

# **Estimate of expenses related to Homelessness in Sebastopol**

## **Background**

At a recent city council meeting the mayor lamented that the city of Sebastopol was doing so little for the homeless. Mayor Zollman stated that he was embarrassed when meeting with other mayors and county officials.

What about our Homekey projects? No other city with 7,000 residents has one Homekey project let alone 2. Look at Park Village. Although it has largely been kept a secret, the city has been offering permanent supportive housing and wraparound services for nearly 20 years now.

The eleven-page analysis below shows that the city of Sebastopol and its taxpayers are indeed doing much to respond to the homeless and paying a high price. Since 2022, homeless populations have been decreasing in the county and in every city except Sebastopol. Sebastopol's homeless population has more than doubled.

Sebastopol houses the largest population of homeless people per capita in the County. Public Works cleans up human waste, needles and trash in areas where the homeless sleep. The police do regular wellness checks and address serious criminal activity when it occurs. The fire department responds quickly to campfires in the Laguna that get out of control. Our churches offer meals and showers. And except when citizens are attacked or homeless try to break into their homes or steal personal property, many residents here seem to accept the presence of homelessness throughout the town.

**The missing element of this largess is the cost to the city. The analysis below tries to get a realistic estimate of what it is costing the city and its taxpayers to host over 100 unhoused homeless in 2 square miles.**

## OVERVIEW

It is well established that the homeless population is costly to cities and counties with significant homeless populations. Many studies focus on the financial cost to society, but focus primarily on expenses related to emergency shelters, hospitalizations, and incarceration. These costs can quickly add up, making homelessness more expensive than many realize.

The financial impact on a small town can be unexpectedly high even though the town does not have services, shelters, pay for hospitalizations or the cost of incarceration. **The small city of Sebastopol incurs substantial expenses reacting to the increasing burden of homelessness.**

In January 2024, the Sonoma County Point in Time identified 118 homeless people in the city (Table 1). 108 were unhoused and living presumably on doorsteps, parks and in the laguna. They are visible in all those locations. 10 were identified as housed. The county permanent supportive housing facility (Elderberry Commons) was closed at the time, so it seems likely that the 10 housed were counted in Park Village which includes some apartments and RV pads dedicated to recently homeless. The reduction of 30 housed individuals corresponds with the reported population of Elderberry.

There was a dramatic increase in homeless unhoused in 2024 (108) compared to 2023 (47). The point in time count does not provide any explanation for the change.

**One possibility is that when the county emptied the unhoused vulnerable elderly population from Elderberry Commons placed there in 2020, many become unhoused in Sebastopol.** The County offered the explanation that all were offered alternatives. No reports were provided on how many accepted alternatives.

