MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

MOVING TO END AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

A Review of the Unsheltered Point-in-Time Count Process

2023 PIT COUNT PROJECT REPORT

Lisa Trauernicht
January 31, 2023

Contents

BACKGROUND 2
WHY DO WE DO THE PIT COUNT? 2
WHY DOES THE PIT COUNT TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF JANUARY? 2
WHEN WILL THE RESULTS BE AVAILABLE? 3
PLANNING TIMELINE 4
PIT COUNT METHODOLOGY 4
YOUTH PIT COUNT PLANNING 7
COUNTING US APP and the PIT SURVEY 8
PIT COUNT VOLUNTEERS 8
KEY VOLUNTEERS and GATHERING LOCATIONS 9
PIT COUNT OUTREACH SUPPLIES 10
BUDGET 11
PIT COUNT COMMUNICATIONS 12
PLANNING FOR FUTURE PIT COUNTS 12
APPENDICES 13
APPENDIX 1 - KEY VOLUNTEERS AND LOCATIONS 13
APPENDIX 2 – 2023 PIT SURVEY QUESTIONS 14
DISABLING CONDITIONS 15
APPENDIX 3 – SALEM PIT COUNT AREAS 17
RESOURCES 18

BACKGROUND

The 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count was held during the week of January 23, 2023, with targeted volunteer outreach on January 24, 25, and 28.

The PIT Count was a collaborative effort among community partners, jurisdictions throughout the Marion-Polk region, and over 200 community volunteers.

2023 PIT Count Workgroup Members

- Commissioner Danielle Bethell, Marion County, Co-Chair
- Councilor Shannon Corr, City of Independence, Co-Chair
- Matt Herbert, Church at the Park
- Amber Kramer, Polk County
- Sara Webb, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that this annual, nationwide census be conducted in the last ten days of January. Its purpose is to gather information on the total number and characteristics of individuals and households experiencing homelessness. The PIT Count provides a snapshot of homelessness across the region.

WHY DO WE DO THE PIT COUNT?

WHY DOES THE PIT COUNT TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF JANUARY?

- Having the same timeframe for every community ensures consistency across the U.S.
- The same timeframe year after year ensures that trends are monitored appropriately.
- It is related to a night in winter because each CoC is likely maximizing its resources to serve people's needs. Thus, this timing can provide a more

precise picture of who is unable to access emergency shelter or other crisis response assistance.
- It is at the end of the month to ensure that people who can only pay for temporary housing for part of the month are generally included in the count. For example, some people can afford to stay in a motel, but only for the first few weeks after receiving their public benefits payment at the beginning of the month.

WHEN WILL THE RESULTS BE AVAILABLE?

Once all the data is collected there is a data cleaning process to review for duplications and addition of HMIS data, as well as a review of data quality wherein information is validated for conformity.

Examples:

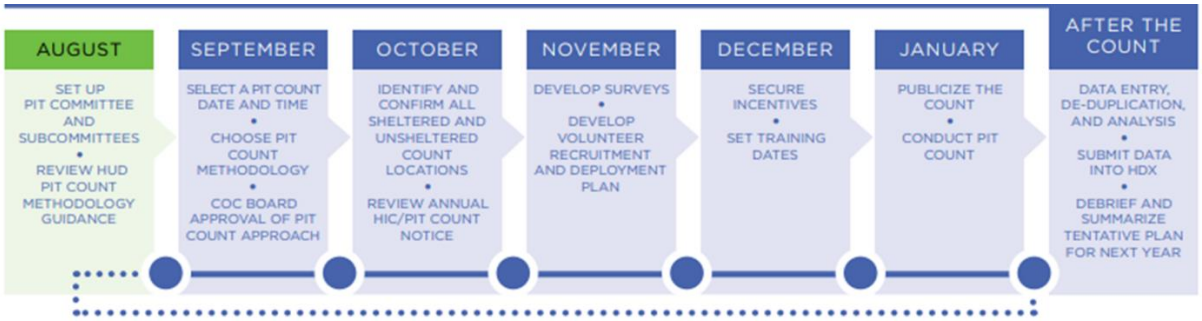
- If an unsheltered survey answer to "where did you sleep on the night of 1/23?" is "in a shelter," (which happened multiple times in the past).
- Use of the correct survey (sheltered or unsheltered),
- Consistency of answers about chronic homelessness, and
- Geo-mapping validation.

