



# Homelessness Coordinating Committee

*Santa Cruz City Council Subcommittee*

## Final Report and Recommendations

May 9, 2017

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## INTRODUCTION

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Homelessness is an extremely complicated and tragic community issue. This challenge is viewed by many as intractable unless and until our country—the governments and its people—accepts it as a national societal issue worthy of appropriate attention and resources. While whole-heartedly agreeing that federal and state engagement is necessary for long-term reduction and elimination of homelessness, local governments cannot stand aside and wait for other governments to solve our problems. We must and should act.

Local governments and their communities can wield tools to improve the suffering of homelessness and its impacts on the greater community. We are fortunate to have strong and growing community partnerships to help. The City of Santa Cruz (City) is positioned with strong relationships with other local governments and networks that extend into the faith community, the business community, and with our residents and visitors. Galvanizing all sectors of our community will be necessary to initiate the depth of change our community, and those experiencing homelessness here, deserve.

Santa Cruz is grappling with a substantial homeless challenge and sadly, we are not alone. Many other communities are experiencing the same trend of perceived growth in street homelessness and the same reduction in community quality-of-life. Coastal communities in particular have a shared story. The coastal, temperate climate such as ours is a predominant factor in where greater populations of homeless individuals locate.

This is borne out in the data. We understand the very high reported number of homeless individuals in our County from the 2015 Point-in-Time Homeless Census: 1,964 homeless individuals countywide, with 831 in the City of Santa Cruz. Of that 831, nearly 500 were unsheltered with 1,354 unsheltered in the entire county. Our county has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest homeless per capita ratio in the State. The total homelessness was a reported decline from the prior Census (3,536 total individuals counted in 2013 of which 2,895 were unsheltered) and yet the number of homeless individuals in our city today feels greater than ever. The 2017 Point-in-Time Homeless Census, which took place in January 2017, will be released this summer and we expect it will verify the widely held sense of our growing numbers.

Compounding this growing demand for services, the collective resources in the County of Santa Cruz are able to shelter only 58 percent the total countywide unsheltered population (even fewer when the seasonal winter shelter is not operating). Other homeless resources are in short supply, too.

We note the tremendous negative impacts of homelessness in our community. Homelessness affects all: from the suffering and humiliation arising from the lack of services to meet the basic human needs of homeless individuals, to the lack of safe and secure places to sleep and store belongings, to the legitimate public health issue of human waste in our public spaces, to the erosion of the sense of safety and comfort of our residents who encounter individuals with debilitating mental illness or substance use disorder. The City of Santa Cruz invests millions of dollars each year in a combination of homeless services and reacting and responding to the externalities of homelessness. From law enforcement interventions for people in behavioral health crisis, to the clearing of yards and yards of encampment materials from our open spaces, addressing homelessness has become an inadvertent and unstrategic City priority.

The Homelessness Coordinating Committee (Committee) was formed to take a focused look at what can be done to better coordinate across all partners with this challenge, alleviate the suffering of homelessness and shift the City from a reactionary to a proactive stance. Standing on the excellent work and broad-based community engagement of the 2015 *All-In Toward a Home for Every County Resident: The Santa Cruz County Community Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce, and Eventually End Homelessness*, this Committee concentrated its time on research of models, strategies and tenets successful in other communities.

The Committee is well aware that the issue of homelessness is not one dimensional and that the term “homeless” encapsulates a wide variety of demographics and experiences, each of which has a unique set of needs and appropriate responses. With this in mind, the Committee’s first objective was to clearly define the population scope to identify specific strategies to address the needs of the identified population. We determined our scope to be the visible, unsheltered adult homeless population, as the data show this to be a substantial component of the homeless community and also based upon relation to substantial community impacts.

With its collective hundreds of hours of research and discussion of ideas and models, and after applying a set of goals to sift the ideas generated through this extensive research, the Committee, with unanimous agreement, arrived at 20 recommendations. In the spirit of acting how and where we can as a community, the 20 recommendations are offered both as a vision for long-horizon strategies and short-horizon actionable solutions. The recommendations span the gamut of direct homeless services, to a permanent, fully-supported, low-barrier shelter, to improved regional coordination, to stronger advocacy with our state and federal governments. They all espouse the necessity of inclusion in the new Coordinated Entry system and the pairing of any service

offered with case management or outreach to encourage long-term solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness.

The Committee is pleased to present this report of its activities and recommendations. Much work remains to be done on the challenge of homelessness, and the ad hoc committee's constraint of time (six months) severely limited the breadth and depth of the Committee's exploration and the amount of discussions and engagement it could complete. We embrace more and deeper conversations, and we hope this report can serve as a launching point to spur dialogue and partnership.

We thank the City Council for the opportunity to delve into this important work. We believe that we treated it with the care and respect it deserves and invite more active community attention and action toward betterment of the future.

Respectfully submitted,

*The Homelessness Coordinating Committee*

Mayor Cynthia Chase  
Councilmember Richelle Noroyan  
(former) Councilmember Pamela Comstock

## Homelessness Coordinating Committee Charge and Scope

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The Homelessness Coordinating Committee (Committee), a six-month ad hoc City Council Subcommittee, was authorized by Santa Cruz City Council motion in April 2016 with a charge to, “cooperatively exchange information and identify actions to change homelessness in our community.” The Committee convened in July 2016 and one of its first decisions was to define the development of *actionable solutions* as the focal point of its work. In doing so, the Committee determined that it would extensively research practices, models and services from across the country that could work in Santa Cruz, with the City of Santa Cruz (City) in a strong partnership role with the County of Santa Cruz (County), the three other cities (Capitola, Scotts Valley, Watsonville), service providers, the faith community and others.

