the grips of a nationwide opioid epidemic, and that as a state we have made our prisons and jails into little more than warehouses for our mentally ill. This requires strategic thinking far broader than what we're getting from the people who support the status quo at City Hall.

First, we must tackle the very visible signs of homelessness that are affecting those who live in tents and everyone living and working around them. We need to end the cycle of tent encampments and make our sidewalks safe, healthy environments. We must help those struggling with addiction and mental illness. And we have to get people out of our doorways, driveways, and parks and into shelter or housing. Second, we must recognize that we can never truly move the needle on homelessness without policies in place that keep people who are housed in their homes. We must protect tenants with rental and legal assistance, and stop unfair evictions that push more people onto the street. And finally, we can and must repair our broken system of supportive services and housing.

I will be releasing my plans to address housing and safe, clean streets soon, but we will never fix those problems without first committing to ending street homelessness once and for all. City Hall can no longer promote failure - it's time to shake things up and demand results.

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End Street Homelessness with Housing-First Solutions

- **Immediately move at least 1,000 people off the streets and into permanent supportive housing.**

The Department of Building Inspection reports that right now, as many as 1,500 Single Room Occupancy units (SROs) remain vacant in SRO hotels around San Francisco. There is no excuse for allowing people to sleep on our streets every night while existing housing units for homeless people sit empty. As State Senator, I fought to preserve and protect local SRO housing stock and track room availability and occupancy. As Mayor, I will immediately commission the City Controller to partner with the Department of Building Inspection to conduct a census that identifies the total number of vacant units, any issues associated with them, and why the units aren't being leased, so that we can quickly resolve any issues and move to place people in each of those units.

We know that many SRO landlords leave units empty because City Hall isn't meeting the need for supportive services that help keep formerly homeless tenants safely and reliably housed. Landlords should not have to worry whether a new tenant exiting homelessness will have the social services they need to pay rent or maintain mental and physical stability — this should be a guarantee from City Hall. Existing programs like Pathways to Housing show how wraparound services can help vulnerable tenants stay afloat, yet many landlords who provide SRO units to subsidized formerly homeless tenants don't have reliable access to any social services. As Mayor, I will work to bring landlords together with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to identify service needs, and deploy Rapid Response Teams to provide those roving services to existing tenants and incentivize new tenants.

- **Reform our homeless shelter system to increase capacity and improve rates of re-housing**

San Francisco's shelter system is at max capacity every night, in every season. Despite the often challenging environment traditional shelters provide -- no partners or pets, minimal belongings, and only a cot to sleep on at night but no place to stay during the day -- we still see over 1,000 people fill a waiting list each night. But we don't need statistics to tell us that we just aren't meeting our need. Until we have the supportive and affordable housing we need to permanently house everyone in need, we must do everything we can to move people under a roof as quickly as possible to provide relief for our streets, and for those living on them.

I will identify the revenue needed to transform our homeless shelter system to operate more like successful navigation centers, and increase capacity to provide more shelter to more people. Let's

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replicate what works. By simulating the successes of Navigation Centers and investing in rehabilitative, intensive wraparound services on-site, we can improve the odds that those coming through our shelters won't end up back on the street or in jail, but instead will stay on a path to permanent housing.

- **Move as many people as possible off the streets by quickly expanding our Navigation Center system**

We now have a system that works, but only if we prioritize using it. Navigation Centers get people out of tents and into shelter, by providing a place to sleep, shower, and stay, with intensive services that help get people on their feet again. The City has been far too slow at opening the many additional navigation centers we need to actually move people off our sidewalks -- we can't afford the status quo of City leaders who say "no" and refuse to do their part to compassionately, comprehensively clear our streets of tents.

Within my first 12 months as Mayor I will lead the charge to open as many navigation centers as possible in districts across the City to get people off the streets, out of the rain, and under a roof. Navigation centers are not a permanent solution, but as long as 3,500 people continue to sleep outside we must take action to relieve our streets and neighborhoods, provide shelter, and kickstart an exit out of homelessness and into housing. As Mayor, I will work with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to see that we return the length of stay from 30 days to 60-90 days, so that we can stop wasting resources by cycling people back to the streets before we're able to secure an exit to housing. Our number one priority must be getting people out of dangerous situations that impact everyone on our streets.