It may take weeks/months before PIT Count data is ready for distribution.

PLANNING TIMELINE

This was this first year for the PIT Count to be under the purview of the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (MWVHA). Previously the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA) took on the lead role for the Count. The timing of the transfer of responsibility to MWVHA resulted in a truncated timeframe for planning and preparation.

Below is the HUD recommended planning timeline. Planning for the 2023 PIT Count did not begin until November, with the first PIT Count Workgroup meeting being held late in the month.



PIT Count Planning Worksheet https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/PIT-Count-Planning-Worksheet.pdf

Board approval of the PIT Plan is required by HUD. Having the board approved plan in place at the beginning of the preparation process will provide the framework for the PIT Count methodology.

Areas for Improvement

1. Begin planning earlier in the year to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the project plan.
2. Obtain board approval of the PIT Plan at the beginning of the process.

PIT COUNT METHODOLOGY

There are three parts to the PIT Count:

1. **Sheltered Count**: An annual PIT Count of people staying in emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or transitional housing.

   Per HUD, CoCs should use client data already collected and entered in HMIS as the primary data source for the sheltered PIT count for emergency shelter, Safe Haven, and transitional housing projects that participate in HMIS.

2. **Unsheltered Count**: Surveying people residing in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings.
3. **Youth Count**: Focuses on unaccompanied youth ages 13-25 experiencing homelessness.

   The unsheltered Count methodology for youth and adults included a combination of the "complete coverage count" and "known locations count".

   Complete Coverage Count: In this approach, the whole CoC geography is canvassed. Instead of going only to specific blocks or locations (e.g., the bus station), CoCs send teams of enumerators throughout the geography covered by their CoCs, searching for and counting all people who are unsheltered.

   Known Locations Count: This approach identifies known locations where people who are unsheltered are located at night or sends enumerators to specific neighborhoods, blocks, census tracts, or other geographies within the CoCs to count unsheltered homeless people staying in those locations. For example, if homeless outreach teams are aware of an encampment of homeless persons under a bridge and alongside the highway, the CoCs would send enumerators to this location as part of the unsheltered count. When using this approach, CoCs should attempt to canvass all known locations within their geography where people who are unsheltered are believed to be staying, unless doing so is not feasible or safe, in which case an alternative method should be used to count people in known locations not included on the night of the Count.

   PIT Count Methodology Guide pg. 18 https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/PIT-Count-Methodology-Guide.pdf

For Consideration:

1. Consider changing the hours of the Count to align with times that more people are found in known locations.

   Many volunteers reported not being able to find people in known locations and suggested that a different time of day might be beneficial for reaching people. Consulting with street outreach workers on this could provide insight into the best times to reach the unsheltered based on their patterns of movement during the day.

2. Research and consider using a combination of the PIT survey (census) and sampling approach.

A census count is an enumeration of all homeless people or a distinct subset of homeless people (e.g., households with adults and children) in CoCs. This counting approach provides a direct and complete count of all people and their characteristics, does not require any estimates, and can be used as a benchmark for future PIT counts. A census count should incorporate the entire CoCs' geography. However, it can be difficult and resource intensive to canvass, count, and survey all homeless persons in the CoC.

Sampling can provide an accurate measure of the CoCs' homeless population if it is done correctly, including an appropriate sample size. There are two approaches to sampling – random sampling and non-random sampling.

Sampling is a partial enumeration of the entire homeless population (or a subset of the homeless population) and can be more feasible for some CoCs or for certain required data (e.g., substance use disorder). CoCs may sample a smaller group of homeless people that are selected from the larger homeless population or a subset (e.g., homeless youth) and use it to estimate the number and characteristics of the entire homeless population or a subset within the CoCs. CoCs may also sample by counting homeless people located in certain geographic regions within the CoCs and then use this information to estimate the overall homeless population. Sampling can provide an accurate measure of the CoCs' homeless population if it is done correctly, including an appropriate sample size. There are two approaches to sampling – random sampling and non-random sampling.