Table 1: Homeless Count from 2024 Sonoma County Point in Time Count

**Figure 3: Total Homeless Census Population by Shelter Status and Jurisdiction**

| JURISDICTION                | UNSHELTERED  |              |              | SHELTERED  |            |            | TOTAL        |              |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                             | 2022         | 2023         | 2024         | 2022       | 2023       | 2024       | 2022         | 2023         | 2024         |
| <b>North County</b>         | <b>155</b>   | <b>103</b>   | <b>141</b>   | <b>40</b>  | <b>15</b>  | <b>16</b>  | <b>195</b>   | <b>118</b>   | <b>152</b>   |
| Cloverdale                  | 23           | 9            | 6            | 0          | 0          | 3          | 23           | 9            | 9            |
| Healdsburg                  | 97           | 18           | 37           | 0          | 15         | 13         | 97           | 33           | 50           |
| Town of Windsor             | 8            | 26           | 26           | 40         | 0          | 0          | 48           | 26           | 26           |
| Unincorporated              | 27           | 50           | 67           | 0          | 0          | 0          | 27           | 50           | 67           |
| <b>South County</b>         | <b>679</b>   | <b>337</b>   | <b>434</b>   | <b>89</b>  | <b>163</b> | <b>181</b> | <b>768</b>   | <b>500</b>   | <b>615</b>   |
| Cotati                      | 79           | 9            | 21           | 6          | 6          | 10         | 85           | 15           | 31           |
| Petaluma                    | 214          | 157          | 143          | 79         | 88         | 97         | 293          | 245          | 240          |
| Rohnert Park                | 241          | 141          | 205          | 4          | 69         | 74         | 369          | 210          | 279          |
| Unincorporated              | 21           | 30           | 65           | 0          | 0          | 0          | 21           | 30           | 65           |
| <b>West County</b>          | <b>62</b>    | <b>143</b>   | <b>128</b>   | <b>65</b>  | <b>70</b>  | <b>49</b>  | <b>127</b>   | <b>213</b>   | <b>177</b>   |
| Sebastopol                  | 40           | 47           | 108          | 38         | 40         | 10         | 78           | 87           | 118          |
| Unincorporated              | 22           | 96           | 20           | 27         | 30         | 39         | 49           | 126          | 59           |
| <b>Sonoma Valley</b>        | <b>93</b>    | <b>109</b>   | <b>74</b>    | <b>29</b>  | <b>20</b>  | <b>12</b>  | <b>122</b>   | <b>129</b>   | <b>86</b>    |
| Sonoma                      | 66           | 40           | 13           | 15         | 0          | 0          | 81           | 40           | 13           |
| Unincorporated              | 27           | 69           | 61           | 14         | 20         | 12         | 41           | 89           | 73           |
| <b>Santa Rosa</b>           | <b>1,099</b> | <b>599</b>   | <b>805</b>   | <b>582</b> | <b>695</b> | <b>664</b> | <b>1,681</b> | <b>1,294</b> | <b>1,469</b> |
| Santa Rosa                  | 1,089        | 465          | 701          | 569        | 695        | 664        | 1,658        | 1,160        | 1,365        |
| Unincorporated              | 10           | 134          | 104          | 13         | 0          | 0          | 23           | 134          | 104          |
| <b>Undisclosed Location</b> | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>   | <b>12</b>  | <b>23</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>12</b>    | <b>23</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>2,088</b> | <b>1,291</b> | <b>1,577</b> | <b>805</b> | <b>975</b> | <b>945</b> | <b>2,893</b> | <b>2,266</b> | <b>2,522</b> |

*Note: Confidential beds have been included in their respective jurisdiction(s) since 2018.*

Another explanation for the dramatic increase is a migration from the West County into Sebastopol. West County had 96 unhoused in 2023 which decreased to 20 in 2024. It would be helpful to understand the mobility of the unhoused population to develop a plan to address the problem.

It is commonly understood that homeless individuals living on city streets are expensive. The preferred solution by experts is Housing First. Unfortunately, although Sebastopol has more Permanent Supportive Housing Beds per capita than other cities in Sonoma County, the city has no control over who is selected by the Continuum of Care for housing.

Based on the increase in unsheltered **homelessness in Sebastopol and decreases through much of the county it appears Sebastopol is not the priority** as its homeless burden explodes and other cities and the county see significant decreases, presumably associated with placements into housing options.

## SEBASTOPOL CITY HOMELESS COSTS

The elected leadership in Sebastopol has gone to great lengths to avoid examining the actual cost of the unhoused to the city of Sebastopol. Going back to the Morris Street Encampment, then Mayor Rich made it clear repeatedly that the city was not spending any money on homeless services. In spite of public requests to account for the costs, which were rather obvious, the city never accounted for the cost of dealing with the homeless.

Several departments are active in managing the homeless situation. Police have reported up to 50% of their time dealing with homelessness and that was before the added burden of additional calls to deal with issues at Elderberry Commons.

Public Works at one time reported workers making the rounds every morning. Trash, human waste and needles were cleared from public buildings. The Director reported that 60% of their time was spent managing issues created by the homeless.

The city has received a Homekey award. It is the only recipient in the State of California that does not have dedicated housing authority. Although the non-profit St Vincent de Paul is doing the heavy lifting, the city is the recipient of the grant and is ultimately responsible for the success of the project. Failure to meet complicated state requirements could make the city liable for millions of dollars in costs. Staff hopefully are spending appropriate time working with SVdP.

