



Tommy Calvert
County Commissioner, Precinct 4

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STATEMENT FROM COMMISSIONER TOMMY CALVERT ON HOUSING INSECURITY

For those of us who are from San Antonio, we have seen more people unhoused than ever—mothers, veterans, working families, and elders are living without shelter, safety, or stability. Our emergency systems are overwhelmed, neighborhoods are strained, and too many of our fellow residents are forced to navigate life without the support they need. The policies being proposed by national leaders are setting us up for a crisis on our streets.

To confront this crisis, I am proposing a seven-year plan to create 3,000 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, ideally in 250-unit clusters to support neighborhood integration. In tandem, we must scale transitional housing options such as pallet homes, affordable senior housing, owner-occupied rehab funds, emergency shelter units, rapid rehousing, and clean community tent villages—to serve an additional 3,000 individuals who are currently unsheltered and without low barrier options.

While the 2024 Point-in-Time Count (PIT) recorded 3,372 individuals experiencing homelessness, that one-night snapshot grossly undercounts the full extent of the problem. **Haven for Hope** reports over 9,800 individuals interacted with their services last year. In a county discussion last year, Haven's CEO projected that an additional 6,000 individuals could become homeless by 2030—an increase that could triple today's PIT numbers if we fail to expand housing capacity. I felt it was time to sound the alarm and elevate the conversation to the community, to ask "Is this the type of crisis we want to tackle after it's too late?"

According to Close to Home, key drivers of this trend include a growing population and rising rents—with the average cost of 1–2 bedroom apartments rising approximately 15% from 2020 to 2024. At the same time, consumer prices in San Antonio have surged more than 16%. Wages have not kept pace. And according to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 27% of renter households in the San Antonio–New Braunfels area are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than half their income on housing.



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Families that were barely holding on are now slipping through the cracks—cracks that soon may not have federal rental assistance to prevent people from living on our streets.

Real solutions are not cheap.

- Permanent Supportive Housing units cost an estimated \$150,000–\$200,000 each.
- Pallet shelters and other transitional options cost \$7,500–\$25,000 per unit.

But the cost of inaction is even greater:

- Bexar County's University Health system absorbs more than \$100 million in uncompensated care annually—much of it tied to preventable ER visits by unhoused residents.
- Jail cycling for minor infractions costs \$70 to \$90 per person per day, without breaking the cycle of homelessness.
- The City of San Antonio spends more than \$20 million each year responding to homelessness through law enforcement and EMS.

We have been doing the inhumane sweeps for years and they are not working. Investing in housing—particularly PSH, which reduces jail bookings, ER visits, and 911 calls—is both fiscally prudent and morally essential.

To support these goals, I am proposing the creation of a County land bank to identify, assemble, and repurpose underutilized public land for housing development.

These master-planned, trauma-informed communities would serve as a foundation for stability and include:

- Mental health and substance use disorder treatment centers
- On-site workforce development and job training programs
- Food security and nutrition services
- Transportation access and childcare and healthcare support

To finance this vision, I support exploring a \$450 million housing bond—a generational investment to make housing affordability a reality for all Bexar County residents.



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As we build local momentum, we must also acknowledge growing threats from Washington. Recent federal proposals would:

- Eliminate the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, halting affordable housing construction like the Fortuna Court project with Habitat for Humanity. In 2024, Bexar County received \$723,000 in funding through this program.
- Defund the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which supports infrastructure and social services in 26 Bexar County cities and unincorporated areas. In 2024, Bexar County received \$2.3 million in funding through this program.

These proposals would dismantle the country's most effective safety net just as local demand is set to increase. Local leadership must rise where federal support is failing.

As we expand services, equity must be our compass. Communities like Precinct 4 have long shouldered a disproportionate share of social infrastructure without receiving equivalent investment in opportunity. No one side of town should carry the full burden, and every neighborhood must be included in the solution.

This will require coordination across city, county, state, nonprofit, and private sectors—but more than anything, it will require the courage to lead.

As we begin the summer budgets, every elected leader needs to increase our resources to the tsunami of homelessness that will be seen on our streets. This should include an increase to directly compensate for the loss in HOME and CDBG funds.

In addition, I will be meeting to with the Bexar County Medical Examiner to take a hard look at how we count heat-related deaths in our county. This isn't just a public health conversation—it's a housing conversation. Because when the mercury rises, those without shelter are the first to suffer and far too often, the first to die.

This moment demands more than good intentions.

It demands political will.

Let's all step up.