- **Take advantage of our Small Site Acquisition program to move more people from the street and into housing**

Rather than wait for new housing to be built, we can make use of existing units to house homeless people now, using San Francisco's Small Site Acquisition program. By acquiring SRO units from private owners, we can quickly place formerly homeless tenants under a roof, and dramatically reduce the number of people on our streets and in our navigation centers and shelters. As Mayor I will use the Small Site Acquisition program to find and purchase SRO units, establish services through our Pathways to Housing program, and move people from navigation centers and into a supportive housing unit. A housing ladder, beginning with shelter that leads to supportive housing, offers a pathway out of homelessness and eventually to a permanent home. We must also provide job training, employment assistance, and educational support as part of the solution to move individuals toward the goal of self-sufficiency. The ladder then makes room for more formerly homeless individuals to be placed in shelter and supportive services.

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- **Bring all families and children in off the streets**

The fact that our City sidewalks are home to families and children is unacceptable. In 2016 nearly 2,100 students in San Francisco were identified as homeless. These are children who are being educated in our schools during the day, yet have no permanent place to call home at night to eat dinner, do homework, or rest. This must change. Not only must we do what we can to assist parents, but we must also focus on the impacts of homelessness on children and offer support services that meet students where they are and lift them up to where they can and should be. As Mayor I will focus relentlessly on accomplishing this, and will work with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to prioritize bringing families and children into our shelters, navigation centers, and stable housing immediately.

Target the Root Causes and Direct Symptoms of Homelessness

- **Establish a Mental Health Justice Center**

Our treatment of mentally ill homeless people is a national disgrace. Nearly 50% of people in San Francisco County Jail are receiving mental health services, and over 20% are receiving psychotropic drugs. Our county jail is the single largest provider of mental health services in San Francisco. This is wrong and needs to change. We must stop recycling mentally ill people between our jails and our streets. It's inhumane, it's expensive, and it ends when I become Mayor.

I will open a Mental Health Justice Center to get people who are having mental health crises off our streets and into shelter and services. Those with mental illness and substance abuse problems need treatment, not punishment. The number of psych beds in our city's hospitals have been steadily cut year after year. We need to prioritize expanding our

A Mental Health Justice Center will serve as a safe, humane place to bring people who are experiencing mental health crises on our sidewalks, that won't result in their return back to the streets. The Center will serve as a centralized, coordinated system of care that will engage with San Francisco's many existing care providers and advocates to place people on an appropriate path to stable housing and secure services. We must move away from the status quo of incarcerating our city's mentally ill population. The Mental Health Justice Center will catch people who have fallen through the cracks and find long-term comprehensive care solutions that will benefit all San Franciscans.

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- **Create Universal Mental Health Care For All**

We cannot end street homelessness without also addressing the mental health crises happening on our streets. As Mayor, I will launch the effort to create universal access to mental health care so we can finally provide services to keep those who are struggling with illness or addiction off our streets. The first step is to ensure that our city is compliant with The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. If San Francisco's supply of psychiatric beds isn't meeting the demand, we can and must do more to expand the system. Mental health policy experts recommend supplying 50 in-patient psychiatric beds for every 100,000 residents in the total population. In San Francisco, that would add up to over 430 beds. And yet, a 2016 policy analyst report showed that San Francisco only offers 163 beds. Even with the recent addition of 54 beds at St. Mary's Hospital, we have less than half the supply of beds needed to serve our most vulnerable mentally ill residents. That just won't cut it.

As Mayor, I will be committed to the creation of a universal mental health care program in our city so that all San Franciscans – regardless of their income, housing, or immigration status – can access quality mental health services. Healthy San Francisco, signed into law in 2007, provides access to health care for residents, but its use is impeded by bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of resources needed to provide comprehensive mental health services. When I am in City Hall, I will add 200 in-patient mental health beds, more than doubling our current supply, so that we can provide immediate shelter and services to those who need it most. In addition, I will establish a robust psychiatric street outreach team that can provide on-demand mental health services for people struggling on our streets.

- **Create 15,000 units of affordable, workforce, and permanent supportive housing to move people off our streets and under a permanent roof**

Homelessness is a housing problem. Nearly 50% of San Francisco's homeless population says they lost their housing because they could not afford rent. As a Supervisor, I authored San Francisco's first inclusionary housing law which requires that private, for-profit developers include a minimum amount of housing that is affordable to working and low-income residents in the production of 10 or more market-rate units. We can't expect to solve our homelessness crisis if we don't solve our housing crisis. As Mayor, I will be laser-focused on creating 15,000 units of affordable, workforce, and permanent supportive housing over the next ten years.

