Open Books: What Santa Monica Spends on Homelessness

Updated October 28, 2026. Every phone number was checked against an official page.

Residents should be able to see every homelessness dollar, every contract and every result on one page, updated every month. Today that page does not exist. This initiative asks the City to build it, using numbers it already has. Totals, never names.

How much does Santa Monica spend on homelessness?

There is no single public figure, and that is the problem this initiative fixes. The spending is spread across the City's biennial budget, County and state grants, and individual contracts approved at Council meetings. We have not yet verified a total from the source documents, so we do not publish one. Our Ledger will post figures only with the document they came from.

You can read the City's budget yourself: the FY 2025-27 Proposed Biennial Budget (PDF).

Where does the money come from?

From the City, the County and the state. These pieces are public and sourced:

Source	What we know
LA County Measure A, Local Solutions Fund	Santa Monica's FY26-27 allocation is $1,296,779 (LA County HSH guidance). How it is being spent is not yet published.
Federal and state grants (2023)	$1.5 million federal and $1.5 million state toward a Santa Monica Behavioral Health Center, a planned 24/7 destination for first responders. No opening status published.
City decisions, Jul. 28, 2026	Council approved a Housing Focused System of Care, including City-run interim housing at the Palm Motel (34 rooms) and 35 funded beds at the Salvation Army's Bell Shelter, and voted to keep SaMoShel (60 beds) open until replacement housing is found.
Counting	From summer 2026 the City pays RAND to count unsheltered people six times a year.

What results does the City report?

Some, but not in one place. The City publishes the annual point-in-time count (718 people on Jan. 22, 2026) and program updates in press releases, such as SaMo Bridge placing 81% of the people it connected in its first year into housing or treatment immediately. What is missing is a page that ties each contract to what it was supposed to deliver and what it delivered. The City also publishes no 311 outreach volumes or closure times, and police calls in the City's open data have had no coordinates since November 2023.

What should be published every month?

1. Every homelessness contract: who, how much, what it was supposed to deliver, and what it delivered each quarter.
2. Case list totals: people active, people who came in, people housed or placed, people who came back. The confidential list already exists for "Santa Monica Program Participants." Only totals are published.
3. Street contacts: beds offered, offers accepted, beds open at the time, warnings, citations, CARE petitions and SB 43 referrals.
4. 311 outreach requests: how many, and the median days to close them.

What do hotel and motel rooms actually buy?

Nobody outside City Hall can tell you, and that has to change. Residents know hotels and motels are paid to house people. Residents cannot see what each room costs, how long people stay, or where they go next. Our ask: for every hotel or motel room the City or County pays for in Santa Monica, publish monthly totals of:

- the cost per room-night and the total paid;
- the average length of stay;
- where people went next: permanent housing, treatment, another shelter, or back to the street.

Totals, never names. A room that leads to an apartment is money well spent. A room that leads back to the sidewalk is a question Council should have to answer in public.

How is the camping law enforced, park by park?

Today there is no public count. Our ask: every month, publish warnings, citations and shelter offers by park and by beat, next to the beds that were open at the time. Then residents can see whether the park rules are applied the same way in Reed Park as in Palisades Park, and whether every enforcement contact started with a real offer of help.

Why not fund what already works?

We should, and open books is how a city finds out what works. Programs that publish results and show people leaving the street for good should get the next dollar. Programs that cannot show results should have to explain why. One example of focused, measurable work: Harvest Home, a nonprofit that serves homeless pregnant women and their children in and around Los Angeles. It says its residential program serves up to 70 women and their families a year, with case management, therapy and parenting classes. We cite it as a model of a program that knows exactly who it serves and what it delivers, not as a City contractor.

Why does this matter?

Because residents cannot judge what works without the numbers, and programs that work deserve the credit. Bakersfield and Kern County took chronic homelessness from more than 200 people to 3 by December 2020 using a confidential case list, weekly case conferencing and monthly public totals. San Francisco's 2022 Prop C created a homelessness oversight commission with budget authority. Open books is the cheapest initiative in the plan: the City already has the data.

How can residents follow the money now?

Read the budget linked above, watch Council agendas for homelessness contracts, and file public records requests. Our first step is five records requests, with everything that comes back, and everything that does not, posted on the site's Ledger. You can also speak at Council or write in to ask for a monthly report.

Where does this initiative stand?

It is a resident draft. Nothing has been submitted to the City Council. We propose a councilmember item adopting a functional-zero target for chronic homelessness and monthly publication of contract outcomes and case list totals. Members plan to ask for a sponsor after the Nov. 3, 2026 election.

Sources

1. Harvest Home: About
2. City of Santa Monica: FY 2025-27 Proposed Biennial Budget (PDF)
3. LA County HSH: Measure A Local Solutions Fund guidance FY26-27
4. Rep. Ted Lieu: funding for the Santa Monica Behavioral Health Center (Mar 3, 2023)
5. Santa Monica Next: Council takes ownership of homelessness response (Aug 2026)
6. City of Santa Monica: Housing Focused System of Care
7. City of Santa Monica: Unsheltered homelessness in Santa Monica falls (Jul 24, 2026)
8. Santa Monica Daily Press: SaMo Bridge first year (May 22, 2026)
9. City of Santa Monica Open Data: Police Calls for Service
10. Community Solutions: Bakersfield and Kern County reach functional zero (Jan 2021)
11. SF Public Press: Proposition C homelessness oversight commission (2022)

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