The opening of the SVdP permanent housing solution is expected to create new demands on city services and particularly the police and emergency medical services, similar to what has been seen at Park Village and Elderberry Commons. Although representatives from the county, West County Community Services and Burbank promise the surge in police activity is typical initially and will eventually decrease. The Sebastopol Times contacted Santa Rosa PD about police activity over time at the SVdP facility there. They indicated that there are typically 40 calls per month and that it has been steady since opening 2 years ago.

## **WHAT IS THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS TO SEBASTOPOL?**

### **Direct Costs**

Below (Table 2) is an attempt to capture the cost of dealing with the homeless issues in Sebastopol. Expenses are taken from the 25-26 adopted budget. Estimates of what percentage of city costs might be related to the homeless are based on comments by city officials during public meetings.

The assumptions are fairly conservative. It is likely that the Assistant City Manager/City Clerk spends time on homeless issues and that is not counted here. Police were spending 50% of their time on homelessness prior to the problems at Elderberry. Only police salaries and benefits are included, not the cost of vehicles and equipment utilized on calls. There is no cost for the time the City Council spends on the issue.

The city spends approximately \$2.6MM reacting to homeless issues in the city. This is a total of \$21,958 for each homeless person in the city (based on 2024 Point in Time Count). Even if the estimates are cut in half the city is still spending over \$10,000 per homeless person.

**Table 2: Estimated cost of Homelessness in Sebastopol**

|          | Direct Homeless Expense                | FY 25-26 City Budget | % allocation to homelessness | Homeless Direct Costs |
|----------|--|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>A</b> | Police Salary & Benefits               | \$ 4,646,067.00      | 50%                          | \$ 2,323,034          |
|          | Public Works                           | \$ 2,496,103         | 5%                           | \$ 124,805            |
|          | Outreach Coordinator                   | \$ 50,000            |                              | \$ 50,000             |
|          | Community Development                  | \$ 701,666           | 5%                           | \$ 35,083             |
|          | City Manager                           | \$ 581,282           | 10%                          | \$ 58,128             |
|          | <b>Direct Homeless Expense</b>         | <b>\$ 8,475,118</b>  | <b>31%</b>                   | <b>\$ 2,591,050</b>   |
|          | <i>Cost per Homeless (118 on 1/24)</i> |                      |                              | <b>\$ 21,958</b>      |

**Assumptions (Table 2)**

**Direct Costs** – Daily cost of dealing with homeless issues and ongoing projects to manage those issues.

**Police Salary and Benefits** – police reported 50% of time spent on homeless. That was before Elderberry so this may be conservative now.

**Public Works** – reported that someone goes through each of the city buildings in the morning to check security and clean up after the homeless. Assume 5% of budget which is maybe 1 FTE salary and benefits. Two years ago, the PW Director reported 60% of the time spent cleaning up after homeless so the number could be much higher. In addition to daily patrols, Police and Public Works periodically clear the laguna and do a massive cleanup.

**Outreach Coordinator** – Sebastopol paid half of shared expense with County in 2023-24. The county has cut their contribution for FY25-26.

**Community Development**- Most likely spending the most time supporting SVdP and the Gravenstein Commons project – assume 5% of staff time.

**City Manager** – provides oversight to all the departments that are working on homeless and is point for SVdP.

**Assume 108 unsheltered homeless (2024 Point in Time Count).**

## Indirect Costs

Indirect Costs account for costs related to homelessness but not directly related to day-to-day homeless activities.

**Table 3: Indirect Costs of homelessness to the city**

|          |  | FY 25-26 City Budget | % allocation to homelessness | Homeless Direct Costs |
|----------|--|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>B</b> | <b>Indirect Homeless Expense</b>       |                      |                              |                       |
|          | Legal - Litigation                     | \$ 400,000           |                              | \$ 400,000            |
|          | Legal city attorney                    | \$ 150,000           | 10%                          | \$ 15,000             |
|          | Park Villiage                          |                      |                              |                       |
|          | mgmt contract                          | \$ 54,600            |                              |                       |
|          | maintanance and repair                 | \$ 4,725             |                              |                       |
|          | Loan repayment                         | \$ 64,585            |                              |                       |
|          | <b>Total Park Village</b>              | <b>\$ 123,910</b>    |                              | <b>\$ 123,910</b>     |
| <b>C</b> | Low income property tax forgiven       | \$ 3,639,105         | 6%                           | \$ 220,524            |
|          | <b>Indirect Homeless Expense</b>       | <b>\$ 3,763,015</b>  |                              | <b>\$ 759,434</b>     |
|          | <b>Cost per Homeless (118 on 1/24)</b> |                      |                              | <b>\$ 6,436</b>       |

