



The bridge to possible



DESTINATION: HOME

# A practical guide: Working together to address homelessness



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## I. Introduction

“ While homelessness can feel “too big” to solve, the solution is really quite simple: **housing ends homelessness**. And if we can align the public, private and non-profit sectors behind this common strategy, we can turn homelessness into a problem of the past.

That’s exactly the approach we’ve taken in Silicon Valley. Over the past five years, we’ve housed 15,000 homeless individuals, created a robust homelessness prevention system and drastically scaled the production of deeply affordable housing.

These successes were only possible due to the commitment of a wide-range of stakeholders. I’m particularly grateful to Cisco, who has demonstrated how a corporation can leverage both its financial and human resources to have a truly catalytic impact. Private sector leadership is critical, and Cisco’s transformational partnership has allowed us to move from scarcity to abundance, an exceedingly rare perspective when it comes to homelessness.

Our work is far from done, but our story shows how it’s possible for a community to come together to advance real solutions to this crisis.

This is the great moral challenge of our generation, and we all have a role to play. Now’s the time to become part of the solution. ”



**Jennifer Loving**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Destination: Home



**Chuck Robbins**  
Chairman and CEO  
Cisco Systems

“ Santa Clara County, California, one of the wealthiest areas in the United States, is experiencing a homelessness crisis due to high housing costs and lack of affordable housing. As CEO of one of the largest companies headquartered here, I believe we have both an opportunity and responsibility to address this problem.

Destination: Home has a strong coalition and plan to end homelessness in Silicon Valley and their leadership and dedication inspired us to reach out and ask, “How can we help?”

We know businesses cannot be successful without healthy communities. Therefore, we need to be advocates. Our voices, our support, and frankly, our resources, can help bring positive change faster and our employees extend our reach further to help influence public sentiment.

While every community is different, many are grappling with homelessness and most have organizations like Destination: Home, elected officials, and companies that want to solve the problem. By sharing the outcomes of our collaboration in Santa Clara County, we hope to encourage other communities to work together across business, governments, and other sectors to focus on this issue and take the necessary bold actions to solve it. ”

## II. The Homelessness Crisis

More than [560,000 people](#) in the United States experience homelessness on a given night. That means half a million people don't know where they are sleeping tonight, or have a safe space in which to live their lives and raise their families.

The reasons for homelessness are often misunderstood. Common stereotypes portray it as a problem largely affecting people with mental illness, people with disabilities, or those suffering from the disease of addiction. Yet only [36 percent](#) of the homeless population reported experiencing severe mental illness or chronic substance abuse.

Many people experiencing homelessness are simply unable to afford a home. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 6.5 million Americans experienced severe housing cost burden in 2018, which means they spent more than 50 percent of their income on housing. For people with little money to spare, just one life crisis, such as losing a job, divorce, or an accident or sudden illness, could lead to eviction.



## What contributes to homelessness?



### Lack of affordable housing

There is not enough affordable housing available for extremely low-income people—those earning 30% or less of the local median income. There is not a city left in America where those earning minimum wage can afford a market-rate apartment. In San Jose, California, a family must make over \$58.00 per hour to afford a market-rate dwelling. Even when resources are allocated for “affordable housing,” they often fund middle-income housing development, versus housing for the lowest-income populations



### Economic inequality

Over the last several decades, low-income wages have been stagnant, while upper-income salaries have grown significantly. Combined with skyrocketing housing costs, this leaves many families living paycheck to paycheck with few affordable housing options.



### Racial inequality

Homelessness in America disproportionately affects people of color. Research suggests this is due to the persistent wealth gap, lack of economic opportunity, disparities in incarceration rates, and a legacy of structural racism. For example, Black people account for 39.8% of the homeless population, while comprising only 13.4% of the total population.



### Discriminatory housing policies

Until the Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, it was legal for landlords, sellers and developers to refuse to rent or sell housing to people of color. These policies continue to have repercussions today. Unable to build equity, or benefit from the stable housing costs that home ownership provides, these individuals and families are often trapped in poverty and more at risk of falling into homelessness.



