



# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

## **State Awards County \$33M to House Homeless, Seniors** *Project Homekey funding allows purchase of two local properties*

**Redwood City** – The County of San Mateo will be able to provide long-term housing and shelter to vulnerable residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness — including those who lost shelter due to COVID-19 — in two converted local hotels thanks to Project Homekey funding announced by the governor today.

“We are grateful to the governor and our local legislative delegation in Sacramento who lobbied successfully for the County to receive these additional funds to help our unsheltered residents,” said Board of Supervisors President Warren Slocum. “Ending homelessness was already a top priority for the Board when COVID-19 hit and the pandemic only magnified the need to provide permanent housing and shelter opportunities for those who will accept our help.”

The County will use the more than \$33 million award to purchase two projects totaling 170 rooms. The County is not yet releasing the property names because negotiations are ongoing. One project will provide service-enriched interim housing to individuals experiencing homelessness and highly vulnerable to COVID-19. The on-site services and connection to off-site services will help residents stay successfully housed both in the interim and in the transition to permanent affordable housing.

The second project will provide permanent housing for seniors who meet certain criteria, including qualifying as extremely low income, below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“Even before COVID-19, the County was working to protect residents who were on the verge of losing housing due to the high cost of living and rent in the Bay Area. And, from day one of the County’s response to this pandemic, we’ve been innovative and strategic in how we keep our residents safe, especially for our homeless, seniors and at-risk populations,” said County Manager Mike Callagy. “Project Homekey allows another

opportunity to quickly continue those efforts because we will convert existing facilities rather than needing to build from the ground up.”

Owning the facilities will reduce the County’s sheltering costs over time and provides a better opportunity for the coordinated service system to work with clients and move them into permanent housing.

Project Homekey grew from Project Roomkey, the state’s initial homeless housing initiative launched earlier in the pandemic. The \$600 million state program provides funds to approved counties to purchase and rehabilitate housing — including hotels, motels and vacant apartment buildings — into dedicated housing for people experiencing homelessness or at risk, including those who lost their homes due to COVID-19.

The Jan. 30, 2019 biannual Point in Time Count found 1,512 people experiencing homelessness on that night — a 20 percent increase over 2017. The COVID-19 health crisis created even greater challenges and dangers for this population because they lacked the ability to shelter in place when the Bay Area imposed those restrictions and business closures limited their access to food and other basic needs.

Early in the pandemic response the County addressed the needs of homeless residents by working with existing shelters to allow social distancing and other protective measures and housing high-risk individuals in motels or alternative care sites. Using funds from Project Roomkey, the County also leased rooms in a Peninsula hotel referred to as Bayfront Station to house individuals without COVID-19 symptoms and deemed high risk based on CDC guidelines.

With the transition to Project Homekey, use of Bayfront Station will be phased out later this year.

To learn more about Homekey-funded projects, please visit [bcsh.ca.go/homekey](https://bcsh.ca.go/homekey).

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