### Assumptions (Table 3):

**Legal Expenses** -Sebastopol has had significant litigation costs for the past three years. These legal costs are primarily to defend the ACLU lawsuit challenging the parking ordinance which tried to address the growing problem of derelict RV encampments on city streets. Expenses have ranged between \$400,000 and \$600,000 annually since 2022.

**City Attorney** – assume 20% of his time managing ACLU lawsuit and the issues with Elderberry and SVdP projects.

**Park Village** – The cost of providing permanent supportive housing at Park Village is included as an indirect expense. Park Village was purchased in 2016. There were many issues with poor management, so the city council decided to purchase it and create a new city park. City management at the time, faced with protest from residents in the Village, shifted gears and the city took on the management of the property. At some time after that the city contracted with West County Community Services to provide management and wrap around services for the population. Recent grants remodeled some apartments and created pads for RV parking. The mayor recently identified it as the city's first Permanent Supportive Housing Project, even before Elderberry. Prior to his statement, the city has universally avoided any discussion of the operation.

## Low Income Housing Property Tax Exclusions

The city has also invested in low-income housing. The investment resulted in lost property tax revenue. Typically housing projects that target lower income households get tax rebates and exemptions from paying property taxes.

Below is an inventory of properties that do not pay property taxes and an estimate of what they would pay if they were not exempt properties. Although they do not contribute taxes they do demand city services. The estimate is that the city receives \$220,000 per year less revenue than if these were commercial residential properties.

**Table 4: Estimated Property tax revenue to Sebastopol Forgone**

| Name  | Address               | Yr Built | Units | Land Value   | Improvements  | Total taxable value | Estimated Property Tax | Sebastopol Share | Total Forgone Revenue |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Burbank Orchards & Heights                      | 7777 Bodega Ave       |          |       | \$ 4,329,728 | \$ 14,580,136 | \$ 18,909,864       | \$ 189,099             | 0.199176         | \$ 37,663.91          |
| Burbank Orchards                                |                       | 1991     | 60    |              |               |                     |                        |                  |                       |
| Burbank Heights                                 |                       | 1989     | 12    |              |               |                     |                        |                  |                       |
| Woodmark Apartments                             |                       | 2025     | 47    |              |               | \$ 25,000,000       | \$ 250,000             | 0.199176         | \$ 49,794             |
| Gravenstein North (Burbank)                     | 699 Gravenstein Hwy N | 2025     | 29    | \$ 1,005,698 | \$ 2,346,635  | \$ 3,352,333        | \$ 33,523              | 0.199176         | \$ 6,677              |
| Elderberry Commons                              | 6751 Sebastopol Ave   | 2025     | 31    |              | \$ 8,000,000  | \$ 8,000,000        | \$ 80,000              | 0.199176         | \$ 15,934             |
| Gravenstein Commons                             |                       |          | 29    | \$ 955,087   | \$ 6,000,000  | \$ 6,955,087        | \$ 69,551              | 0.199176         | \$ 13,853             |
| Two Acre Wood*                                  | 680 Robinson Rd       | 1999     | 14    |              |               |                     |                        |                  | \$ 88,200             |
| <b>TOTAL POTENTIAL REVENUE</b>                  |                       |          |       |              |               |                     |                        |                  | <b>\$ 212,122</b>     |
| <b>CITY REVENUE BUDGET 25-26</b>                |                       |          |       |              |               |                     |                        |                  | <b>\$ 15,314,718</b>  |
| <b>% of City Revenue for Low Income Housing</b> |                       |          |       |              |               |                     |                        |                  | <b>1.4%</b>           |

## Assumptions

**Burbank Orchards and Burbank Heights** land value taken from tax rolls. The structural cost is based on a similar apartment complex, the Marlow apartments, in Santa Rosa Built around the same time.