### Inadequate support for vulnerable populations

In the 1980s, the federal government reduced funding for many social service programs and shifted responsibility to state and local governments. With only limited budgets to support them, programs for senior citizens, people with disabilities, youth exiting foster care, victims of domestic violence, and those with mental illness have eroded in outreach and results. For example, according to the [National Foster Youth Institute](#), 25 percent of former foster youth experience homelessness within 4 years of being “emancipated” at age 18.

### III. The Solution: Working Together, Putting Housing First

The cost of homelessness on multiple populations is enormous. It obviously impacts those experiencing it most severely, but it also takes a toll on neighborhoods and communities throughout America.



#### Health

People who are homeless lack access to health care and good hygiene, and their harsh living conditions can cause or exacerbate chronic illnesses. They are more vulnerable to communicable diseases, which can lead to outbreaks. While the data is difficult to track, the National Healthcare for Homeless Council estimates between 17,500 and 46,500 homeless deaths occurred in 2018 alone.



#### Economy

People without housing are high consumers of public resources. According to the “Home Not Found” study in Santa Clara County, California, more than \$500 million per year is spent on temporary housing, food, emergency health care, policing, and other services for homelessness residents.



#### Community

Homelessness can fray our social fabric and our humanity. It can create safety and environmental concerns, reduce business growth, and limit the desirability of public spaces. These effects can cause residents to cast blame rather than express empathy or try to help. For people without a home, the social isolation, lack of privacy and public indignity they experience can be traumatic.

For these reasons, we must address homelessness. It may seem daunting, but homelessness is a solvable problem.

A combination of two approaches has proven to be most effective.

### Collective Impact

A Collective Impact model brings together service providers, public funders, and strategic partners around a set of common metrics and outcomes. Each partner acknowledges that no one organization can solve the problem alone, so they must unify in a systemic approach to achieve a common goal. Stakeholders recognize that they will only reach their individual goals by working with others toward the broader goal.

Collective impact initiatives go beyond collaboration. They involve a centralized infrastructure; a dedicated staff; a structured process; a common agenda; and mutually reinforcing activities, funding, and outcomes among all participants.

### Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is a proven strategy for ending homelessness by combining an affordable home with support services for individuals.

Supportive housing embodies the Housing First approach—the idea that people need a place to live first, and then can more effectively focus on matters like getting a job, obtaining mental health counseling, or addressing substance use and other medical issues.

This approach can lead to improved results for people and communities. For example, [one study](#) showed that such an initiative could cost up to \$23,000 less per person per year than a shelter program.

Several types of supportive housing exist. Permanent supportive housing is typically reserved for chronically homeless individuals who are expected to need an ongoing level of support. Transitional housing and rapid re-housing are for those whose need for housing and support services is expected to be temporary (for example, due to a circumstance like lost income or a health crisis).

### Types of Supportive Housing



#### Transitional Housing

Temporary housing provided with services to households enrolled in a permanent housing program



#### Rapid Rehousing

Provides time-bound rental subsidy and supportive services to help households find and stabilize in permanent housing



#### Permanent Supportive Housing

Affordable housing units with voluntary on-site services to support the permanent housing of chronically homeless and permanently disabled individuals and families

### What is the “support” in supportive housing?

- 1 Access to health care
- 2 Education and skills training
- 3 Employment assistance
- 4 Family reunification
- 5 Mental health counseling
- 6 Substance abuse counseling

### What about shelters?

A shelter can provide short-term relief from sleeping on the streets. Yet it is not a long-term solution. Shelters may not be suitable for people with mental illnesses. Shelters that accommodate whole families are limited. Many people, especially women, feel unsafe in shelters, and those with pets are usually

not allowed. A shelter does not provide an address or a solid foundation from which someone can secure a job, maintain stability, or rebuild their lives. Shelters are necessary as communities seek to expand affordable housing for extremely low-income people, but they will not end homelessness on their own.