The Committee delved deeply into this research. On a weekly basis, the Committee received a packet of contemporary news articles on homelessness divided into three categories: Bay Area stories, California stories and national stories. In addition to the articles themselves, the committee also reviewed associated information upon which the models, policies or interventions were based. Over the course of the Committee’s duration, this amounted to over 160 works on the effects and solutions to homelessness across the country (listing of works reviewed attached as Appendix A). This wide lens allowed the Committee to watch the formation and results of various policies, the introduction and piloting of programs, and outcomes of programs and unintended consequences. Importantly, this study revealed how other cities, counties and states organized themselves to collaborate and coordinate on tangible solutions and systems improvements. This extensive study led to new, or supported existing, ideas of potential application in Santa Cruz.

Throughout this research, the *All-In Toward a Home for Every County Resident: The Santa Cruz County Community Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce, and Eventually End Homelessness (All-In Plan, attached as Appendix B)* served as a ballast and continual touch point, given the recency and comprehensive community engagement entailed in the development of this homelessness strategic plan.

This 2015 report was the result of an inclusive 18-month process that joined together service providers, governments, agencies, individuals with lived experience and other stakeholders to identify solutions to promote systems and housing solutions in Santa Cruz County. The *All-In Plan* posited “Plan Implementation Strategies” and eight major service systems and homeless sub-population strategies for all stakeholders in the homeless services systems (local

homeless and housing service providers, faith-based community, governmental authorities and local governments):

- 1) Transforming the Crisis Response System
- 2) Increasing Access to Permanent Housing
- 3) Integrating Systems and Community Support
- 4) Ending Chronic and Other Adult Homelessness
- 5) Ending Family Homelessness
- 6) Addressing Needs in South County
- 7) Initiating a Response to Youth and Young Adult Homelessness
- 8) Ending Veteran Homelessness

While not all recommendations in the *All-In* Plan were in the City's purview, many action strategies and themes were. The Committee's ultimate recommendations underwent a fit test with the *All-In* Plan.

As its work deepened, the Committee also deliberately centered on solutions and ideas to address the *visible, unsheltered adult homeless population*.<sup>1</sup> This focus was undertaken out of the acute need of this population and out of practicality, given the time and resource constraints of the short-term committee schedule. The Committee understood that a comprehensive sweep of all issues related to homelessness would be the work of years, not a handful of months, and some narrowing was necessary to complete its work. The Committee acknowledges the legitimate concerns and urgency around other specific types of homelessness and recommends that any long-term solution pursued must include consideration of these sub-populations and their special needs.

The Committee could not invest its limited time into deep historical study of homelessness in Santa Cruz or to the national or state legislative response to homelessness over time. Aspects of this information can be found in earlier reports to the City Council and prior Council-authorized homelessness committees.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee also could not engage in the number and depth of meetings and conversations with stakeholders that it hoped to achieve. As a result, the Committee supports that the recommendations adopted by the City Council remain flexible and adaptable to additional input and perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many and varied subpopulations under the broad homeless spectrum. For instance: Veterans, those with disabilities, families, youth, at-risk, substance use disorder-related, mental illness related, post-incarceration, etc. The Committee's focus generalized to the visible, unsheltered adult population with the understanding that this cohort cross-cuts many layers of complexity.

<sup>2</sup> See April 30, 2013 City Council Homelessness Study Session and 2000 Homeless Issues Task Force.

Finally, the Committee pursued its work with an expectation of meaningful and true partnership with the County and other cities. Informed by the 2010 City Council action that " *the policy position of the City is to continue to work toward efforts that seek equal participation from all jurisdictions for homeless services and programs, both in terms of funding and also in terms of the location of those services,*" the ensuing recommendations were generated with this expectation of sharing in solutions for this countywide challenge.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, the Homeless Coordinating Committee, in recognition of the limitations of the six months allotted to it for this far-reaching and serious work, set some scope bounds to enable the completion of a work product for the community and City Council's consideration. The Committee determined it would focus on responses to the circumstances and impacts of the visible, unsheltered adult homeless population, with that response informed by the *All-In Plan* yet tailored to solutions the City can effect in strong partnership with others. These recommendations would be grounded in data and vetted with local values and needs to improve the homelessness situation in Santa Cruz, while being adaptable and iterative in their execution, as additional conversations occur and partners are involved.

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<sup>3</sup> Unanimous Santa Cruz City Council motion on March 9, 2010.

## Snapshot of Homelessness in Santa Cruz

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The Committee used, as its primary source of homelessness count data, the *2015 Homeless Point-In-Time Census and Survey* (Executive Summary included as Exhibit C), conducted by Applied Survey Research (ASR) under the auspices of the Homeless Action Partnership, of which the City is a member.<sup>4</sup>

The 2015 Homeless Census, a visual count of homeless individuals on January 22, 2015, found 1,964 homeless individuals countywide. This is the lowest number in at least 10 years and a substantial decline from the last Census count in 2013 when the total countywide count was 3,536.<sup>5</sup> Of the 2015 1,964 homeless population, 1,354 or 69% were unsheltered. In the City of Santa Cruz specifically, the 2015 Census counted a total of 831, with 497 of them (60%) unsheltered.

The Homeless Survey, which supplements the Point-in-Time Census with qualitative information from persons in homelessness, is a two-page survey instrument administered in the weeks following the Census. The 2015 Homeless Survey was administered to 344 individuals, with results generalized to the entire population that was counted in the Census.

From the Survey, we learned that of the 69% unsheltered countywide, 37% of them were living on the street, 2% in abandoned structures, 21% in vehicles and 9% in encampments. Over half (53%) have one or more disabling conditions (41% substance abuse, 38% psychiatric condition, 35% physical disability, 24% post-traumatic stress disorder, 33% chronic health problems, 16% traumatic brain injury and 1% AIDS/HIV-related). One out of three homeless individuals in this community has been incarcerated within the past year. Over half (56%) of the population has been homeless for one year or more. The data show that homelessness can have several compounding drivers, which contribute to a very high unsheltered population and demand for a larger envelope of services such as behavioral health, alcohol and substance use disorder and chronic health condition treatment.

The 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Census took place on January 23, 2017, with the survey conducted over the weeks following. The results are not yet published but the Committee recommends that the City carefully review those data.

