

Climate Action Pocket Questions

Title: Authorize the Mayor to Execute a Revised Memorandum of Understanding for the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH)

Purpose: The purpose is to authorize the mayor to execute a MOU with the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness for FY 2026.

Department: Housing and Community Services

1. How will this action impact the Town's or the community's greenhouse gas emissions?

- b. Will not reduce or increase greenhouse gas emissions

2. Please explain.

- Adoption of the MOU on the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) should not measurably increase or decrease greenhouse gas emissions. While some greenhouse gas emissions are associated with housing, unhoused individuals are forced to contribute to certain kinds of emissions due to lack of access to systems and services—these include, but are not limited to: overreliance on cars and vehicles, dependence on disposable products (which fuels the carbon-costly production of these products), and difficulty recycling or properly disposing of waste.¹

3. Does this action impact:

- a. Water quality
- c. Flooding
- e. Heat islands or extreme heat
- f. Biodiversity
- g. Solid waste
- h. Hazardous waste

4. Please explain.

- Homelessness directly impacts solid and hazardous waste and may potentially impact water quality and biodiversity. This is because without access to waste disposal systems and bathrooms, unhoused individuals are often forced to dispose of waste improperly, which can increase pollution and harm water quality and biodiversity.²

¹ Gutowski, et al. 2008. Environmental Lifestyle Analysis, MIT. [ELSA-IEEE-2008.pdf](#)

² [How Does Homelessness Affect the Environment? – The Institute for Environmental Research and Education](#)

- Additionally, without access to shelter, unhoused individuals may be forced to sleep and live in natural habitats that are not zoned for human dwelling, often near waterways. Fires may be lit in these areas to keep warm in the winter, posing significant environmental risks.³
- Reducing or eliminating homelessness will directly mitigate these outcomes, improve solid and hazardous waste disposal, and thereby support water quality and biodiversity.
- While homelessness does not impact flooding, extreme heat, or air quality, these issues directly impact homelessness. Unhoused individuals often face the worst consequences of extreme weather events, which are being exacerbated by climate change.⁴ Lack of shelter, lack of transportation, and lack of food and water access become matters of life or death for unhoused populations during environmental crises and extreme weather events.
- Programs that support the homeless and work to reduce or eliminate homelessness support climate resilience and climate justice outcomes by ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations do not bear most of the burden of climate change and extreme weather. Hence, the Carrboro Community Climate Action Plan acknowledges that homeless populations (which disproportionately comprise BIPOC) face worse outcomes due to climate change, and states that areas with high homeless populations should be at the forefront of climate resilience and climate justice initiatives.⁵

5. How is your department planning to mitigate any climate or environmental impacts? NOTE: This does not reflect a formal commitment by the Town of Carrboro.

- The Housing and Community Services department continues to center environmental and climate impacts throughout our work. In this case, there are no impacts in need of mitigation.

³ Barton, 2025. [Homelessness And Its Environmental Impact: A Hidden Ecological Crisis | ShunWaste](#)

⁴ Christensen. 2024. [A Matter of Climate Justice: Heat and Air Pollution Combine to Worsen Effects of Homelessness - PMC](#)

⁵ [Community-Climate-Action-Plan---Updated-Oct-2020](#)