### The role of prevention

It is hard to end homelessness when a constant stream of individuals and families are losing their homes. Homelessness prevention programs are critical to reducing this influx. Keeping people housed is easier and less costly (both for individuals and the system), than getting re-housed after becoming homeless. It also spares people from the trauma of experiencing homelessness.

The best systems provide a range of support, including immediate intervention (rent or utility payments, financial and legal assistance) and a housing stability plan (financial assistance, ongoing case management, and connection to critical resources, such as employment referrals and child care).





## IV. The Implementation: Santa Clara County, CA

In 2008, elected officials in Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose decided to stop trying to manage homelessness in their communities. Instead, they wanted to end homelessness.

Destination: Home was created to fill this unique purpose. The organization brought the public, nonprofit, and private sectors together around a collective goal—to end homelessness by creating permanent housing for the community’s most vulnerable people. Those involved embraced the concepts of collective impact and supportive housing, and the results were significant.

A central achievement was the \$950 million Measure A affordable housing bond, which designated \$700 million specifically for extremely low-income households and individuals; it is expected to fund 4,800 new housing units by 2026.

Thanks to these efforts in Santa Clara County, from January 2015 to December 2020, more than 17,000 formerly homeless people were placed in permanent housing, with 96.8% of them remaining stably housed 12 months later. In addition, roughly 3,000 new affordable apartments are in the Measure A pipeline and will come online in the years ahead. Previously, only 348 housing units had ever been developed specifically for homeless individuals in Santa Clara County.

## Eight Elements of Success

- 1 A strong convening organization
- 2 Evidence-based and data-driven initiatives
- 3 Community engagement and awareness
- 4 Participation of people with lived experience
- 5 Applying a racial equity lens to the problem
- 6 Collaboration among service providers
- 7 Voter-approved public funding
- 8 Strong corporate partnership to provide flexible funding and additional support

### 1. A strong convening organization

Homelessness is a crisis with no natural owner. It requires a collective impact approach—many organizations and individuals to work together toward a common solution. It's hard to reach that kind of consensus and build a coalition without a central organization to drive the work forward.

Destination: Home was created as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization to fill that role in Santa Clara County and to develop a comprehensive, five-year Community Plan to End Homelessness. The plan provided a single, cohesive strategy to help the system be more responsive to homeless individuals while working toward the creation of more permanent housing.

A strong umbrella organization can:

- Unify stakeholders
- Set goals
- Track progress
- Raise and distribute funds
- Conduct research
- Influence policy
- Drive thought leadership

“ Sometimes we have to act potentially not in our best interests, because the interest of this larger work that we're engaged in is most important. It doesn't matter that we work for different institutions. The most important piece is we have to come together to solve the problem together. ”

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– **Jacky Morales-Ferrand**,  
Director of Housing, City of San Jose

## 2. Evidence-based and data-driven initiatives

Destination: Home commissioned a study called “Home Not Found” to analyze the costs of homelessness in the county from 2007 to 2012. The results showed taxpayers spent more than \$3 billion over six years to provide services such as temporary housing, food, health care, and policing for 104,000 people. Yet, homelessness had not declined. The study showed that just over 4,500 individuals accounted for 61% of all costs, and that getting these individuals into permanent housing instead of managing their homelessness could save more than \$42,000 per person each year.

The county’s “Housing 1000” campaign sought to house 1,000 of the community’s most vulnerable, chronically homeless people between 2012 and 2014. At the end of the program, 83% of the 850 people placed remained stably housed.

These positive results validated the potential of the supportive housing approach. And when combined with the “Home Not Found” cost study, proved critical for garnering public support for permanent housing initiatives.