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<sup>4</sup> Full report can be accessed here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5176dcd7e4b0e5c0dba41ee0/t/559465c9e4b0cd952416aec0/1435788745095/SantaCruzCounty+HomelessReport+2015+FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The 2013 countywide total homeless population was 3,536. For 2011, it was 2,771. In 2009, the total was 2,265. The 2007 count yielded 2,789 and there were 3,371 counted in 2005.

## **Eight-County Comparative Homelessness Scan**

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The Committee, with a lens toward other communities to compare the experience in Santa Cruz County, also analyzed data from 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Surveys conducted in Monterey County, San Benito County, Santa Clara County, San José, Marin County, Sonoma County, Solano County and the City/County of San Francisco.<sup>6</sup> These communities were comparators because of the ready availability of data and, given that Applied Survey Research (ASR) headed each project and employed the same methodology, the ability to conduct direct comparison of like data.

Regionally, all of these counties showed a decrease in the homeless count of the last decade but the percentages of unsheltered homeless across the region remained large (71% Monterey, 73% San Benito, 69% San José, 71% Santa Clara, 58% San Francisco, 64% Marin, 67% Sonoma and 73% Solano—compared to Santa Cruz County, at 69% unsheltered). The unsheltered population was counted on the streets, in vehicles, in abandoned structures and in encampments in generally the same proportion as Santa Cruz County: ~29% on the streets (Santa Cruz was 37%), ~5% in abandoned structures (Santa Cruz was 2%), ~19% in vehicles (Santa Cruz was 21%) and ~13% in encampments (Santa Cruz was 9%). Of these counties, Santa Cruz had the fourth highest street-counted homeless population, behind San Francisco, San Jose and Solano County. Santa Cruz County also had slightly higher numbers of people living out of their vehicles.

Santa Cruz County was generally comparable to these counties when examining the presence of one or more disabling conditions. Substance use disorder was present for ~36% (41% in Santa Cruz); psychiatric condition present for ~33% (38% in Santa Cruz); physical disability present for ~25% (35% in Santa Cruz); post-traumatic stress disorder present for ~23% (24% in Santa Cruz); chronic health condition present for ~24% (33% in Santa Cruz); traumatic brain injury present for ~10% (16% in Santa Cruz); and, AIDS/HIV-related condition present for ~2% (1% for Santa Cruz). Santa Cruz County exceeded the average and was highest or second highest of the counties in the occurrence of substance use disorder, physical disability, psychiatric condition and traumatic brain injury.

Among the counties, Santa Cruz County also matched the general trend for duration of homelessness. For Santa Cruz, and most of the other counties, the smallest group, around 10%, had been homeless for 30 days or less (Santa Cruz was 8%). From there, the percentage rose to about ~40-60% for 1-11 months in

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<sup>6</sup> Reports can be accessed here: <http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/homelessness-reports>

homelessness (Santa Cruz was 37%), with another ~40-60% reporting a duration of one year or longer (Santa Cruz was 56%).

Santa Cruz County was highest among this set of counties in the percentage of homeless individuals with a history of foster care. Santa Cruz also had the highest percentage (15%) of homeless individuals under the age of 18. Most of the other counties had single-digit percentages. Marin County was an outlier with young adult homeless with a reported 40% under the age of 24 (Santa Cruz homeless young adults under 24 was 29%).

For additional snapshot of comparisons among the counties, see Appendix D which contains the executive summaries of the 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey for these counties.

This simple comparison of eight other ASR-surveyed communities highlights that Santa Cruz County has a slightly higher than usual street-counted homeless population and higher percentages of individuals with substance use disorders, psychiatric conditions, physical disability and traumatic brain injury.

## Comparison of California Shelter Resources

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Under federal rules for eligibility for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants, all communities must organize into a local Continuum of Care (CoC) to coordinate homeless resources across the designated region. The City and County of Santa Cruz fits within CA-508, the "Watsonville/Santa Cruz City & County CoC". Each CoC reports on its shelter bed resources and homeless counts after the biennial point-in-time count in January. This information is posted on HUD's website and provides an even basis for comparing the shelter bed resources across the state.<sup>7</sup>

The Committee analyzed all 43 CoCs in California, to understand how Santa Cruz compared in terms of raw homeless count, the per capita ratio of homelessness, the number of shelter beds (and sub-types of beds) available and the sufficiency of shelter beds. Appendix E contains the data tables.

The Committee found that Los Angeles, with the largest population of over 9.3 million with 41,174 homeless individuals, offered the greatest number of shelter beds: 33,628. With this volume of beds, Los Angeles is able to shelter 82% of its homeless community. The next largest homeless population was reported in San Diego, with 8,742 counted. There, 8,264 shelter beds means that the CoC shelters 95% of its homeless community. Next is San Francisco, which the data show can shelter 152% of its homeless population as the number of counted individuals, 6,775, is exceeded by the available shelter beds, 10,326.

On the other end of the spectrum are counties with low homeless populations or low shelter resources. The Alpine, Inyo and Mono Counties CoC reported a total of 53 homeless person with 17 shelter beds available (ability to shelter 32% of the homeless population). The Lake County CoC has the lowest sheltering percentage, 19%, for its 61 beds available for 315 homeless individuals.

Comparing the Watsonville/Santa Cruz CoC against the state reveals that our community is not resource-rich when it comes to shelter beds, but possesses a high ratio of homeless per capita.

Out of 43 California CoCs, Santa Cruz ranks:

- 14<sup>th</sup> largest in homeless population with 1,964 individuals counted in 2015
- 26<sup>th</sup> largest in overall community population (274,000)

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<sup>7</sup> The main website is: <https://www.hudexchange.info/>. CoC dashboard and housing count reports can be accessed here: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-dashboard-reports/>

- 4<sup>th</sup> highest in homeless per capita, at 0.72%. Ahead of Santa Cruz is Mendocino (over 1% of population is homeless), Humboldt (0.87%) and San Francisco (0.78%).
- 19<sup>th</sup> largest in number of shelter beds (total shelter beds are 1,140)
- 32<sup>nd</sup> in sufficiency of shelter beds (available beds to homeless population)

Through this comparison, the Committee found that Santa Cruz County has a very high ratio of homelessness per capita (4<sup>th</sup> largest of the 43 California Continuum of Care entities) and yet is substantially under-resourced in homeless shelter, with 31 of the 43 CoCs providing greater sufficiency of shelter beds than Santa Cruz County.