**Woodmark** – valuation based on Sebastopol Times estimate of \$25,000,000 to build.

**Elderberry** – assumes \$6MM purchase and \$2MM in upgrades.

**Gravenstein Commons** - uses land value on tax rolls and \$6,000,000 to build.

**Two Acre Wood** – is some sort of commune. There are 14 units all owned by residents. There is no property tax charged and there is no reason found. The property tax amount is based on an average property tax paid at nearby townhomes.

## TOTAL COST OF HOMELESSNESS TO SEBASTOPOL TAXPAYERS

Table 6 shows the total cost of homelessness in Sebastopol. Taxpayers are paying \$28,395 for each of 118 homeless people said to be in Sebastopol in January 2024.

**Table 6: Total Homeless spending in perspective**

| Spend on Homeless vs Residents | Cost         | Homeless Count | \$ Cost per Homeless |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Direct Cost Homeless Services  | \$ 2,591,050 | 118            | \$ 21,958            |
| Indirect Cost Homelessness     | \$ 759,434   | 118            | \$ 6,436             |
| Total Cost                     | \$ 3,350,484 | 118            | \$ 28,394            |
| Spend on Homeless vs Residents | 21           |                |                      |

Table 7 shows total city spending per resident. The number is from the FY 25-26 budget, less expenses allocated to the Enterprise funds and dollars identified above to fund the homeless response.

**Table 7: City spending on total residents**

|   | FY 25-26 City Budget |                |                      |
|---|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sebastopol Expenditures per Resident      |                      |                |                      |
| Population Sebastopol 2023                | 7,388                |                |                      |
| City Expense (Less Enterprise allocation) | \$ 13,370,146        |                |                      |
| Cost of Homelessness                      | \$ 3,350,484         |                |                      |
| Net Expense after Homelessness            | \$ 10,019,662        |                |                      |
| Services per citizen                      | \$ 1,356.21          |                |                      |
|   |                      |                |                      |
|   |                      |                |                      |
| Spend on Homeless vs Residents            | Cost                 | Homeless Count | \$ Cost per Homeless |
| Direct Cost Homeless Services             | \$ 2,591,050         | 118            | \$ 21,958            |
| Indirect Cost Homelessness                | \$ 759,434           | 118            | \$ 6,436             |
| Total Cost                                | \$ 3,350,484         | 118            | \$ 28,394            |
| Spend on Homeless vs Residents            | 21                   |                |                      |

**The city spends \$1,356 per resident to provide city services. Spending per homeless person is \$28,395. The city is spending 21 times more on each homeless person than on each city resident.**

Even if you cut the cost estimates by ½ we are still spending at least 11 times more on homeless issues than services for tax paying residents.



Sebastopol is facing a 170% increase in unhoused homeless since 2022. Although the city reports expenses by department and not function or purpose, this analysis suggests that the city is spending 25% of their annual budget to effectively react to the homeless in Sebastopol.

Most experts recognize the high cost of dealing with homeless people on the streets. The preferred solution is Housing First. It is accepted that housing first reduces the cost of managing homeless on the streets of a city. The problem is the County, not Sebastopol decides who gets housing. Even though we have as much or more permanent supportive housing per capita than any other city in the county, there has not been one documented case of a homeless person getting off the streets of Sebastopol into Elderberry. And according to county rules no one will likely get into Gravenstein Commons when it is completed. So far, the data suggests that Sebastopol's homeless are not getting from the list into acceptable housing.

According to the West County Community Services data more than 1,000 applications for 300 individuals have been submitted to the Coordinated Entry Process. WCCS did not report how many actually got into a housing solution.

### **The City of Sebastopol Needs to Abandon Practices that Don't Work**

Creating more permanent supportive housing in this small city is creating more problems and more costs. It has not yet removed a single homeless person from the streets of Sebastopol. It has been shown instead that new homeless individuals from other cities come into one of the town's Permanent Supportive Housing Solutions and with them their families and friends, drug dealers and prostitutes. Sebastopol pays the cost to manage the associated problems related to disturbances and crimes.

The Outreach Coordinator has been our only city strategy intended to reduce homelessness, and it has not worked. In the two and half years they have been serving the city homelessness has doubled.