It also led all of the partners to take ownership of the homelessness issue and make permanent investments in addressing it. For example, the County of Santa Clara created the Office of Supportive Housing to centralize all activity related to homelessness into a new department focused solely on that work. This agency is now the central funder, data center, and organizer of activity related to the Community Plan to End Homelessness.

## 3. Community engagement and awareness

Building supportive housing for extremely low-income people requires both political will and public support.

Some residents may oppose spending tax money on homelessness at all. Others may support spending the money, but don’t want formerly homeless individuals or families living nearby. Whatever its form, “NIMBYism” (Not In My Back Yard) can stymie permanent supportive housing initiatives and prevent communities from making meaningful progress to end homelessness.

The Santa Clara County coalition recognized the need to educate residents about the personal and collective consequences of homelessness. Destination: Home started the Housing Ready Communities initiative to empower community members to show up, speak out, and talk with neighbors about the urgent need for supportive housing.

The program maintains a calendar of educational opportunities and notices for community meetings, as well as a social media action network for engaged members.

## 4. Participation of people with lived experience

Many programs that address homelessness aim to solve the problem for the community, not the people experiencing it.

To gain the perspective of the clients they serve, Destination: Home and its partners in Santa Clara County sought input from people with “lived experience.” In 2018, they created the Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB), consisting of members who currently experience or previously experienced homelessness.

“How can someone who has not experienced this know what I need?”

– **Gabriela Gabrian**, Lived Experience Advisory Board member

The LEAB advises nonprofits and policymakers about issues impacting the unhoused community. They evaluate the existing system of care and make recommendations for improvement. For example, LEAB members conducted an evaluation of the county’s largest shelter and homeless services center. The evaluation identified a number of areas for improvement, which the shelter quickly acted on.

### 5. Applying a racial equity lens to the problem

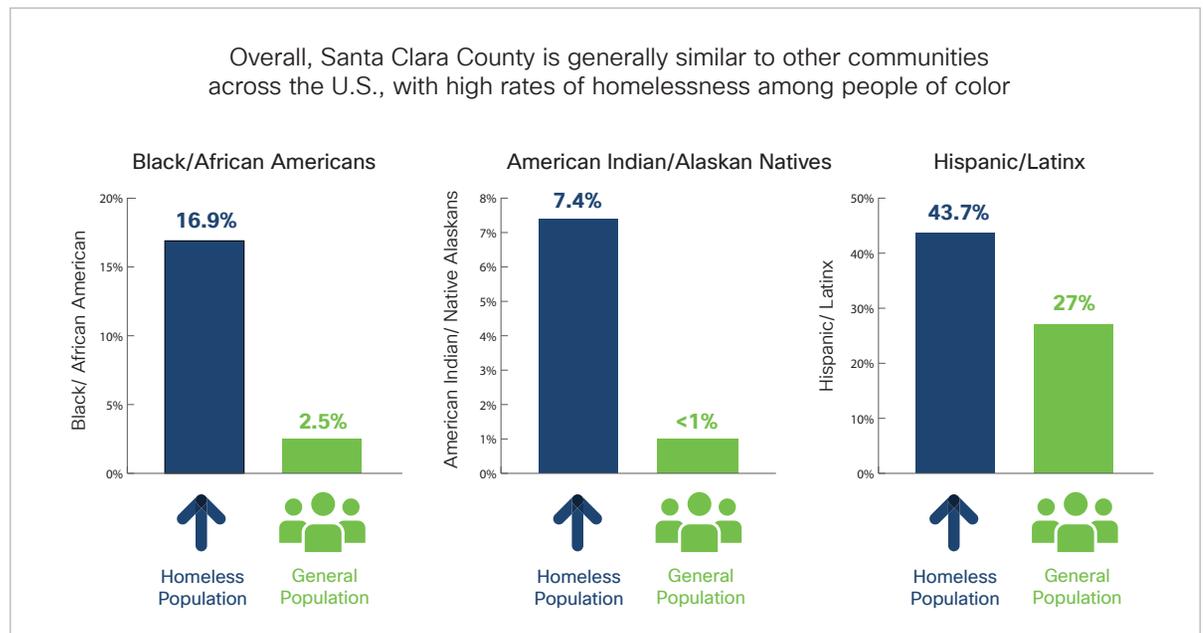
Research has shown that people of color are dramatically more likely than their white counterparts to become homeless