CoCs may choose to combine census and sampling approaches to complete their PIT count. For example, a CoC may conduct a census to count the total number of homeless people in the CoC, while using a random sampling approach to generate the necessary demographic information, such as gender and race.

Choosing the Right PIT Count Methodology, PIT Count Methodology Guide pg. 10
https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/PIT-Count-Methodology-Guide.pdf

A common question during the PIT Count was,

"I see people living there and they don't want to talk to me, can I count them anyway?"

The answer is "no". MWVHA's PIT Count did not allow for "observational" counting.
Observational counting has been suggested, however, it is not advised.

Given that observation-based PIT count activities do not include verbal or physical interaction between people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and those conducting the PIT count, **PIT count observations should only take place at nighttime on the night designated for the PIT count, preferably between the hours of 10pm and 6am**. This allows enumerators some amount of certainty that the people observed are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is impossible to determine whether someone was experiencing homelessness on a prior night just by looking at them, so observations should not be used with a post-night-of-the-count approach. Similarly, one cannot assume that because a person was experiencing unsheltered homelessness on one night, they would also be experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the future, so observation-based counts should not be conducted before the designated PIT date.

PIT count observations allow CoCs to count the total number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in a given area (i.e., conduct a "head count"). However, because it is not feasible to determine someone's demographic characteristics just by looking at them (e.g., determining race or gender), **HUD highly recommends not using observations to collect demographic PIT count data.**

Unsheltered Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Observation Guidance

YOUTH PIT COUNT PLANNING

A small team of youth service providers met a few times to plan for targeted outreach to YYAs during the PIT Count.

A youth survey was created and used by service providers and shared with McKinney Vento liaisons in the schools throughout Marion and Polk counties. Targeted outreach to youth was conducted in Salem and Polk County.

Youth were encouraged to volunteer to help with the Count, and were offered a stipend for their time.

Areas for Improvement

1. Have a dedicated youth PIT Count coordinator to ensure good communication and outreach to YYAs and others through the planning process and during the Count.

COUNTING US APP and the PIT SURVEY

PIT Count surveys are conducted using a free mobile app that is available for use on smartphones, tablets, and computers. The Counting Us app tags the geographic location where the survey was conducted, allowing count administrators to monitor the progress of the count.

Volunteers without access to the app were paired with volunteers who had the app on their mobile device.

The PIT Count Workgroup approved customization of the standard HUD survey questions. See Appendix 2 for the list of survey questions.

PIT COUNT VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a vital role in the success of the unsheltered and youth counts. Volunteer teams (two people per team) go out into the community to engage with people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers conduct brief interviews and if available, offer hygiene items and other supplies, food, and resource lists to participants.

There were over 200 volunteers that conducted surveys throughout Marion and Polk counties. MWVHA's street outreach teams were vital partners.

Areas for Improvement:

1. Recruit more volunteers – not all that registered volunteers participated.
2. Volunteer waiver – make it easier to sign and return the waiver.
3. Provide better training–information on the Counting Us app.
4. Provide better training-information on what to expect at the gathering location.
5. Consider using the Counting Us volunteer registration portal to streamline volunteer management and have all data in one location.

KEY VOLUNTEERS and GATHERING LOCATIONS

Key volunteers serve as lead volunteers providing support and resources to volunteers in a specific community.

A list of key volunteers, gathering locations, and PIT Count stationary sites can be found in Appendix 1.

Key volunteer duties

- Recruit local PIT Count volunteers
- Ensure that volunteers know how to use the Counting Us app
- Answer volunteers' questions about the Count
- Distribute supplies for volunteers to take out into the community during the Count

Gathering locations are areas where volunteers meet to get their volunteer assignments and pick up their outreach supplies. The City of Salem was divided into seven regions to provide geographic coverage of the city and give volunteers the opportunity to register for the area that they wanted to work. See Appendix 3 for the map of Salem's PIT Count areas.

Stationary sites refers to organizations hosting an open house for the PIT Count to attract clients and provide some additional services. For example, ARCHES and Neighbors Serving Underserved Neighbors hosted stationary site events that included visits from the Marion County Health and Human Services outreach medical van. Polk County held a Connect event that highlighted and connected participants to county services and offered haircuts and a meal as part of the outreach. Other organizations hosted lunches and other services as part of their outreach.