- **Protect at-risk tenants to keep people in their home**

70% of San Franciscans living on the street were living under a roof in San Francisco before they became homeless. We must be doing much more to prevent unfair evictions and keep people in

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their homes. As State Senator I took on the Ellis Act, successfully exempting SROs and protecting the wholesale eviction of 12,000 of our most vulnerably housed residents, becoming the only legislator in California to ever amend the Ellis Act. As Mayor, I will fight to prevent displacement and homelessness with every tool at my disposal. In order to do that, I'm prepared to take speculators to court for abusing the Ellis Act to evict tenants. It's time we finally stop speculators from destroying our communities and worsening our housing crisis.

We must also provide rental assistance and subsidies to help people hang on to their housing. San Francisco saves more money by keeping people housed rather than letting people fall through the cracks and wind up on the street. As Mayor I will prioritize funding strong rental assistance programs, as well as supporting the full implementation of the Right to Counsel for those facing evictions, should it pass on the June ballot.

Strengthen Tools that Ensure Success

- **Create new tools to hold city government accountable to meeting district-specific criteria and benchmarks**

City Hall needs to be held accountable to making real, measurable progress on homelessness. I will enforce data-driven solutions that are trackable and help to hold my office accountable to its promise to end street homelessness by 2020. To do that, I will work with the Office of the Controller and other City departments to create a homelessness dashboard on the SF.gov website, so that all residents are able to track results in real time across the City. I will also work with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to ensure our Online Navigation and Entry System is as robust and well-resourced as possible. If our goal is to move people off the street and under a permanent roof, we need to know where they are on their path to housing and what they need to get there.

- **Fix our broken system of supportive services**

Majority of those living on our streets have little to no financial assistance to meet their basic needs or obtain life-saving services. Only one-third of homeless San Franciscans are receiving food stamps, and only one-fourth of people receive General Assistance. We can't expect that homeless individuals will stabilize their lives and find secure housing without providing them the resources to do so.

As Mayor, I will work with state and federal agencies in order to provide homeless individuals with General Assistance and create a system that works. We must ensure all homeless individuals who

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enter or exist within San Francisco's ONE System are automatically scheduled for recurring check-ins to see that they're receiving their due social service benefits. At-risk individuals should be quickly connected to assistance programs that get them on a path to housing, and receive services tailored to their unique needs that will help them to stay on their feet and under a roof.

But getting to service providers and making regular appointments shouldn't be left to chance. Let's increase the impact our resources can have on lifting up those experiencing homelessness, by making sure people actually get where they need to go. As Mayor I will work with our city's service providers and the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to make sure we have a system that sets people up for success by assisting individuals to and from appointments whenever needed. We will waste more precious dollars if we continue to promote a system that fails.

Secure Funding for Long-term Solutions

- **Do a top-to-bottom audit of homeless dollars to stop and prevent waste**

San Francisco spends approximately \$300 million per year on addressing homelessness -- we're spending way too much money with little results to show for it. Clearly, the status quo isn't working. As Mayor, I will conduct a top-to-bottom re-evaluation of where our money is going, where it's being wasted, where it's working, and where we need to prioritize funding that actually works to solve problems. I will push for more proactive solutions, stop waste on ineffective programs and tools, and redirect funding to ensure we're getting the most results possible to maximize public dollars.

- **Pass a comprehensive regional housing and homelessness bond measure**

In 2016, Los Angeles voters approved a \$1.2-billion bond measure to build housing for the chronically homeless. Bay Area cities should follow this model. As Mayor, I will work with our regional partners to create a Bay Area housing bond measure that will immediately get supportive housing projects in the pipeline.

Regional funding would allow San Francisco to work across city borders to invest in long-term, regional housing solutions that actually reduce homelessness across the Bay Area. Additionally, creating revenue for long-term solutions will save local governments money that would otherwise be spent on perpetual temporary solutions — such as emergency medical and police services. We must focus on increasing the supply of housing regionally, and not only in our city which has borne the brunt of the Bay Area's housing crisis.

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- **Make use of the \$100 million dollars I secured as State Senator to create 400 units of permanent supportive housing**

As a result of my work on Proposition 63, I was able to secure \$100 million for San Francisco to fund desperately-needed housing for mentally ill homeless individuals. This is funding that I've already fought for and won, and as Mayor I'll make sure we're putting it to good use. I will work quickly to put these funds into action and immediately build 400 units of permanent supportive housing for the most vulnerable on our streets.

- **Leverage statewide connections to fund homeless resources**

My greatest legislative accomplishments as a Supervisor, Assemblymember, and State Senator, came when we reached across the aisle to build consensus and bring people together to get the job done. As Mayor, I will leverage my experience and connections in Sacramento as a 14-year legislator, working hand-in-hand with state and federal officials as well as private stakeholders to bring hundreds of millions of dollars to San Francisco to fund solutions that will end street homelessness.