

HOMELESS STRATEGY OFFICE CITY OF AUSTIN

DOWNTOWN COMMISSION

David Gray
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HOMELESS
STRATEGY
OFFICE



2023 AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM (HRS) DATA/METRICS

Est. Homeless Population: 6,300

People Exiting Homelessness: 3,000

(50% increase from 2022)

Unique People Served: 24,300

(60% increase from 2022)

First-Time Service Recipients: 8,400

(72% increase from 2022)

Chronic Homeless Rate: 30%

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ESTABLISHED DECEMBER 2023

The Homeless Strategy Office (HSO) collaborates with public agencies, community organizations, and individuals to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Homeless Strategy Office Core Objectives

1. Manage the City of Austin's homeless response resources, including 80+ contracts with various providers.
2. Create and support opportunities to produce more shelter and housing options for people experiencing homelessness.
3. Prioritize and coordinate cleanups and closures of encampments on public land.
4. Collaborate with research partners to incorporate best practices into services.
5. Proactively communicate the City of Austin's efforts to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.
6. Broaden the base of financial support for local initiatives and organizations.



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STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

Homeless Prevention: Activities that support households at-risk of homelessness.

Street Outreach: Activities that meet the immediate needs of people living unsheltered.

Public Space Management: Activities that ensure public spaces are safe, accessible, and welcoming for all community members.

Diversion/Rapid Exit: Activities that immediately address the needs of someone who has recently lost their housing and become homeless.

Emergency Shelters: Facilities that provide people experiencing homelessness with access to food, sleep, medical care, and safety.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH): Activities that provide short-term rental assistance and case management services to help tenants stabilize in their new homes.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): A long-term housing model that combines affordable housing with case management and supportive services.



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

HOUSING-FOCUSED ENCAMPMENT ASSISTANCE LINK (HEAL)



Austin City Council Resolution No. 20210204-049

- The HEAL initiative compassionately closes the most unsafe encampments in our city.
- Everyone residing at an encampment is offered a direct path to shelter and opportunities for stable housing.
- Two emergency shelters (called “BRIDGE” shelters) are designated for HEAL.
- 71% of clients who enter shelters have been homeless for 12+ months.
- Half of clients leaving shelter go to a housing destinations.