Cloverdale appears to partner with the County and Faith Based Organizations to get individuals into the Coordinated Entry Program. Several Sebastopol churches provide meals and showers, why can they not be qualified to do coordinated entry and link the homeless to medical resources? There are solutions out there. The problem is Sebastopol has been trying to do it alone, without experience, skills, budget or a plan.

## CITIES WITH PLANS COORDINATED WITH THE COUNTY ARE SEEING DRAMATIC DECREASES IN HOMELESSNESS

The Five-Year Sonoma County Homeless plan (Table 8) shows that most of the cities in Sonoma County have plans that are integrated with the County plan. Sebastopol must have taken a pass when the initiative was started. Even small Cloverdale has a plan. From the Point in Time Data, it appears plans might actually make a difference.

**Table 8: Extracted from the Sonoma County Five-Year Homeless Plan**

### APPENDIX G: CROSSWALK OF SUBREGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANS

The Sonoma County strategic planning effort took place in the context of many other planning efforts addressing homelessness in Sonoma County and the State of California. These include:

- [City of Cloverdale Homelessness Strategic Plan](#), adopted August 2022.
- [City of Petaluma Strategic Plan to End Homelessness](#), adopted June 2022
- [City of Santa Rosa Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan](#), adopted November 2022
- [City of Sonoma / Sonoma Valley Homelessness Strategic Assessment](#), adopted June 2022
- [Northern Sonoma County Strategic Plan to End Homelessness](#), adopted May 2021
- [Sonoma County Five Year Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#), adopted March 2021
- [State of California Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California](#), adopted March 2021, updated and adopted September 2022

Not surprisingly, these plans share many ideas and strategies in common. Among other things, they call for improving regional collaboration, increasing local government management capacity, expanding and improving both interim and permanent housing options, strengthening street outreach and support, investing in prevention and diversion efforts, strengthening supportive services, increasing the involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness, advancing efforts to implement the “Housing First” approach, boosting efforts to educate and engage the public, increasing the availability and use of housing vouchers, and increasing pathways for economic self-sufficiency. The chart on the following page highlights the provisions from each of the above plans that touch on these shared themes.

**Figure 3: Total Homeless Census Population by Shelter Status and Jurisdiction**

| JURISDICTION                | UNSHELTERED  |              |              | SHELTERED  |            |            | TOTAL        |              |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                             | 2022         | 2023         | 2024         | 2022       | 2023       | 2024       | 2022         | 2023         | 2024         |
| <b>North County</b>         | <b>155</b>   | <b>103</b>   | <b>141</b>   | <b>40</b>  | <b>15</b>  | <b>16</b>  | <b>195</b>   | <b>118</b>   | <b>152</b>   |
| Cloverdale                  | 23           | 9            | 6            | 0          | 0          | 3          | 23           | 9            | 9            |
| Healdsburg                  | 97           | 18           | 37           | 0          | 15         | 13         | 97           | 33           | 50           |
| Town of Windsor             | 8            | 26           | 26           | 40         | 0          | 0          | 48           | 26           | 26           |
| Unincorporated              | 27           | 50           | 67           | 0          | 0          | 0          | 27           | 50           | 67           |
| <b>South County</b>         | <b>679</b>   | <b>337</b>   | <b>434</b>   | <b>89</b>  | <b>163</b> | <b>181</b> | <b>768</b>   | <b>500</b>   | <b>615</b>   |
| Cotati                      | 79           | 9            | 21           | 6          | 6          | 10         | 85           | 15           | 31           |
| Petaluma                    | 214          | 157          | 143          | 79         | 88         | 97         | 293          | 245          | 240          |
| Rohnert Park                | 241          | 141          | 205          | 4          | 69         | 74         | 369          | 210          | 279          |
| Unincorporated              | 21           | 30           | 65           | 0          | 0          | 0          | 21           | 30           | 65           |
| <b>West County</b>          | <b>62</b>    | <b>143</b>   | <b>128</b>   | <b>65</b>  | <b>70</b>  | <b>49</b>  | <b>127</b>   | <b>213</b>   | <b>177</b>   |
| Sebastopol                  | 40           | 47           | 108          | 38         | 40         | 10         | 78           | 87           | 118          |
| Unincorporated              | 22           | 96           | 20           | 27         | 30         | 39         | 49           | 126          | 59           |
| <b>Sonoma Valley</b>        | <b>93</b>    | <b>109</b>   | <b>74</b>    | <b>29</b>  | <b>20</b>  | <b>12</b>  | <b>122</b>   | <b>129</b>   | <b>86</b>    |
| Sonoma                      | 66           | 40           | 13           | 15         | 0          | 0          | 81           | 40           | 13           |
| Unincorporated              | 27           | 69           | 61           | 14         | 20         | 12         | 41           | 89           | 73           |
| <b>Santa Rosa</b>           | <b>1,099</b> | <b>599</b>   | <b>805</b>   | <b>582</b> | <b>695</b> | <b>664</b> | <b>1,681</b> | <b>1,294</b> | <b>1,469</b> |
| Santa Rosa                  | 1,089        | 465          | 701          | 569        | 695        | 664        | 1,658        | 1,160        | 1,365        |
| Unincorporated              | 10           | 134          | 104          | 13         | 0          | 0          | 23           | 134          | 104          |
| <b>Undisclosed Location</b> | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>   | <b>12</b>  | <b>23</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>12</b>    | <b>23</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>2,088</b> | <b>1,291</b> | <b>1,577</b> | <b>805</b> | <b>975</b> | <b>945</b> | <b>2,893</b> | <b>2,266</b> | <b>2,522</b> |