Areas for Improvement:

1. Develop training for key volunteers and provide better direction on expectations during the PIT Count.
2. Have meetings with all key volunteers to ensure consistent practices and messaging.
3. Encourage key volunteers to match first time volunteers with experienced volunteers.
4. Consider using the Counting Us Region and Count Team Management feature to allow for better coordination for the volunteer manager and key volunteers.

PIT COUNT OUTREACH SUPPLIES

MWVHA partnered with Big 5 for a majority of the outreach supplies with included sleeping bags tents, tarps, emergency blankets, phone charger banks, lanterns, water bottles, pet waste bags, dog biscuits, backpacks (for volunteers to carry supplies during outreach), gloves, wool socks, and flashlights. Big 5 discounted the order by $4,948.50.

Hygiene items were ordered through a different retailer and that order was impacted by supply chain issues, so the supplies did not arrive in time for the Count. Work is in progress to remedy this issue.

The Marion Polk Food Share provided five pallets of "grab-and-go" food to be given out during the Count.

The United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley offered storage of food supplies at its Good360 warehouse and storage of other supplies at its main administrative office. United Way staff and volunteers sorted the food into boxes to be distributed to various locations throughout the region. MWVHA consultants sorted supplies for distribution.

Outreach supplies and food were distributed to Dallas, Keizer, Mill City, Stayton, Woodburn, and 8 gathering locations in Salem.

The PIT Count Workgroup approved a grant of $2,000 to Polk County for its Connect event, as well as grants for $1,000 to Stayton and Woodburn for their PIT events.

Northwest Human Services' (NWHS) medical outreach team serves the most medically fragile of the homeless population. Some supplies were set aside for NWHS specifically for outreach to the hard to reach medically fragile.

There was a lot of shifting of supplies throughout the week to accommodate needs in different areas.

NWHS created a resource list for volunteers in Salem to distribute during the Count.

Areas for Improvement

1. Consult with outreach workers to determine the most needed items for distribution and the amounts necessary for each area.
2. Have a person who understands the needs of the different areas designated to manage/distribute supplies.
3. Provide soft food for unsheltered people with dental issues.
4. Ensure that supplies are available the week prior to the event.

BUDGET

MWVHA did not have a designated budget for the PIT Count so once responsibility for the Count transferred from MWVCAA, fundraising began in an effort to cover costs. As this was a new role for MWVHA, a staff consultant was hired for overall project management. A second consultant was hired to assist with coordinating sponsorships and donations.

Revenue Source	Amount	
Willamette Health Council (WHC)	$ 24,886.00	
Alliance General Fund (GF)	$ 14,317.00	
City of Salem	$ 10,000.00	
CBEL	$ 5,000.00	
PacificSource	$ 2,000.00	
Misc. Cash Donations	$ 1,558.00	
Salem Health Grant	$ 1,500.00	
Total	**$ 59,261.00**	
Expenditure type	Amount	Revenue Source(s)
Coordination	$ 25,541.00	WHC, City of Salem, GF
Supplies (Big 5, Bi-Mart)	$ 21,961.68	WHC, CBEL, GF
Gift Cards (Winco)	$ 1,008.34	PacificSource
Counting Us app	$ 4,350.00	WHC, Salem Health
Polk County	$ 2,000.00	WHC, PacificSource, GF
Santiam Hospital	$ 1,000.00	Misc. cash, GF
A Ray of Hope Today!	$ 1,000.00	Misc. cash, GF
Total	**$ 56,861.02**	
Remaining balance	**$ 2,399.98**	

Areas for Consideration

1. Going forward, consider the PIT Count in the ORS-190 budget planning.
2. Consider parameters for funding allocations for different PIT Count locations.

PIT COUNT COMMUNICATIONS

Communications outreach for the PIT Count included

- MWVHA newsletters that reach about 1900 people
- Social media posts
- Outreach to newspapers and radio
- Jurisdiction newsletters and social media outlets
- Outreach to service providers and community partners

PLANNING FOR FUTURE PIT COUNTS

In planning for future PIT Counts, consideration should be made to the time commitment required for effective planning and execution of the Count.