31
Encampment
Decommissions



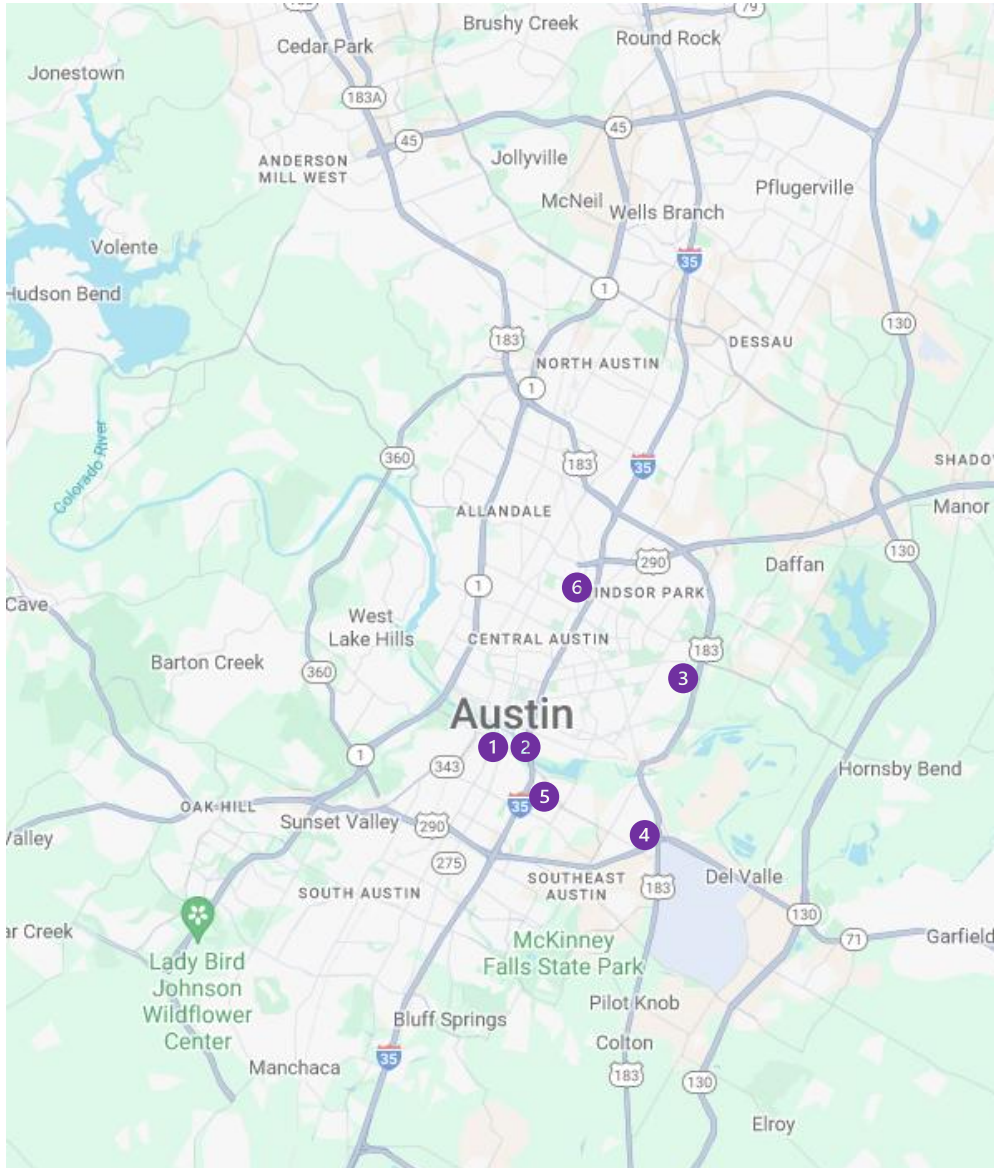
1075
People Moved to
Bridge Shelter



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AUSTIN EMERGENCY SHELTER NETWORK

CITY-OWNED SHELTER LOCATIONS



Shelter Name and Location
1. Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) 130 semi-congregate beds Male clients
2. Eighth Street Shelter for Women 160 semi-congregate beds Women and transgender clients
3. Austin Shelter for Women and Children 81 semi-congregate beds Women and children clients
4. Marshalling Yard Emergency Shelter 300 congregate beds Adult clients (no children)
5. Southbridge Shelter 145 semi-congregate beds (hotel conversion) Adult clients (no children)
6. Northbridge Shelter 125 semi-congregate beds (hotel conversion) Adult clients (no children)

Total shelter beds at City shelters: 941



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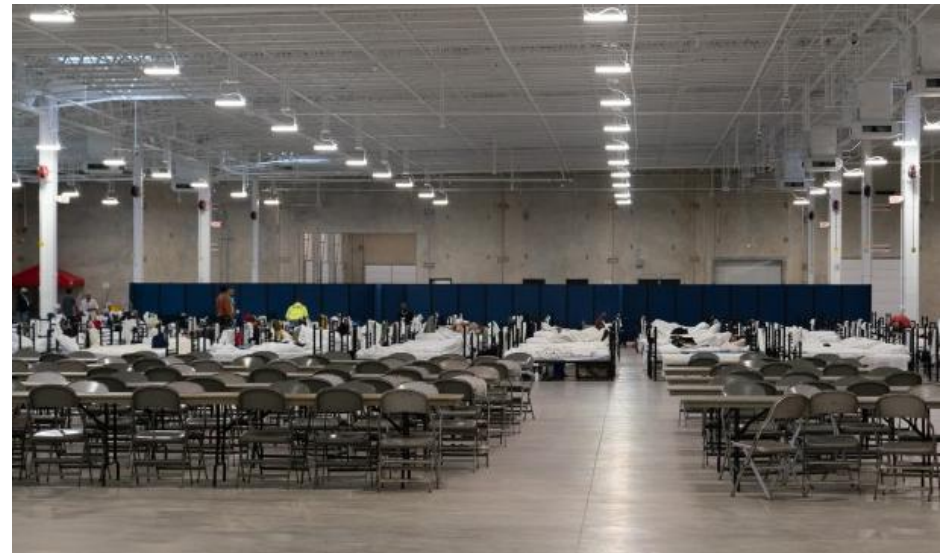
PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: MARSHALLING YARD EMERGENCY SHELTER

Facility opened on August 22, 2023

- Facility operator: Endeavors
- Capacity: 300 clients
- Model: Congregate
- Entries since opening: 1,028

Clients receive multiple services, including:

- Daily transportation services, including door-to-door transfers.
- Three meals per day, provided through new partnership with Central TX Food Bank.
- Pet-friendly on-site boarding facility and pet food.
- Onsite wash, dry, and folding service.
- Onsite showering facilities.
- Onsite access to case management.
- Wellness activities (e.g., television area, open Wi-Fi network, etc.).
- Patio access for outdoor activities and smoking area.