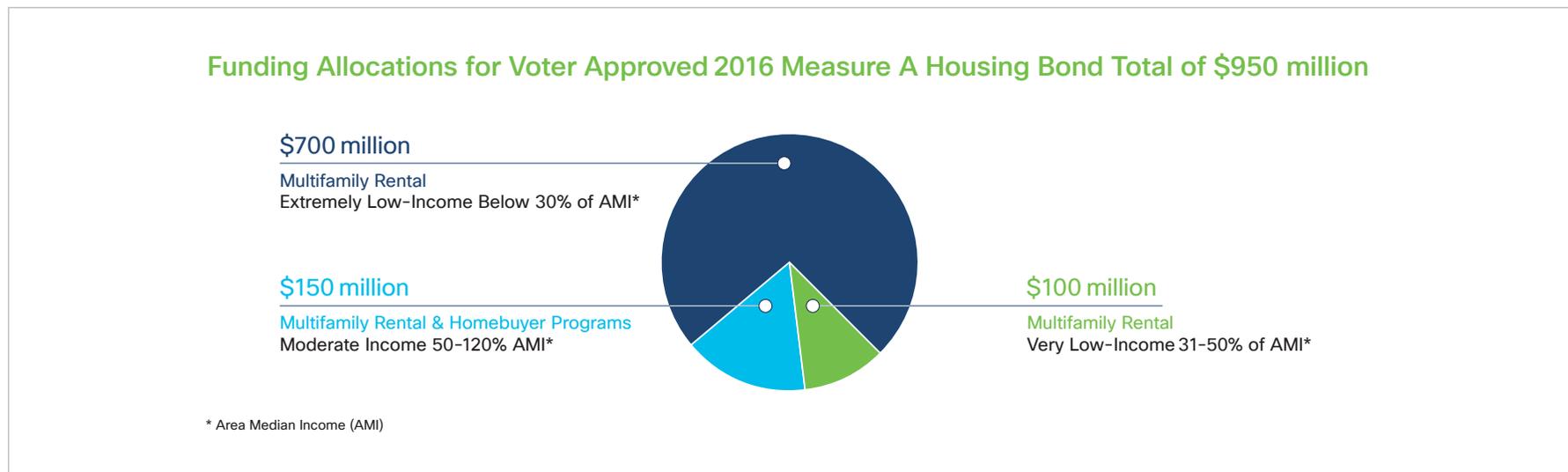
in America, and that the legacy of structural racism is at the root of who becomes homeless.

Destination: Home partnered with the national SPARC Initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) to examine the link between racial inequity and homelessness in Santa Clara County.

Based on the report, the following strategies were incorporated into Santa Clara County’s Community Plan to End Homelessness:

- Raise the voices and visibility of people of color who have experienced homelessness in the policy and program decisions of the supportive housing system.
- Partner with the safety net system to better understand and address the systemic causes of poverty and inequity.
- Adopt new housing and land use policies that help reverse longstanding housing disparities that have negatively impacted people of color.





## 6. Collaboration among service providers

As part of the collective impact model, nonprofit organizations that provide food, housing, and employment and training services also play a critical role. These organizations ensure people receive the services they need while awaiting a place to live, and deliver services that are aligned to the community’s overall objective.

In Santa Clara County, these relationships are also core to the Homelessness Prevention System, designed to prevent all instances of family homelessness.

These partnerships proved critical when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in March 2020.

After an aggressive fundraising effort, Destination: Home was able to leverage its service provider partners to quickly distribute more than \$52 million in financial assistance to 16,756 low-income households impacted by lost jobs or wages due to COVID as of August 31, 2021.