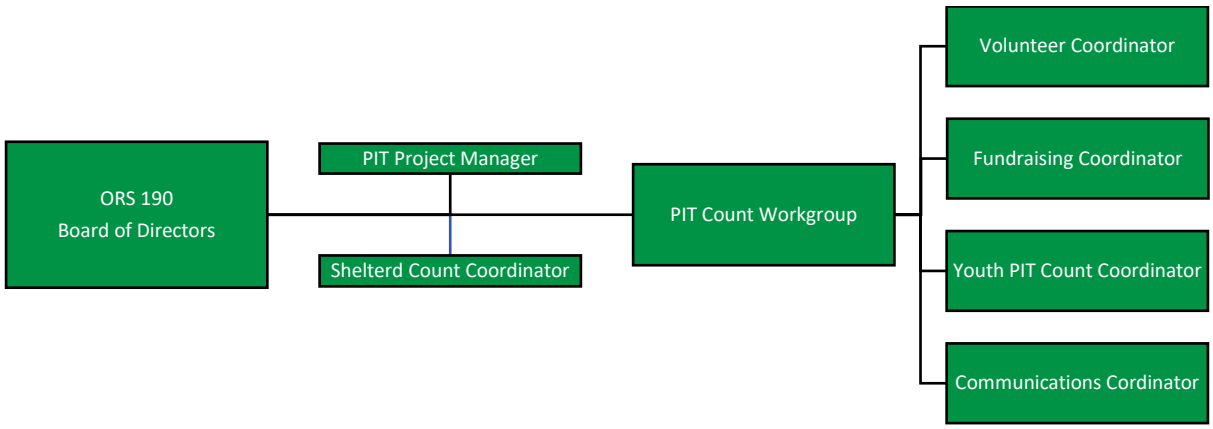
Each role in the organization chart below is vital to carrying out the PIT Count.

The PIT Count included volunteer recruitment and distribution of food and supplies over three days, however, MWVHA's street outreach teams continued targeted outreach to areas of known camps throughout the week.

The PIT Count is a big lift for MWVHA and for the organizations that participated. Countless hours of donated time and resources went into this regional event.

Areas for Consideration

1. Consider having subcommittees of the PIT Count workgroup with a point person for each area: volunteers, fundraising, youth Count, and communications.
2. Outline the roles and responsibilities as well as the decision-making chain of command.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - KEY VOLUNTEERS AND LOCATIONS

City of Salem

Key Volunteer	Location
Gretchen Bennett	Salem Police Department 333 Division St NE, Salem
Christine Sommer	Marion County Housing Authority 2645 Portland Rd NE, Salem
Rick Richardson, Salem SOS	Chemeketa Community College 4000 Lancaster Drive NE
Jake Snell, Salem SOS	ARCHES Inn 1288 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem
Dominique Schlosser	ShangriLa 4080 Reed Rd SE # 150, Salem
Elaine Lozier	PacificSource 4263 Commercial St. SE, Salem
Matt Herbert	Cascades Gateway Park 2100 Turner Rd SE, Salem
Sara Quick	Salem Housing Authority 360 Church St SE, Salem
Kristin Kuenz-Barber	NWHS Medical Clinic 1233 Edgewater St NW, Salem
STATIONARY SITES	
Alisa Tobin	HOME 625 Union St. N.E, Salem
Sara Webb	ARCHES 615 Commercial St NE, Salem
Stephen Goins	HOAP 694 Church St NE, Salem
Lexi Meyer	HOST 1143 Liberty St NE, Salem
Alberto Maldonado	Salem Drop – Youth Count 246 State St, Salem
	This location was not available during the Count but youth from Salem Drop were able to help with youth outreach during the Count.

