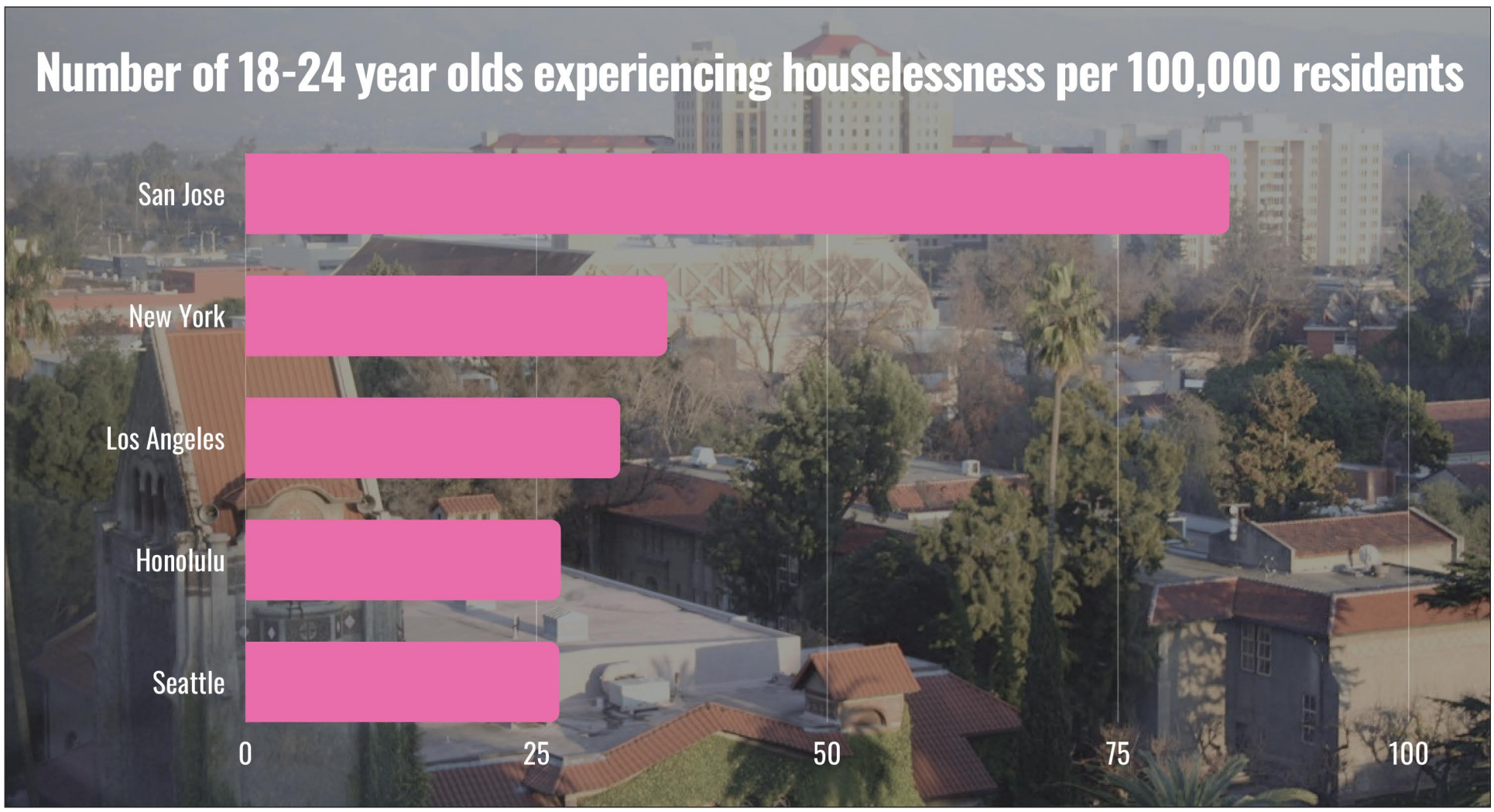


INFOGRAPHIC BY RAINIER DE FORT-MENARES; SOURCE: UNITED WAY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA

San Jose tops nation in houseless youth

By Dylan Newman
STAFF WRITER

San Jose has been ranked first out of 100 major cities as the area with the highest number of houseless young adults per capita, establishing San Jose as the number one city in youth houselessness nationwide, according to a Feb. 11 San Jose Spotlight article.

San Jose has nearly 85 houseless young adults between the age of 18 and 24 for every 100,000 residents, according to the Spotlight article.

Kristen Weaver, SJSU Cares student affairs case manager, said although Santa Clara County has "amazing support services that are often overwhelmed," the cost of living in San Jose is to blame for the amount of housing insecurity in the area.

"The cost of living in the city of San Jose is exorbitant," Weaver said. "There are not sufficient social structures in place and resources from the state and federal government to be able to support that in a more substantive way."

SJSU Cares is the university's case management and resource system for students who are experiencing financial crises.

It provides supplemental support through programs for students experiencing insecurities with housing and food, including the Rapid Rehousing Program and the Spartan Food Pantry.

The Rapid Rehousing Program is a three-year state pilot program designed to provide direct support to students who are or are at risk of being unhoused, according to the SJSU housing assistance webpage.

Students participating in this program receive additional case management and financial support to aid with housing insecurity.

The Rapid Rehousing Program is planned to end on June 30, 2023.

The program is a partnership with San Jose's Bill Wilson Center, a nonprofit social services and shelter organization that serves people in need of assistance annually in Santa Clara County, according to the Bill Wilson Center website.

Lana Gomez, sociology masters student and member of the Student Homeless Alliance (SHA) said one of the issues that SJSU has with housing the maximum number of students is struggles with the full implementation of the 2020 SJSU-SHA Housing Agreement.

SHA is a student-led advocacy group focusing on addressing houselessness for SJSU students. It created the SJSU-SHA Housing Agreement, which was signed by former SJSU President Mary Papazian.

"For the agreement to be fully implemented, all obstacles to receiving emergency beds need to be removed," Gomez said. "A communication plan needs to be fully implemented so that students know the eligibility requirements and that the emergency beds are available to them."

The agreement establishes guidelines for SJSU Cares, which includes the implementation of 9,125 emergency beds for students in need.

It also established the incorporation of rental assistance and a dedication to the future construction of affordable housing units for current and former SJSU students experiencing houselessness.

Gomez said SHA is meeting with SJSU President Cynthia Teniente-Matson to discuss the housing agreement in March.

The group met with Teniente-Matson on Wednesday, according to a post on SHA's Instagram account.

"This agreement includes ensuring that SJSU Cares is well resourced, fully integrated, effective and emergency beds are available and accessible to all students." Gomez said. "Dedicating 15% of all new units to affordable housing to future construction on buildings like Alquist will help aid this crisis."

The Alquist Redevelopment is a planned mixed-income housing facility with up to 1,000 units for graduate students, faculty and staff. It is a part of SJSU's plan to make housing more accessible to the SJSU community, according to its website.

Computer science senior Yorick van de Water said constructing new buildings in San Jose is problematic because of the complications in obtaining permits.

He said he wasn't the least bit surprised when he heard the news about San Jose's ranking in youth houselessness .

Van de Water said a solution to this is through the increase of new housing projects, which would turn homes currently built of decent quality into affordable housing units.

"There should be buildings going up, lots of them," he said. "If there was enough being built, then the price of housing would come down. And then us students and other people at the bottom of the economic totem pole could afford proper or at least better housing."

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