For additional information about homeless services and facilities available in the city, attached as Exhibit F is a 2015 report to the Santa Cruz City Council summarizing the spectrum of homeless programs and facilities.

## Community and City Impacts of Homelessness

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Another research area into which the Committee delved was the impacts of homelessness on the greater community and degree of public resources devoted to managing and mitigating those impacts.

### City Impacts

To assist in understanding the level and cost of the City's operational response to homelessness, the Committee gathered information from the major operating City of Santa Cruz departments that regularly interface and manage homeless issues. Those departments were Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Police and Fire. The Committee asked for information about the types and frequency of activities undertaken to respond to homeless-related issues, the cost of doing them and the experiences of the City's field staff.

The Committee learned that the City invests substantial and continuous effort to manage homeless issues in the City. That degree of effort has been growing in step with the perceived increase in homelessness, despite the 2015 homeless count showing a decline since 2013, and the behaviors, on average, have become more aggressive.

Public Works reports substantial resource commitment to homeless issues in several major divisions (refuse, traffic/streets, and facilities). Public Works staff address a range of issues from continuous clean-ups in parks, open space and urban areas of the City, to vandalism repair, to needle and substance clean-ups, to addressing refuse enclosure issues (sleeping in dumpsters, clean-ups), to garage safety and public restroom management, to outreach to educate about the serious dangers of sleeping in refuse enclosures.

Last year, nearly 100 tons of debris was removed during campsite clean-ups in the City's parks and open spaces. An additional 54 tons were removed from our City streets, directly attributable to homelessness. The entire refuse division estimates that between direct costs and the value of staff time spent addressing homeless issues, it is costing the Refuse Fund over \$300,000 annually.

In the streets/traffic and facilities divisions, staff also spend time on continuous trash and syringe clean-up and disposal, repair of vandalized public infrastructure (street lights and light poles due to illegal tapping of power lines) and fence repair and replacement. For these divisions, the total direct and staff time value is about \$140,000. Accordingly, in the Public Works Department alone, the City is investing approximately \$440,000 dollars simply to respond to front-line issues.

Public Works staff have also had to deal with escalating aggressive behaviors from some members of the homeless population, including physical assault on staff (punching, shoving, hitting), threats and harassment. This more aggressive display of behavior is a newer phenomenon, increasing over the past year.

The Parks & Recreation Department showed similar trends. The Parks Rangers and Parks Maintenance Workers most directly and frequently interface with homeless issues. Parks Rangers are responsible for Municipal Code enforcement, camp clean-up and resource management and repair. About 50-60% of the Parks Rangers' time is spent addressing homeless-related matters. Parks Maintenance Worker activities include facility clean-up and vandalism repairs (restrooms, fencing, lighting and electrical tapping), as well as vegetation clearing.

The staff costs invested to mitigate homelessness impacts in the parks are estimated at \$460,000 annually for the Parks Rangers and \$320,000 for the Parks Maintenance Workers, for a total of ~\$780,000.

The Police Department reports that about 60% of officer time is spent responding to calls-for-service related to homelessness or transient activity. In 2015, 49% of the Police Department's total arrests were of persons providing address information of "transient", "homeless", or "115 Coral Street" (the Homeless Services Center address). For comparison, Watsonville and Capitola reported 27% and 24%, respectively.

Given that 60% of calls-for-service are spent on homeless-related issues, the cost of the police staff time is staggering: \$14.8 million, annually. In addition, the Police Department manages First Alarm contracts to supplement security, at an annual cost of \$350,000.

Finally, the Fire Department estimated that about 20-25% of calls-for-service volume is related to homeless individuals. Of those calls, about 90% are medical or behavioral health, 5% are fire and 5% other. Due to the high volume of these calls and the insufficiency of ambulance transport services, the City's Fire crews spend significant time standing-by for an ambulance to arrive, which imposes a burden on the entire emergency response system.

Viewed separately or together, the experiences of just these four departments shows that tremendous resources are invested by the City to deal with the effects (e.g., refuse, vandalism) and conditions and behaviors associated with homelessness.<sup>8</sup> Just keeping up with reacting to these problems places an

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<sup>8</sup> Most, if not all, of the City Departments deal with the effects of homelessness on a regular basis and even manage other contracts not captured here (pressure washing, security contracts, other cleaning services).

enormous financial and staff burden on the City organization. In addition to the costs articulated above, the City pays a heavy opportunity cost. Dozens of City staff and dozens of hours each day are devoted to responding to homeless issues. If that time and resources could be reinvested in core city services, the City would be able to deliver more and improved services to the greater community. Further, with this set of recommendations and strong partnership, we anticipate investing resources more strategically to better target or address issues rather than simply reacting.

The City provides substantial financial support of local organizations assisting those at risk of, or in, homelessness. The Homeless Services Center, for example received over \$160,000 in grant funding this year. In addition, other programs providing preventive or direct homeless services received over a combined \$100,000. Outside of its community programs funding, the City contributes over \$450,000 to County outreach services and a partnership program to assist individuals in our Downtown with mental health and substance use disorders, chronic public inebriation and other social services needs (Downtown Outreach Worker, Bob Lee Partnership for Accountability, Connection and Treatment, Serial Inebriate, and Mental Health Liaison programs).

### Community Impacts

Far exceeding the impacts on the City organization are the greater externalities and costs to the entire Santa Cruz community. We hear that for many residents and visitors, visible street homelessness engenders a sense of discomfort, lack of safety and security, an ambiance of neglect and lack of caring. From seeing people sleeping in doorways of businesses, to being panhandled or harassed (aggressively or not), to experiencing behavioral health crisis episodes, to seeing garbage and smelling urine, residents report a range of reactions to visible street homelessness. This reaction can be compassion, mild discomfort and uneasiness, fright, and downright fear of violence against them or others. Our residents do not feel that our public spaces are reliably safe and comfortable.