Marion County

STATIONARY SITES	Location
Kim Dwyer	Stayton Community Center 400 W Virginia St, Stayton
Ali Swanson	Neighbors Serving Underserved Neighbors 1560 Hardcastle Ave., Woodburn
Jane James	Idanha-Detroit Food Pantry 397 Church St., Idanha
Sarah White	Sheltering Silverton 345 Westfield St #304, Silverton
Christina Korkow	Santiam Outreach Community Center 280 NE Santiam Blvd, Mill City

Polk County

Key Volunteer	Location
Shannon Corr	The Gate 1501 Monmouth St. Independence
Christopher Lopez	Community Life Church (Formerly Praise) 189 S Monmouth Ave, Monmouth
STATIONARY SITE	
Amber Kramer	Evangelical Bible Church 1175 SE Howe St., Dallas

APPENDIX 2 – 2023 PIT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Have you already been interviewed today for the Point in Time Count? ❑ Yes ❑ No (If Yes --- STOP)

2. Where did you sleep on January 23? *MWVHA customized question.*

❑ Abandoned building	❑ Under bridge/ overpass	❑ Jail
❑ Bus/ Train station	❑ Vehicle/ Boat / RV	❑ Motel/Hotel paid for w/ own $
❑ Motel/Hotel paid for by agency	❑ Emergency shelter	❑ Transitional housing
❑ Outdoor encampment	❑ House or apt – rent/own	❑ Treatment program
❑ Park	❑ Hospital	❑ w/ friend or family (couch surfing)
❑ Street or Sidewalk	❑ In a place being evicted from	❑ Other: _____

Question #2 was customized so that the app would continue the survey if a participant answered any of the green options above. Otherwise, if those options were chosen, the survey would have end here.

3. What is your name?
   a. First Name (or Initial): _____ Last Name (or Initial): _____
      ❑ Person Refused
   b. If hesitant, ask "What are your initials?" _____

4. What is your gender? (select all that apply)
❑ Male ❑ Female ❑ A gender other than singularly female or male (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender) ❑ Transgender ❑ Questioning ❑ Don't Know ❑ Refused

5. What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy) ___/ ___ /_____ ❑ Person doesn't know ❑ Person Refused
If refused to answer date of birth, ask "How old are you?" _____
If refused to answer age, "What age range do you fall into?"
❑ <5 ❑ 5-12 ❑ 13-17 ❑ 18-24 ❑ 25-34 ❑ 35-44 ❑ 45-54 ❑ 55-61 ❑ 62+

6. What is your race? (select all that apply)
❑ American Indian, Alaska native, or Indigenous (Specify Tribe (optional): _____)
❑ Asian or Asian American ❑ Black, African American, or African ❑ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ❑ White
❑ Other: _____ ❑ Person doesn't know ❑ Person Refused

7. Are you Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

8. Is this the first time you have been homeless? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused This is asked differently on the Polk survey.

9. How long have you been homeless this time? (Only include time in shelters and/or streets)
❑ 0 to 3 months ❑ 4 to 6 months ❑ 7 to 11 months ❑ 1 to 2 years ❑ 2 to 3 years ❑ 3 years or more

10. How many months did you stay in shelters or on the streets over the past 3 years?
❑ 0 to 3 months ❑ 4 to 6 months ❑ 7 to 11 months ❑ 1 to 2 years ❑ 2 to 3 years ❑ 3 years or more

11. How many separate times have you stayed in shelters or on the streets in the past 3 years? Similar but different question on Polk Survey – How many TOTAL months have you stayed in shelters or on the streets over the past three years? (options listed)
❑ Fewer than 4 times ❑ 4 or more times ❑ Person doesn't know ❑ Refused

DISABLING CONDITIONS

12. Do you have a substance use disorder? ❑ No ❑ Alcohol use disorder ❑ Drug use disorder ❑ Both Alcohol and Drug use disorders ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person Refused
If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

13. Do you have a Chronic Health Condition? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused
If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

14. Do you have a Mental Health Disorder? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused
If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

15. Do you have a Physical Disability? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused
If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