Coalition partners were able to reach vulnerable households that are not always served through traditional forms of assistance.

## 7. Voter-approved public funding

In 2016, members of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors advanced a

\$950 million housing bond measure that allocated \$700 million specifically to develop housing for the community’s lowest-income and homeless residents.

The measure passed, buoyed by solid data from the “Home Not Found” cost study. The funding will help create approximately 120 housing developments over ten years, including 4,800 new units dedicated to extremely low-income households and individuals, families exiting homelessness, and other underserved populations. Prior to Measure A passing, less than .0005% of the total housing stock in Santa Clara County had been restricted for formerly homeless individuals and families.

“ There was a point when I realized that the only way to truly address the challenge was to build more housing units; and for that we needed to secure a dedicated, and significant, funding source. Once we had the funding set aside from Measure A, the initiative really took off and attracted other partners. ”

– **Ky Le**, former Director, County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing, current County of Santa Clara Deputy County Executive

### 8. Strong corporate partnership to provide flexible funding and additional support

While Measure A provided the foundation to move the collective work forward, the public funding alone was not enough to meet the significant need in Santa Clara County. To achieve success, the private sector also needed to step up. Not only with significant financial contributions, but also with thought leadership, employee involvement, and a platform to amplify the importance of the work to leaders at technology companies—the dominant industry in the area.

In early 2018, Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins began asking what he could do to alleviate the homelessness crisis in the community where his company is headquartered. After learning more about the compelling plan to end homelessness in Santa Clara County and Measure A funding, Robbins committed \$50 million from Cisco over five years. At the time, it was the largest corporate contribution ever made to address homelessness in the United States. But it also included an unprecedented commitment by the company to get more involved in an issue that impacted so many of its vulnerable neighbors, and such a large swath of its community.



## V. The Private Sector Partnership

### Flexible, long-term grant funding

Cisco representatives spent time with Destination: Home to understand the problem, its root causes, existing solutions, and the gaps the company could help fill. They looked at their contribution as a true investment in bringing an already proven solution to scale. Together, they developed priorities, goals, and milestones for what the five-year grant funding would achieve.

The \$50 million Cisco contribution seeded the Supportive Housing and Innovation Fund (SHIF), which channels private, philanthropic investments toward solutions for reducing and preventing homelessness. Cisco support proved catalytic in attracting other corporate funders, expanding the impact of Destination: Home's work, and reshaping the supportive housing system to better serve the needs of those who need it most.

### What have corporate contributions to SHIF enabled?

- Support to acquire and plan for 20 new deeply affordable and supportive housing developments, which will produce almost 2,000 new homes

- Capacity building for six non-profit affordable housing developers to expand their future housing pipelines by at least 1,600 new units in the next three years
- Funding government positions dedicated to expediting planning applications, identifying publicly owned parcels, and leverage existing resources towards ending homelessness
- Expanding capacity of the countywide Homelessness Prevention System to serve 1,500 households annually and add services for victims of domestic violence
- Creating the first-of-its-kind online portal for homeless residents to better access records, make appointments, and navigate the system to get off the streets
- Leveraging other types of corporate contributions, including providing first loss capital to create a \$150 million housing loan fund, the largest of its kind to specifically prioritize extremely low-income housing

This private funding has proven invaluable to nonprofit developers like Abode Services, one of the Bay Area's largest creators of supportive housing.

“ We had everything we needed to get a [145-unit supportive housing] project off the ground, but we didn't have all the dollars we needed for the pre-development. Destination: Home basically gave us a grant on that project, because of where we were. And the next time we needed support, it was a loan. So it's really flexible in terms of what the project needs and what the developer can handle. Destination: Home has done this over 25 times, and that is a major commitment to greasing the wheels for these projects to move forward. ”

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– Louis Chicoine, CEO of Abode Services, a nonprofit housing developer

According to CEO Louis Chicoine, Destination: Home has provided capacity-building grants to help him expand his staff, and low-interest loans and grants for pre-development work that would have been far more expensive through traditional lending sources.