Our City resources struggle to maintain a high standard of cleanliness. High street homelessness coupled with a lack of basic services for human needs results in waste and refuse left for others to clean up. In addition to our own staff's workload, we hear frequently from businesses who are exasperated that their work of running a business now has extended to cleaning up human waste and other garbage left in their doorways each morning. Further, with the high occurrence of substance use disorder in our community, syringes and other drug

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Thus, the true costs of homelessness borne by the City organization is much higher than these few estimates.

paraphernalia are found discarded in our public and private spaces. This poses significant public health risks.

A far too common sentiment we hear is that our residents and visitors may not want to visit parts or all of our city due to the issues of perceived lack of safety and uncleanliness most often associated with homelessness.

The economic impacts of homelessness on our community are substantial. We hear a consistent and growing outcry from our business community about the burden of homelessness on our economy. Some businesses report that their employees do not always feel safe, due to the homeless population and unsocial behaviors, which impacts recruitment and retention. Some businesses have decided not to locate here or have relocated away because of perceived or real impacts on their staff. Our retail businesses increasingly report that they have to evict homeless sleepers from their doorways on a regular basis and then clear discarded materials, human waste and even drug paraphernalia left behind. Further, if shoppers do not feel safe coming to a location, they will turn to other shopping options, which reduces the viability of those businesses. Especially vulnerable can be our small, local businesses that are already competing with online and major national retailers.

In sum, homelessness, and in particular, visible street homelessness, is a major subtractor to the quality-of-life and economic potential of our community. It negatively affects the experience of the average resident, by rendering parts of our city uncomfortable or perceived unsafe. It can and has dissuaded visitors to our city, negatively impacting our visitor-serving businesses. It increases the challenges of running a thriving business here, particularly for our small, local businesses, by adding extra work keep their storefronts clean and clear and by deterring potential shoppers from our retail areas. Homeless-related issues have been a determinant in businesses choosing not to locate here or moving away from here, representing missed opportunities for jobs for local residents and further diversification of our local economy.

The City expends millions annually to address the externalities associated with homeless, resources that could be applied more positively and proactively if the homeless issues were reduced or eliminated.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Homeless Coordinating Committee is pleased to present this list of recommendations to the community and City Council. Developed through the research previously discussed in this report, this list represents a commonsense and achievable set of goals to alleviate homelessness and externalities associated with homelessness in our community. Some of the recommendations are newer concepts, some have been discussed for decades, but all were carefully vetted to ensure that they move the community forward toward a reduction in the suffering and harm associated with homelessness.

This list is also important because in whatever form it is ultimately adopted by the City Council, it sets forth the position and goals of the City of Santa Cruz. This resolves a problem identified by the committee: that the City Council has not clearly and uniformly stated its intentions for solutions around homelessness. In the recent past, the Council has taken up homelessness for exploration and better understanding, or indirectly touched upon solutions as part of ancillary discussions, but not in a direct, solution-oriented manner. As a result, there does not exist a contemporary, clear-cut Council vision on homelessness reduction. With the adoption of a set of recommendations, the City will have a workplan and deliverables, to move our community forward.

Separated by timeline for implementation in short and long horizons, this list contains 20 recommendations. Some recommendations will, by nature of complexity, take longer than others. However, our intent is that the City advance these items concurrently and build them into the City's workplan.

The 20 recommendations were the result of the Committee's consideration of dozens of ideas and opportunities gleaned through extensive study of the national, state and local response to homelessness. The Committee established a set of goals and each recommendation had to **substantially fit the goals and have unanimous committee support** to achieve a place on this list.

The goals for recommended solutions:

- 1) Reduces suffering and harm
- 2) Increases safety for housed and unhoused community members
- 3) Draws from best practices; is evidence based
- 4) Promotes good physical and mental health
- 5) Promotes permanent solutions to homelessness
- 6) Provides community quality-of-life benefit
- 7) Resource investment promotes direct and indirect savings

In addition, the Committee identified and strongly supports the best practice of coupling any homeless services offered with case management or outreach/referrals to service networks to address the underlying cause of homelessness for that individual. Simply stated, all services should support a pathway out of homelessness. Similarly, the Committee strongly supports the Coordinated Entry effort (see Recommendation #1) and advises that the City only invest in programs that are part of that system of coordination.

The recommendations were also vetted with the *All-In* Plan action strategies. The recommendations aligned most closely with *All-In* Strategic Priorities 1-4.

Finally, the suffering, hardship and extreme difficulties experienced by individuals living in homelessness was a continually theme and discussion point with the Committee. People in homelessness live in a condition of constant stress. In addition to exposure to the elements and uncertainty over meeting basic needs of food and water, these individuals live with compromised safety and are often victims of theft or mistreatment. Their histories and the reasons why they are homeless can be complicated and require specialized supports. When the Committee considered solutions, as illustrated by the solutions goals on the preceding page, it thought about ways to help this community from the long-term goal of housing, to services and support that could help on a day-to-day basis.

## *Short Horizon Solutions (0-3 years)*

### 1. Support the Implementation and Success of Coordinated Entry

Coordinated entry, a horizontally and vertically integrated pathway into the collective set of homeless resources, was a key recommendation of the *All-In* Plan. Currently, the system of care is fragmented, with multiple entry points and programs can operate in isolation, not consistently communicating with other like or related services. Consequently, homeless individuals are supported ad hoc, program by program. Coordinated entry, in contrast, follows a “no wrong door” approach such that a potential client can present to any homeless service provider and be assessed and matched with a service strategy to enable the best path to housing, considering the universe of resources in the area. This new logistical and operating platform will profoundly impact the Homeless Action Partnership’s goals of rapid rehousing and efficiency. Significant steps were achieved in this goal and supported by a recent \$75,000 HUD grant, the system appears poised for implementation later in 2017. Its success however, hinges on participation and support from all partners, including the City.

