**

Agency Strategic Plan 2016-2020

**Executive Summary**

*“When you become homeless, you have no place to go. No place to cook. It does something to a person–I don’t care who they are. It eats at you. It almost kills you. You get to feeling hopeless. You feel there’s no way of coming back out of this. You feel like you’re stuck and struggling to get out of quicksand.”*

**HomeFirst is the first point of contact for people like Craig**, a Vietnam War veteran who became homeless after the house he was renting was sold. After reaching out to Craig, the HomeFirst team did an assessment and was able to help Craig secure a HUD veterans’ housing voucher. After many months of searching, Craig moved into a subsidized apartment.

**The team at HomeFirst serves more than 4,000 adults, veterans, families with children, and youth each year.** Our team is the first point of contact with and we provide more assessments of homeless people than any other agency in Santa Clara County every year.

HomeFirst is a key partner with the County of Santa Clara, the City of San Jose, Destination: Home and other stakeholders in developing and implementing a county-wide *2015-2020 Community Plan to End Homelessness*. It’s a roadmap to end homelessness in our community over the next five years.

**Based on that and more than 35 years of experience helping people, HomeFirst created the following agency plan to ensure that we can help those in greatest need in the best way possible.**

In this, you’ll see how we envision leveraging emergency shelters as an “on ramp” to housing; working with veterans; broadening the supportive services we offer; and creating an agency that will be here to help as long as there is need.

Every night, an estimated 6,000 people just like Craig are homeless in Santa Clara County.

HomeFirst envisions a thriving community where every one of them has a home. Here’s our plan to make that happen.

**The HomeFirst Strategic Plan 2016-2020**

**Our Vision:**

HomeFirst envisions a community where everyone has a home. We believe in the power of community and the support that it brings. We believe in the strength of the people we serve. And we believe that there will be an end to homelessness.

**Our Mission:**

HomeFirst confronts homelessness by cultivating people’s potential to get housed and stay housed.

**Our goals:**

1) HomeFirst will be the preferred provider of outreach and emergency housing as an onramp to permanent housing and stability.

2) HomeFirst will work with the Veterans’ Administration to help end—and then prevent—veteran homelessness in our community.

3) HomeFirst will build on its Supportive Services and develop a best practice model to help people who struggle to stay housed.

4) HomeFirst will continue to build its financial and program resources to ensure its role in meeting our community’s needs.

The HomeFirst executive team has used this strategic plan as a guide to create a specific action plan with details on how we plan to accomplish this.

KEY: “Y1” refers to Year 1 (FY 2017), “Y2” to Year 2 (FY 2018), etc.

**Our action plan**

*HF serves almost 80% of the people enrolled in emergency housing programs in Santa Clara County.*[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Goal 1**

**HomeFirst will be the preferred provider of outreach and emergency housing as an onramp to permanent housing and stability.**

Annual Goals:

Y1. HomeFirst will create best practice procedures and protocols based on our research of emergency shelters around the country.

Y2. HomeFirst will increase efficiency and reduce our environmental footprint by ensuring that the Boccardo Reception Center is a green facility.

Y2. HomeFirst will expand shelter-based supportive services to increase the number of clients exiting to permanent housing.

Y3. HomeFirst will integrate mental health support services into existing services.

*Santa Clara County has one of the highest rates of unsheltered veterans in the U.S.*[[2]](#footnote-2) *Of the identified 700 homeless veterans, HomeFirst serves 35%—more than any other organization.*

**Goal 2**

**HomeFirst will work with the VA to help end—and then prevent—veteran homelessness in our community.**

Annual Goals:

Y1. HomeFirst will use its established best practices to decrease the time required to house a veteran.

Y1. HomeFirst’s Veteran Emergency Shelter Program will continue to provide best practice emergency shelter services.

Y2. HomeFirst will establish a veteran homelessness prevention program to meet the next generation of veteran’s services.

*In the 2013 census and survey of the homeless population in Santa Clara County, 64% of the people surveyed reported a mental illness diagnosis such as PTSD, depression or bipolar disorder.*[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Goal 3**

**HomeFirst will build on its Supportive Services and develop a best practice model to help people who struggle to stay housed.**

Y1. To better serve our community HomeFirst will create comprehensive case management model to ensure long-term permanent housing solutions.

Y2. We will develop internal roles and responsibilities to expand our housing services model.

Y3. We will publish our results and established procedures to assist other communities with their goal of helping people who struggle to stay housed.

**Goal 4**

**HomeFirst will continue to build its financial and program resources to ensure its role in meeting our community’s needs:**

Y1. HomeFirst will expand on its Medi-Cal certification to enrich programs and expand contract services to serve more clients;

Y1. Expand awareness in philanthropic, public service, and volunteer communities to support the long-term goals of HomeFirst.

Y2. Create a cohesive property management business segment to build financial capacity with enhanced client services.

**Assumptions**

Our strategic plan is based on the following key assumptions:

1. There will continue to be need for emergency shelter(s) in Santa Clara County.
2. A broader base of financial support (e.g., Medi-Cal reimbursements, greater charitable giving) will allow HomeFirst to hire staff at a living wage in Silicon Valley.
3. The board and executive team will invest in our staff and ensure they are trained in best practices.

**Strategic Plan Oversight**

As we move forward in implementing this plan, the HomeFirst Board of Directors will be kept informed on progress and challenges; be invited to provide ideas and suggestions; ensure accountability to the goals; and assist in communicating progress, successes and challenges to the larger community.

The HomeFirst management team including the CEO, CFO, CDO, and Director of Services will focus on the details of implementing the action steps in the strategic plan. They will report progress to the agency’s Board of Directors twice a year.

**Concluding Thoughts**

It has been a time of great change in the homelessness sector that has resulted in new services and funding opportunities. The team at HomeFirst has stepped up to this challenge as reflected in our goals, as well as new roles and responsibilities within the agency.

***We believe in the power of community and the support that it brings.***

The HomeFirst executive team thanks our Board of Directors and particularly the Strategic Planning Task Force for their leadership and vision throughout this process.

We also thank the County of Santa Clara, City of San Jose and the VA Health Care System for continuing to partner with HomeFirst to serve the most vulnerable in our community.

***Together, we will end homelessness.***

1. Santa Clara County HMIS data as of Oct. 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Community Plan to End Homelessness, 2015-2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Applied Survey Research, 2013 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey [↑](#footnote-ref-3)