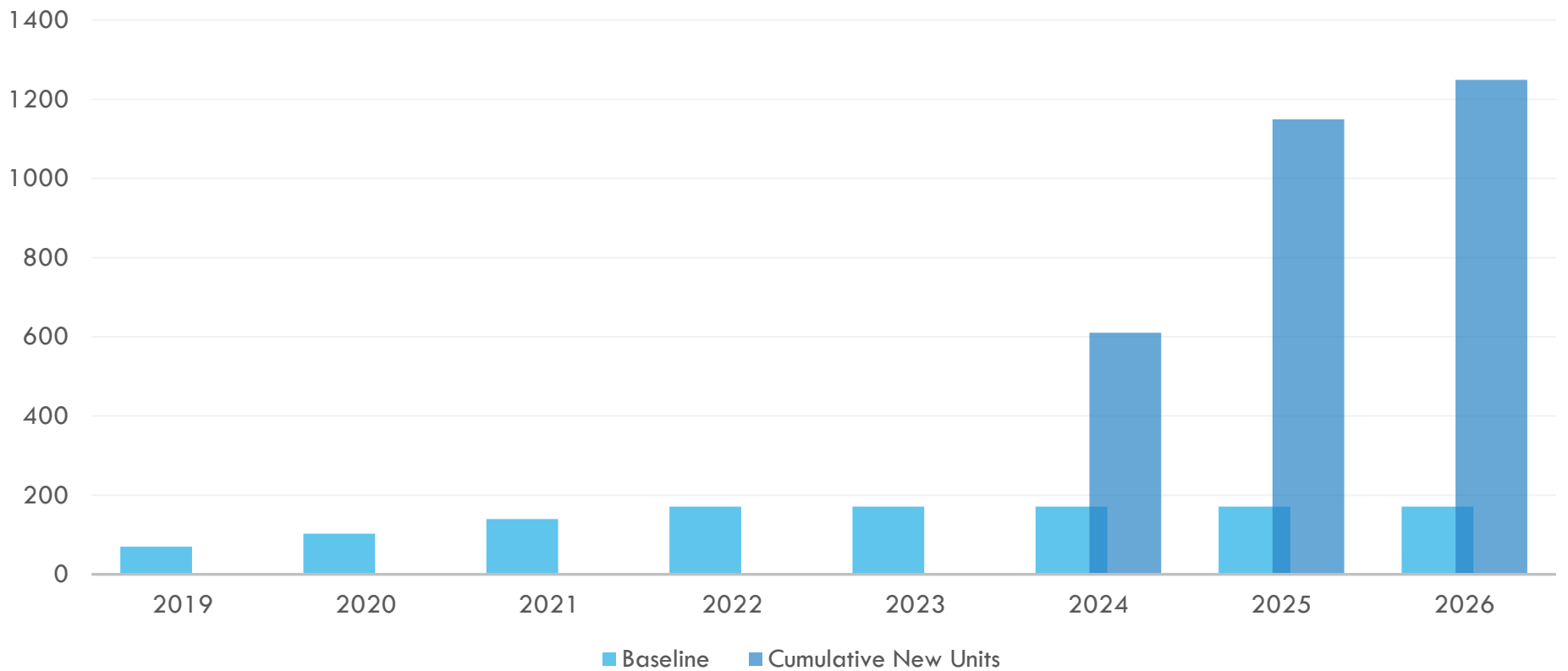
**as of November 1, 2024*



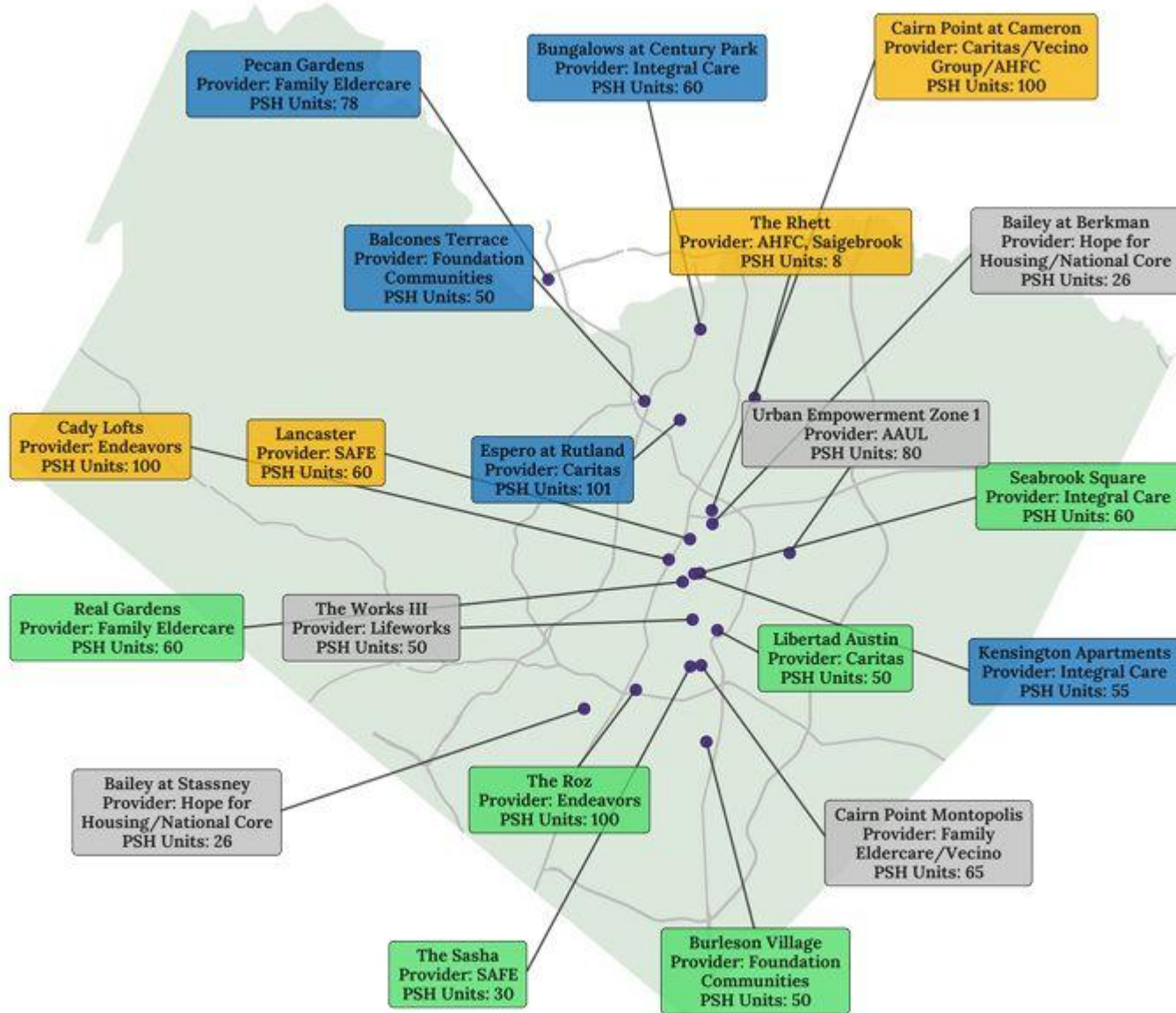
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PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INVENTORY

Austin and Travis County will Experience a 630% Increase in PSH Units by December 2026



PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING MAP



Year Operational: 2024 (Blue), 2025 (Yellow), 2026 (Green), 2027 (Grey)

DOWNTOWN PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

HOMELESS OUTREACH STREET TEAM (HOST)

- A multidisciplinary, proactive approach that prioritizes outreach, relationship-building, and service coordination.
- Collaboration between HSO, APD, EMS, Downtown Austin Community Court, and Integral Care.
- In its most recent full year of operating, HOST delivered:
 - 3,480 total contacts with 1,505 unique individuals
 - 3,155 interventions, such as medical assistance, mental health services, and substance use services
 - 68 emergency room diversions
 - 37 psychiatric hold diversions
 - 70 jail diversions
 - 300+ coordinated assessments completed,
 - 126 individuals assisted with housing support
 - 281 individuals assisted with shelter access
 - 596 individuals provided with basic needs, such as hygiene supplies, clothing, and safety items