**ACTION:** Stay attuned to Coordinated Entry implementation progress and provide support to launch and sustain this new system. Require that any homeless program supported by the City, through funding or other resources, integrate with the Coordinated Entry system.

- **Cost:** No anticipated City financial contribution.
- **Savings:** Unquantifiable, but substantial due to unified strategy to promote better outcomes and efficiency.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. The ability of a homeless person—either in a chronic or newly homeless circumstance—to be supported through a coordinated service of care will hasten the path to services, eliminate uncertainty, waiting and worry, and more compassionately, equitably and effectively improve the person’s condition of life and impacts to the community.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 3 and 6.
- **Partners:** Countywide effort. City will require that its homeless services providers be part of Coordinated Entry.

## 2. Increase Homeless Outreach Services & Mobile Behavioral Health/Mental Health Response

A substantial barrier to ending homelessness in Santa Cruz is the availability of case management workers to individually assist those in homelessness to obtain the needed level of services. Homelessness is a complex situation, usually with many drivers and history that requires continual, trained and skilled assistance for proper assessment and referral to the appropriate level of support. The City currently contracts to provide one Downtown Outreach Worker and a Mental Health Liaison that works with the Police Department. More resources are needed to coordinate services and engage the perceived increased numbers of individuals in our community. Drawing upon the lessons from the Bob Lee Partnership for Accountability, Connection and Treatment (PACT) Program, a model could be deployed that provides different layers of engagement: more intensive case management with continual contact and funded treatment, and less intensive case coordination with referrals to services.

Further, the volume of mental health crises in the City increased substantially over the past several years. The Downtown Outreach Worker reports a 47% rise in behavioral/mental health crisis intervention downtown in the past year. Those with mental illness are underserved and the result is that more homeless individuals who have mental illnesses are not receiving stabilizing supportive services and reaching crisis states in our city. A flexible mobile mental health team could be deployed more regularly to provide crisis response. Less urgent intervention can be referred into the county's system of care where their mental health needs can be appropriately met. Any outreach or crisis response should be integrated with the Coordinated Entry system.

**ACTION:** Increase outreach services, including an expanded mobile behavioral/mental health team from the County Health Services Agency. Consider additional outreach workers and mental health liaisons. Work with the County on a better coordinated model of outreach and support seven-days-a-week.

- **Cost:** To be determined based upon services obtained. The City's FY 2017 contribution for Downtown Outreach worker is \$36,500 (County contract). The City contributes \$60,000 annually to support the Mental Health Liaison who works alongside law enforcement. Expansion in both of these contracts could add \$70,000-\$100,000 to the FY 2018 Budget.
- **Savings:** Unquantifiable, but substantial savings to the system of care.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Provides direct resources to match individuals with appropriate level of services, with a specific increase in

mental health intervention and potential to prevent exacerbation of mental illness. Tremendous community benefit to intervene in and decrease episodes of mental health crises.

- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 6, 8 and 11; Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategy 8; and, Strategic Priority 4: Action Strategy 4.
- **Partners:** County, with City support to target resources.

### 3. Contract for Homeless Jobs Engagement Program

Several communities across the country found success with homeless jobs programs that outreach to and hire local homeless individuals for community-benefit jobs such as cleaning, weed abatement, beautification projects, and encampment/dumping clean-up. The homeless workers earn vouchers for needed services, regain dignity associated with employment, are offered employment workshops, are connected to services and are well-positioned to engage with homeless individuals to assist in expanding connections to supports and services. Locally, the Downtown Streets Team organization operates successfully in San Jose and could be a strong partner for Santa Cruz. Contracting with such a program in Santa Cruz would be a new approach to homeless engagement, offering homeless individuals the opportunity to earn compensation in the form of vouchers and work for the community in which they live, while growing job skills and work history. It is important that this program integrate with the local Coordinated Entry system.

**ACTION:** Contract with the Downtown Streets Team to provide homeless outreach and jobs opportunity. Specifically, the team could assist with clean-ups, beautification projects, weeding, maintenance, encampment/dumping clean-up across the City and in parks and open space, and support services in public garages as well as public restrooms, and hygiene and storage facilities.

- **Cost:** An annual Downtown Streets Team contract would total about \$360,000. Recommended for the FY 2018 Budget.
- **Savings:** Substantial direct and staff cost savings in City resources to clean streets and security services.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Provides dignity of employment, a source of earned supports and job training for homeless individuals—with access to other supportive services. Provides direct community services to support clean and vibrant public spaces. Former homeless individuals are

also well positioned to reach out to currently homeless individuals to build trust, rapport and credibility increasing potential for engagement of more individuals in the program.

- **All-In Plan Alignment**: Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategy 11; and, Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 6, 8 and 11.
- **Partners**: City lead, with encouragement of County partnership.

#### **4. Create a Triage Location/Expanded Recovery Center for Crisis Intervention**

To strengthen the existing linkage between public safety intervention and the system of care for a person in mental health or substance use disorder crisis, improved coordination and resources is required. Limited public safety resources can become easily overwhelmed with the numbers of individuals in crisis, which is exacerbated by the substantial amount of time that is invested to address crisis situations. For instance, assisting a single person can take an officer or first responder hours of time, and that time is unavailable to serve the rest of the community's public safety needs. Our area has a limited capacity of treatment or sobering beds, and what is available may not be able to handle detoxification, or other acute situations requiring medical supervision. If just one treatment bed, equipped to handle detoxification, could be reserved as an on-demand resource for the police department, this one bed would accrue tremendous time savings and allow our limited public safety resources to return to the streets. Our public safety first responders are the appropriate first resource to arrive on scene to a crisis, but they are not the best providers of intermediate care and support in a crisis situation. Having a readily available and qualified treatment space for a "warm hand-off" of that person in crisis would help restore the proper roles within public safety and public health and ultimately increase the availability of effective resources. This center should be fully integrated with the Coordinated Entry system.

