

HOUSING

A Hidden Minority

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

- :19 Homeless people are a hidden and often ignored minority in our society. Far from sharing in equity, they live on the streets, in cars, under bridges, in empty buildings, and within patches of dense brush on interstate rights of way. In 2007, St. Petersburg police slashed tents belonging to the homeless, citing their conditions as fire hazards. After the episode, a homeless advocacy group called St. Petersburg one of the nation's meanest cities. Also in 2007, Catholic Charities and governmental groups founded Pinellas Hope, a temporary shelter for people who have no place to live. It offered tents, apartments, cottages, meals, and counsel to help people become self-sufficient and enjoy a greater share of social equity. It has taken in many tens of thousands of people about half of whom move on to stable housing. In 2019, on a given night in Florida, 28328 people experienced homelessness.
- 1:20 An annual count turns up thousands of homeless adults, children, and families who don't have the money to pay market rents, secure subsidized housing or even access the limited number of temporary shelters or beds.
- 1:38 The current affordable housing crisis in Pinellas County does not bode well for the prospect of housing the homeless. Countywide housing research revealed that there has been a sharp decrease in new units of affordable housing, down from 401 new units in 2012 to only 86 units in 2016. It is estimated that there is a deficit of almost 20,000 housing units for extremely low income households countywide and that was before the COVID-19 crisis brought housing and security and homelessness to the doorsteps of thousands of working poor and middle class families.
- 2:13 This situation has become more acute due to COVID-19. The affordable and accessible housing crisis in Pinellas County must be a focus for health equity advocates as we confront this unacceptable situation in our community.