### Public and peer-to-peer amplification

Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins champions Destination: Home and the urgency of ending homelessness. His authentic ambassadorship has multiplied the impact of the company's monetary contribution.

Robbins talks about homelessness in news media interviews and uses his platform to encourage others to be a part of the solution. In 2019, Jennifer Loving, CEO, Destination: Home was invited to the company's annual U.S. customer event, Cisco Live, to speak about homelessness in a fireside chat with Robbins. He has convened other corporate leaders and Cisco customers and partners to learn more about the problem and inspire them

to get involved. Several technology companies have since collectively invested millions of dollars in Destination: Home's initiatives. For example, in November 2019, Apple invested \$50M in the Supportive Housing and Innovation Fund (SHIF) that Cisco seeded.

Inspired by their CEO's leadership, Cisco employees have stepped up in big ways to support Destination: Home. For example, different teams of employees have assembled and distributed move-in kits, provided communications consulting, and funded a valuable race and equity research report. Cisco employees regularly donate to and volunteer with Destination: Home, and request matching gifts from the Cisco Foundation. These employee-led efforts generated an estimated \$670,000 in cash and in-kind support for Destination: Home between March 2018 and June 2021.

### Thought leadership and partnership

The Cisco team that manages the day-to-day relationship with Destination: Home has become part of the Collective Impact model itself. For example, the company's grant portfolio manager was a member of the steering committee that developed the 2020-2025 Community Plan to End Homelessness, has advised the organization on fundraising and helped screen candidates for a new development role. And the company's government affairs team has advocated for state and local policies and legislation that could affect resources for addressing homelessness in the community.

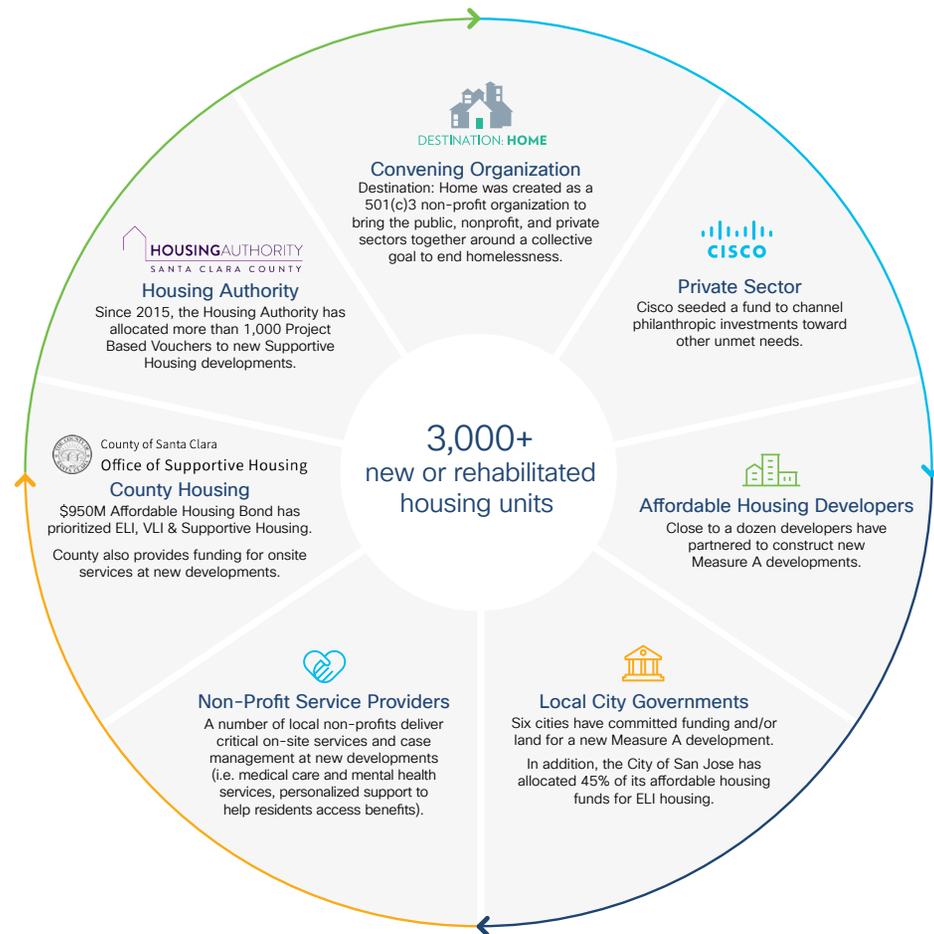
Not every company has the ability to donate significant resources. But the partnership with Cisco, and their engagement with the existing system, provides a roadmap for how an impassioned and empowered group of employees can make a meaningful impact on ending homelessness in their community.