16. Do you have a Developmental Disability? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

17. Do you receive disability benefits? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

18. Do you have AIDS or an HIV related illness? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

19. Are you experiencing homelessness because you are fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

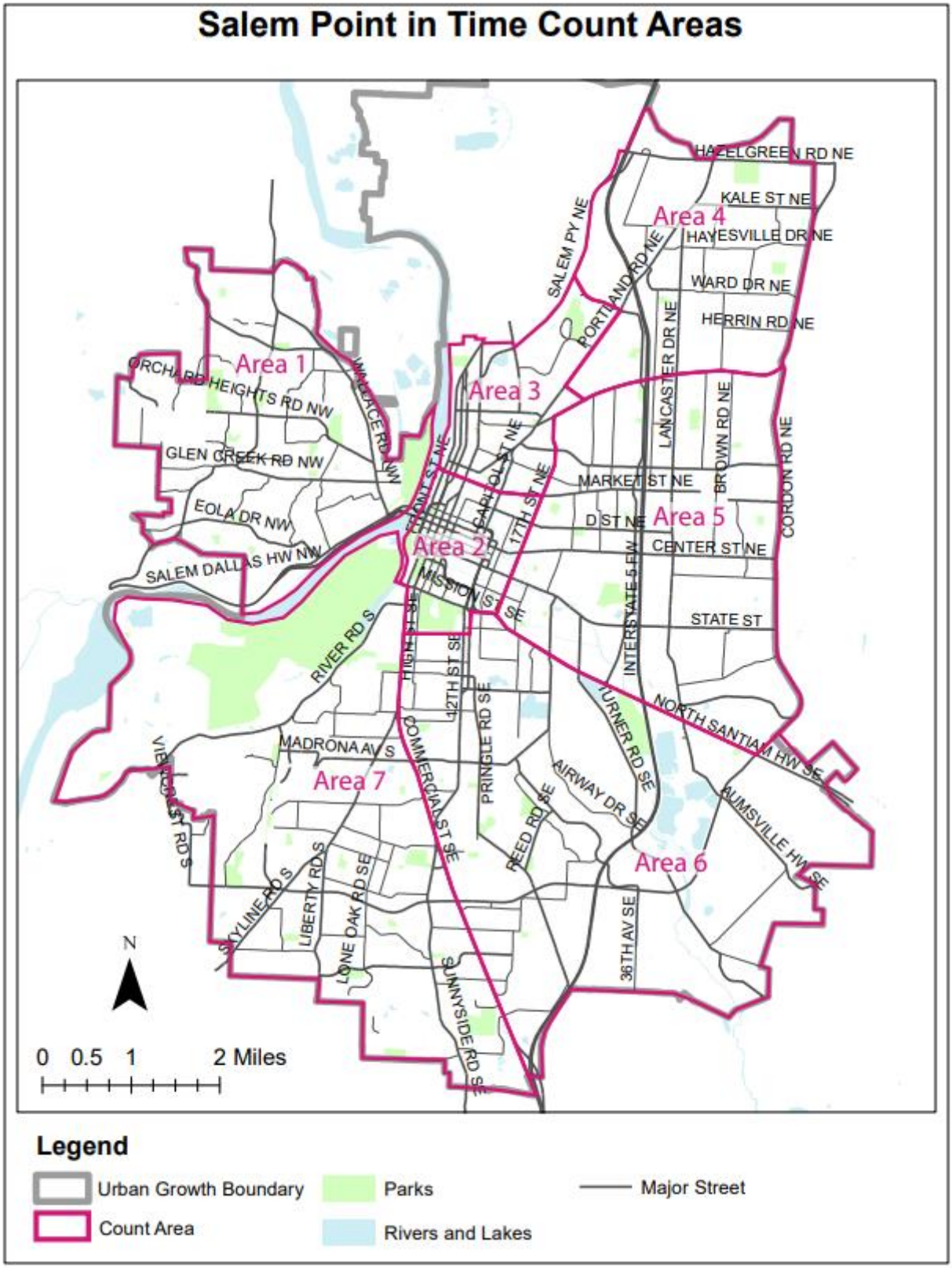
20. Are you a veteran? (served in the US Armed Forces OR been called into a duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist): ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Person Doesn't Know ❑ Person refused

21. Have you experienced domestic or sexual violence in the past? *MWVHA custom question*

22. Notes

_____

APPENDIX 3 – SALEM PIT COUNT AREAS



RESOURCES

PIT and HIC Guides, Tools, and Webinars
PIT and HIC Guides, Tools, and Webinars - HUD Exchange

Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Community Planning and Development
Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide (hudexchange.info)

Point-in-Time Count Planning Worksheet
PIT Count Planning Worksheet (hudexchange.info)

Simtech Solutions – Counting Us App
https://pointintime.info/countingus-mobile-app/

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Planning and Development, Notice: CPD-22-12 Issued: October 26, 2022
2023 HIC and PIT Data Collection Notice (10.26.22) CLEAN (hud.gov)