

March 19, 2025

ITEM TITLE: 2025 UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM. (0240-10)

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:

Community Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

City staff currently conducts outreach efforts throughout the community to best understand and address the unsheltered community in Imperial Beach. This report is intended to provide an update on the overall outreach efforts, as well as provide some statistics and highlight successes over the past year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive and file the report.

OPTIONS:

The City Council can also:

- Request additional information and an additional report; or
- Provide direction to the City Manager.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

History and Overview of the Community Outreach Program

Imperial Beach is a small city close in proximity to its larger neighboring cities of San Diego, National City, and Chula, with various methods of travel throughout these cities including walkable paths, sidewalks, roadways, bus lines, and the trolley. Considering its location regional context, Imperial Beach has a low number of unsheltered individuals per capita for the South Bay area.

Imperial Beach has a population of just over 26,000 people by comparison to approximately 273,000 in Chula Vista and slightly more than 54,000 for National City. During the 2023 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Point-In-Time Count (PIT), Imperial Beach counted 19 people. The 2024 PIT resulted in a 5.3% increase, to 20 individuals. The 2025 PIT was held in the early hours of January 30, 2025, and while the finalized numbers for the PIT will not be available until May 2025, there is no anticipation of growth in the overall number, and possibly even a reduction.

During the 2024 PIT, Chula Vista had 503 individuals (later that year they self-reported 780 individuals in their privately held “CV Count”) and National City had 174 individuals.

- National City has just over twice the population of Imperial Beach but greater than eight times the homeless population.

- Chula Vista has 10 times the population of Imperial Beach but 25 times the homeless population

Imperial Beach is a built-out community with a lack of space to accommodate services that are often utilized by the unsheltered population, such as shelter space, rehabilitation clinics, hospitals, Department of Motor Vehicles, Family Resource Centers, or other similar resources. Therefore, the Imperial Beach community outreach program relies on establishing, nurturing, and maintaining relationships with service providers outside of the City to help clientele on their journey back to being housed.

The primary method of outreach for the unsheltered is making personal contact in the field, known as “Street Outreach.” It is the first step in connecting with the unsheltered community to help them move forward toward finding permanent housing. The Imperial Beach team goes to the individuals, using a by-name list, meets the individuals where they are, builds trust, works together, develops an individualized plan for each person, and then helps them connect with and utilize the resources they need to find permanent housing.

In August 2021, a Housing Specialist in the Community Development Department coordinated efforts with multiple city departments to conduct individual-focused contact throughout the community. In November of 2023, the Department was able to secure grant funding from the Regional Task Force on Homelessness to hire a Community Outreach Worker intended to build a systematic approach to addressing homeless issues within the City by creating and working from a by-name list of clients, utilizing motivational interviewing, following a trauma informed care approach, and collaborating with a multidisciplinary care team from various agencies to support and connect clients with the appropriate services. In 2024, the Department obtained grant funding to purchase a vehicle dedicated to the program.

The outreach team has been able to establish a mailing address that individuals can use to receive their mail and paperwork in efforts to get them document ready for housing opportunities. When feasible, the Imperial Beach program facilitates transportation, bus passes, identification vouchers, entry into the Coordinated Entry System (a network to assist individuals and families resolve their housing crises), and provision of sundry needs that are purchased with grant funds. Most importantly, the program helps individuals to focus on their strengths and develop individualized plans to help them move towards permanent housing. When the client is ready, the outreach program uses its strong connections to partner agencies to connect individuals with the appropriate services at the right time to make that journey realistic and possible.

In addition to focused contact efforts, the City provides regular outreach on Thursday mornings, which is when all regional partners and their services are made available to clients. The skillset and breadth of services available to the weekly street outreach team has grown, and the capability and services provided now include members from the various agencies on any given week:

- Human Service Specialists from the County of San Diego
- Social Workers from the County of San Diego
- Nurses from the County of San Diego
- Case workers from PATH (People Assisting the Homeless)
- Community Liaisons from Acadia Healthcare CTC (Comprehensive Treatment Centers)
- Outreach specialists from Veteran’s Village of San Diego
- Senior specialists at Molina Healthcare
- Outreach teams from MTS (Metropolitan Transit System)
- Outreach specialists from McAlister Institute
- HUD-VASH clinicians from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- NAMI San Diego staff members

- US Fish and Wildlife Rangers
- Port of San Diego personnel
- Salvation Army intake counselors
- San Diego Rescue Mission outreach director
- Imperial Beach Community Park Rangers
- San Diego Sheriff Deputies

Additionally, the team is in constant contact with other city outreach providers in National City, Chula Vista, and La Mesa, and more, working together and brainstorming over individual cases.

Most recently, the Imperial Beach program has established a strong relationship with the San Diego Rescue Mission's South County Lighthouse. This is a 162-bed facility in National City which serves men, women and families. It is a referral-only, low barrier shelter providing safe sleeping, hot meals, clothing, access to showers, laundry, necessities and wrap-around services.

2024 to Current Accomplishments

Prior to the Community Outreach Worker joining the City, the outreach team placed six individuals in permanent housing over the course of 18 months. In 2024 to current, the efforts of the full-time Community Outreach Worker has helped more than 14 individuals be placed into permanent housing, long-term programs, veterans' programs, rehabilitation programs - resulting in successful ongoing sober living arrangements, and more. Fourteen individuals represent more than half of Imperial Beach's last official point in time count. The regular field contacts by the Housing Division, inclusive of the Housing Manager and Community Outreach Worker, and assistance from other supporting City staff, Sheriff Department, and regional partners, have helped reduce the numbers of unsheltered individuals in Imperial Beach by helping them progress toward housing solutions.

Results from the addition of the Community Outreach Worker to the City program:

- Three (3) individuals to permanent housing
- One (1) individual reunited with family and housed
- One (1) individual in Alpha Project long term program
- Two (2) individuals at the San Diego Rescue Mission Academy
- Two (2) individuals in the Salvation Army Program
- Two (2) individuals completing long-term rehabilitation programs and moved into sober living
- Two (2) individuals at the lighthouse shelter anticipating entry into housing
- One (1) individual at Veterans Village of San Diego

Future Projects

Imperial Beach is in discussions with a neighboring city to make available additional shelter beds and anticipates this partnership to come to fruition this calendar year.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Not a project as defined by CEQA.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact for the report.