## VI. Blueprint for replication outside Santa Clara County

While every community is different, we hope the information in this guide can help inform initiatives to address homelessness in other communities. The tools on the following pages are designed to help you identify partners who could work together to develop a community action plan for homelessness.

This image shows the many partners working together in Santa Clara County to build supportive housing for the homeless and other extremely-low-income residents.

### Example of the Collective Impact Model



Last updated: September 13, 2019

The breakdown of new and rehabilitated units is available via this County of Santa Clara fact sheet.

## Assessing Your Local Environment for Collective Impact

The questions below will help you think about where your community is in terms of convening a cross-section of stakeholders to address homelessness.

- 1 What organization could lead a collective impact effort around homelessness?
- 2 What other organizations, funders, corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies would be willing to engage?
- 3 What services and programs already exist in, and what is their mission/approach?
- 4 What barriers currently exist for these services and programs? What more is needed?
- 5 Who are the elected officials and government leaders who advocate for the homeless?
- 6 What data/research exists?
- 7 Who has championed policy changes or public funding campaigns?
- 8 Are there existing conflicts between homeless advocates, residents, business owners and governments related to addressing homelessness and if so, what are they?
- 9 What corporations could provide unrestricted private funding to unlock opportunities?
- 10 What other issues exist in your community?

“There’s lots of good work out there. Don’t think you have to reinvent the wheel. Take a look around, and then do what’s right for your community, given best practices out there. And don’t be so engaged in the work that you fail to share what you’re doing, because we’re going to have to learn from each other.”

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– Miguel Márquez, M.P.P., J.D.,  
Chief Operating Officer, County of Santa Clara



### Conclusion

Homelessness is a massive and daunting problem. But it is solvable when members of the community work together toward a common goal. And while the conditions that exist in Santa Clara County may not exist in every county throughout the United States, every community has a genuine interest in ending homelessness.

Identify what could work best for your community. Think about the people experiencing homelessness, and what would help them move from life on the streets to living in a home. Taking a collaborative, client-centered approach is the first step on the journey to ending homelessness for our fellow citizens.

## VII. Resources/Appendix

- [Community Plan to End Homelessness in Santa Clara County \(2020–2025\) and Executive Summary](#)
- [Home Not Found: Cost of Homelessness in Santa Clara County](#)
- [Destination: Home website](#)
- [Destination: Home Housing Ready Communities Initiative](#)
- [Lived Experience Board Resources](#)
- [Report: Race and Homelessness in Santa Clara County](#)
- [About Measure A-Affordable Housing Bond](#)
- [Supportive Housing Effectiveness study \(UCSF\)](#)
- [“Bay Area Activist Enlists Tech Giants to Help End Homelessness,”](#)  
The Chronicle of Philanthropy
- [American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley podcast with Jennifer Loving \(Destination: Home\), Ky Le \(Santa Clara County\), Jackie Morales-Ferrand \(City of San Jose\), Erin Connor \(Cisco\)](#)