**ACTION**: Explore partnerships with County and health providers to establish more treatment bed capacity and reserve one bed for on-demand treatment of people found in crisis in our City. Negotiate with County to determine how to expand the enhancement of types of services offered at the existing Recovery Center, to expand beyond alcohol (sobering) to serve individuals who are under the influence of other substances. Advocate for the expansion to include mental health triage center for individuals who are sub-acute (not eligible for Psychiatric Unit) but clearly in need of psychiatric intervention.

- **Cost:** The cost of a reserved detox bed at a local recovery treatment center could cost from tens to hundreds of dollars per night. If the Recovery Center was expanded to include support of crisis situations involving more than alcohol (drugs), costs would include hiring trained clinical staff to assess for mental health issues and perhaps a nurse for medical supervision. Without scoping, costs are difficult to estimate but likely in the \$100,000s range.
- **Savings:** Substantial savings to the system of care is anticipated as individuals will begin immediate treatment and support rather than cycling through law enforcement custody or the emergency room.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very high. On demand access to treatment will reduce time in custody, will expedite the client being in a supervised and supportive setting and promote individual and community harm reduction.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategies 8 and 9.
- **Partners:** County and the four cities.

## 5. Secure Electronic Device Charging Resources

Many homeless individuals possess mobile phones, computers, music players and other devices that need regular powering. Maintaining connections via cell phone is often one of few consistent aspects in a homeless individual's life, as well as a way to contact resources, receive important messages, and stay connected to social supports. The City experiences a high degree of vandalism as individuals tamper with public infrastructure (wiring on light poles, power outlets at public buildings) to access this power, resulting in damaged and defaced property that requires immediate (for public safety) and repeated repair. In addition, businesses report the unauthorized use of their power resources. If charging stations were available, homeless individuals could legally and reliably power their devices while reducing vandalism to public property and unauthorized use of private charging resources. The Central Library Branch recently added a free charging station for public use.

**ACTION:** Research the charging station program at the library. Secure and site electronic device charging resources in the City. Purposeful siting will require consideration and ideally should be coupled with other service provider locations. Encourage other locations outside of the City.

- **Cost:** \$300-1,200 per unit (depending on specifications) to the FY 2018 Budget.
- **Savings:** Approximately \$3,000 annually in parts plus staff time for vandalism repair. Reduction in substantial risk of electrical shortages and damage to City equipment.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Enables individuals to stay in touch with family and friends. Provides critical connectivity to services. Increases safety by discouraging tampering with live electrical wires.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 8 and 11.
- **Partners:** City is lead and should invite other municipalities to participate.

## 6. Secure Storage Facilities

Many homeless individuals have no safe location to store their possessions. As a result, many carry their possessions—often large and bulky and on a wheeled cart—with them everywhere, which hinders their ability to obtain services, maintain employment and generally participate in the community. In addition, the greater community is impacted with large collections of possessions on sidewalks and public spaces, including the public libraries. The Homeless Services Center previously provided lockers for use but the lockers have since been converted to a different use. There are few to none publicly available resources of this type.

In some communities, this function is achieved with a storage facility (such as a warehouse or shipping container) manned with personnel to bag, check and keep possessions safe for the day. The Winter Shelter Program operated in this manner. Upon signing up for shelter at the intake site, program clients would check their large possessions into a storage container, which would be locked each night. In the morning, clients were returned to the intake site and reunited with their possessions. Other models include unmanned banks of lockers with keys that allow access any time day or night. Another model is the SHWASHLOCK Program, offered by Ocean Park Community Center (OPCC) in Santa Monica that provides showers, lockers and washers (SHowersWASHersLOCKers) to enable homeless individuals to keep possessions safe and maintain personal hygiene.

Any model pursued should integrate with the Coordinated Entry system, in addition to providing case management, or at a minimum, outreach or referral.

**ACTION:** Consider various models of this service. Identify and secure facilities to allow individuals to check their possessions into a managed storage facility, or rental storage lockers. This service should be co-located with other homeless services including case management or referral resources, or follow the storage, shower and laundry facility SHWASHLOCK model.

- **Cost:** Depending on siting, size and amenities offered.
- **Savings:** Little anticipated direct savings.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Enables individuals to obtain services, work and engage in the community without anxiety about security of their possessions. Removes a volume of articles from our public spaces, increasing overall quality-of-life. If coupled with hygiene resources, further enables individuals to maintain good health and avoid stigma associated with homelessness.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 8 and 11.
- **Partners:** City provides implementation leadership on countywide strategic basis to support a regional facility or multiple locations across county.

## 7. Secure Hygiene Resources: Restrooms and Showers

Basic human needs and public health requires the availability of restrooms and showers. While showers are available at the Homeless Service Center and at a few other locations on a limited basis, there is inadequate supply to meet the need. As a result, many homeless individuals use public restrooms to bathe, which adds considerably to maintenance and cleaning and can dissuade other community members from using those facilities. Currently, our public restrooms are in constant use by the homeless community which can wholly exclude the restrooms from other users. At times, the restrooms will be occupied for long durations (hours, if unenforced) or full of bicycles and carts with persons bathing and laundering clothing, preventing others from accessing the facility. This type of use also prevents staff from cleaning the facilities and requires a large investment of staff time trying to vacate the spaces so that cleaning can occur and others can access the restrooms.

Public restrooms also are in inadequate supply and the City expends tremendous effort and resources to clean human waste across the City. The City launched a pilot temporary toilet program in 2015, which should be evaluated

and recommendations formed for consideration of a permanent sidewalk toilet facility.

In addition, other communities deploy hygiene buses or mobile restroom trailers. These buses, with built-in shower and laundry facilities, travel to different locations on a schedule and then park for several hours while clients use the services. This mobile service avoids the cost of permanent infrastructure, enables broader service delivery and provides essential public health services. Also, this service should be coupled with case management or outreach services and integrate with the Coordinated Entry system.

**ACTION:** Explore locations and providers of additional restrooms and showers dedicated for the homeless community. Consider hygiene buses or mobile restroom trailers. Consider partnership with the faith-based community, homeless advocates, businesses and other organizations to support and host the mobile facilities.