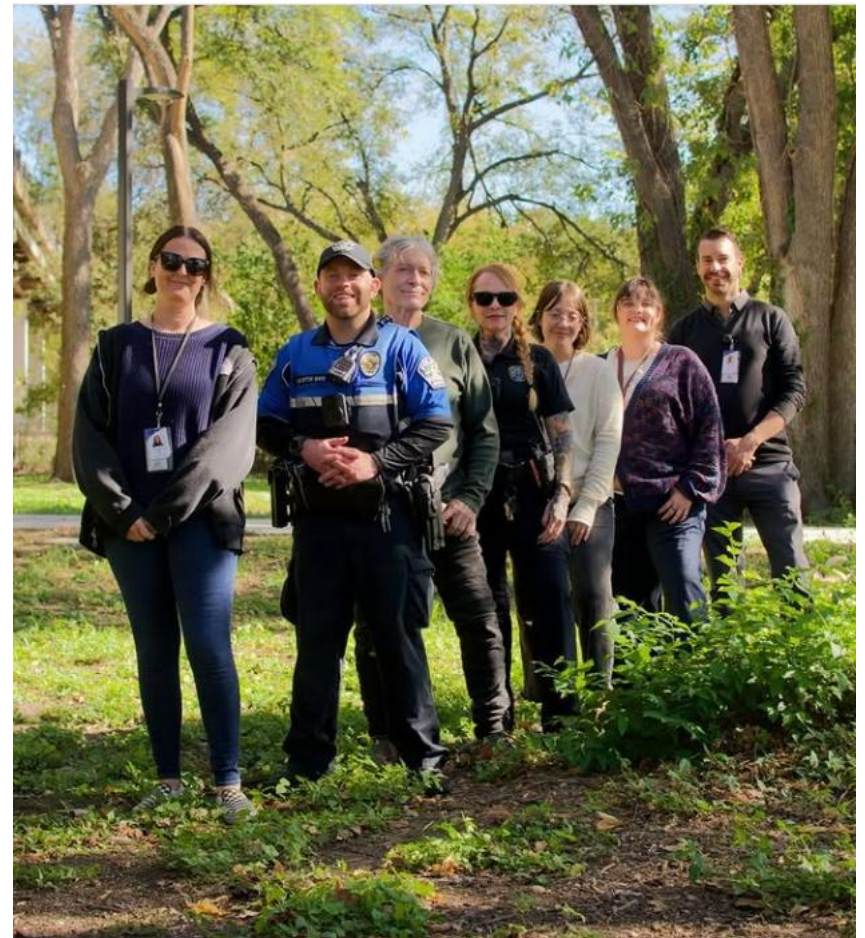


Image credit: Integral Care



DOWNTOWN PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

HOMELESS ENGAGEMENT ASSISTANCE RESPONSE TEAM (HEART)



Image credit: Austin American Statesman

- Launched as an HSO program in January 2025, but piloted by the Downtown Austin Alliance in Summer/Fall 2024.
- A civilian-first responder program that aims to de-escalate and stabilize incidents involving unhoused individuals.
- Partnership between Urban Alchemy, HSO, APD, and Downtown Austin Alliance.
- Engages in proactive engagements (focused on hotspots), APD referrals, and community referrals.
- Downtown boarders: Lamar, W. 15th, Colorado River, and I-35
- Performance snapshot (January 2025 data):
 - 900 total engagements with unhoused individuals.
 - Average 28 engagements per day.
 - 729 referrals to social service activities.
 - 185 provided clean clothes/shoes/blanket.
 - 178 provided hygiene kit.
 - 17 provided transportation to another location.
 - 7 clients attained housing services.
 - 5 clients referred to housing activities.



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

ENCAMPMENT CLEANUPS AND ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement in Downtown Austin

- HSO actively works with APD and community partners to mitigate the impacts of homelessness in Downtown Austin.
 - HSO has a HEART crew dedicated to Congress Ave.
 - HSO, Urban Alchemy, and APD meet monthly and communicate nearly daily on homelessness.
- Major roadways and nodes are prioritized for Keep-Clear efforts (e.g., Congress Ave, Cesar Chavez St. Republic Square Park, Shoal Creek, Hike and Bike Trail, etc.).



Interstate 35 Underpasses

- Interstate 35 underpasses cleaned multiple times per week by APD and Austin Resource Recovery.
- HSO working with local organizations to address externalities caused by food distributions under the freeway.
- HSO considering alternatives to panhandling for residents that want to help unhoused individuals in a safer, more holistic way.



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OFFICE OVERVIEW

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