*Note: Confidential beds have been included in their respective jurisdiction(s) since 2018.*

The table above shows the homeless numbers for Cloverdale, Sonoma, Petaluma and Santa Rosa have all seen dramatic reductions in the number of homeless since 2022. Cloverdale is a similar size to Sebastopol and had only 9 homeless (only 3 unhoused) in 2024 down from 23 in 2022. **Sebastopol over the same period saw an increase from 78 to 118.**

### **SEBASTOPOL NEEDS A PLAN**

Sebastopol needs a plan. The plan needs to be based on realistic data on real costs. The city needs a city-wide referendum on the goals related to homelessness. Based on the increases in the number of homeless unhoused in the city it seems like the unstated goal is to make Sebastopol a destination for the homeless in Sonoma County. This is not in the best interest of the city or the taxpayers.

Cloverdale and other cities focus their goal on reducing the number of homeless by coordinating with faith-based organizations and the County to facilitate moving each of their unhoused homeless into permanent housing. They also articulate a clear principle that homeless people who break the law will be arrested.

Their process includes participation of individuals in the city and county that have interest and experience in dealing with the issues faced by the homeless. This group together identifies goals, strategies and actions. The primary goal is to reduce homelessness in Cloverdale.

Sebastopol needs to assemble a broad coalition of all the entities that interface with the homeless in Sebastopol. Everyone needs to agree on a goal to get the homeless out of Sebastopol and into housing or locations where needed services are available. There needs to be action taken to get them into the county process, track their progress in that system and ensure that they get the housing they deserve.

## **CONCLUSION**

Looking at the FY25-26 budget from the perspective of functional costs instead of just the department budget, it provides a different view of the city's financial situation. The cost of managing the homeless is unacceptable. Reducing the cost of caring for the homeless gives the city substantially more staff time and dollars to address city problems like crime, fire, streets, buildings, parks and community development.

Critical to the process is the county. Sebastopol's elected leaders need to get the county to prioritize moving Sebastopol's homeless into housing and getting them to vital mental health services. Where laws are broken individuals need to be arrested, and the courts need to provide appropriate penalties.

The city will continue to operate in crisis mode until the homeless issue is controlled. Until staff can again focus on delivering critical services to local residents, neglected priorities will continue to pile up. Roads will be among the worst in the county. Our city buildings will continue to deteriorate. The city's technology will remain outdated and inefficient. Our aging water and sewer infrastructure will continue to be ignored as public works focus on cleaning up after the homeless. Police will be unable to focus on preventing and solving serious crimes while they spend time dealing with homeless issues. Downtown will become even less attractive to tourists and local residents alike.