**ACTION:** Evaluate City's pilot restroom program and return recommendations to the City Council.

- **Cost:** Depending on siting, size and amenities offered. Likely investment in tens of thousands of dollars to purchase or rent trailers, plus staff time to manage and monitor this amenity. Possible cost to FY 2018 Budget.
- **Savings:** Some savings in vandalism reduction (note: since the discontinuance of late night hours in the public garage restrooms, vandalism overall has declined). Some savings in resources as restrooms will be used appropriately (not for showering, laundry, etc.).
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Enables individuals to safely maintain basic hygiene and human needs and dispels stigma associated with visual uncleanliness. Improves overall public health for entire community.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 8 and 11.
- **Partners:** City and County provides implementation leadership on countywide strategic basis. All the cities and the county should be partners on the mobile hygiene options to deliver (publicized) rotating locations throughout the county. City lead on its pilot restroom program.

## 8. Continue to Fund Homeward Bound

The City currently budgets \$25,000 annually to provide transportation assistance to individuals who wish to return to their home communities where supportive networks await them. The \$25,000 is available to the Homeless Services Center (via reimbursement) and the Downtown Outreach Worker (Greyhound Bus account). The Homeward Bound Program could be made available to a broader array of service agencies and its funding enhanced by other entities and the public.

**ACTION:** Appropriate \$25,000 in the FY 2018 Budget for Homeward Bound. Outreach to other service providing agencies to offer access to these funds. Invite the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) to jointly fund the program. Expand the opportunity for the public to donate.

- **Cost:** \$25,000 to the FY 2018 budget.
- **Savings:** Unquantifiable, but likely substantial avoided cost to local system of services. Reduction in homeless numbers has indirect benefits and savings to quality-of-life and community and economic vitality.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very High. Enables reunification of homeless individuals to their support networks in their home communities.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 8, 10 and 11
- **Partners:** City is lead. Will invite Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) to participate as funders. Will invite other service agencies to access the funds.

## 9. Create a 2X2 Committee with the County

Although larger solutions to homelessness require coordination at least on a regional scale, there are numerous points of day-to-day coordination and strategizing between the City and the County of Santa Cruz that need to occur. This demand for coordination supports the formation of a dedicated and regular meeting between the two agencies, specifically on homelessness. Borrowed from an idea in Sacramento, a 2X2 Committee, comprising two elected officials from the County and the City, plus staff, this committee would regularly convene to share information and coordinate solutions. This Committee is distinct from the recently launched Homelessness Governance Ad Hoc Committee, which includes about 20 participants across the county for the purpose of deciding if and how to coordinate on regional homeless solutions over the long-term. The 2X2 Committee, in contrast, will be a high level

engagement of two entities that necessarily must work together on policy and operations to mesh effective daily service delivery in our community.

**ACTION:** Formally invite the County to participate in a 2X2 Committee and schedule the first meeting for Summer 2017.

- **Cost:** No City financial contribution. Staff time.
- **Savings:** Unquantifiable, but likely substantial due to better coordination and improved response.
- **Human and Social Impact:** High. The interchange of information from the street level experience of the City and the service level of the County should improve responsiveness and fit of services.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategies 7 and 9. Enhancing County and City Coordination (Plan Implementation Strategy).
- **Partners:** City and County.

## 10. Explore Potential for Local Help from No Place Like Home (AB 1618) Legislation

In 2016, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1618, the “No Place Like Home” legislation which creates a loan program from Proposition 63 funds to incent counties to develop permanent supportive housing for persons at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and who require treatment for mental illness or substance use disorder. The total available funding will be \$2 billion with different rounds of funding available for counties of varying sizes. Only counties, not cities, are eligible to apply for the loans, although counties may partner with cities in conceiving housing projects.

**ACTION:** Work with the County to review and identify opportunities in anticipation of the Notice of Financial Availability (NOFA) release in Winter 2018.

- **Cost:** No anticipated City financial contribution.
- **Savings:** No immediate savings but holds potential for future resources.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Low in the short-term. This action will not immediately benefit homeless or housed City residents. High potential.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategies 7 and 9.
- **Partners:** County lead working with the other four cities.

## 11. Engage in Strategic Planning with the Homeless Services Center, County and Other Service Partners

The County's chief homelessness-focused service provider, the Homeless Services Center (HSC), is located in the City of Santa Cruz and sits on City-owned land. HSC's services and operations directly affect City residents and businesses, and City policies directly affect the HSC's operations. Despite this intertie of effects, the City maintains an informal relationship with HSC that varies over time and across staff in City departments. Councilmembers, staff and HSC effectively meet ad hoc as needed, but there is no established path for consistent communications at the policy level. Further, HSC and the City do not always strategically plan for service delivery and management of community externalities. Establishing a formal relationship will enable the discussion of services, their effects on the community and how the two entities can be mutually supportive. In addition, the County, which provides many health services to the homeless community and whose Homeless Persons Health Project (HPHP) operates out of HSC, is instrumental to the coordination and planning of homeless services.

**ACTION:** Outreach to the Homeless Services Center, County and other related service partners about establishing regular communication and strategic planning meetings.

- **Cost:** No anticipated City financial contribution.
- **Savings:** No immediate savings.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Medium. Improved coordination may change service delivery to homeless individuals, and will lead to better community outcomes.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 4, 8, 10 and 11; and, Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategies 7 and 9.
- **Partners:** City, HSC, County.

## 12. Develop a Revenue Source for Housing

Across the west coast, communities are increasingly concluding that to make meaningful progress on the development of needed housing types, including permanent supportive housing, affordable housing and emergency housing, new revenue must be generated. In San Francisco, Santa Clara County, Portland and Los Angeles for instance, hundreds of millions of dollars will be

provided through bond measures for affordable/housing development. These communities recognize the vital demand for housing, that resources need to be devoted to homelessness and that existing revenue streams are inadequate to respond. Similar energies exist in Santa Cruz County and the City Council recently joined, via participation of two Councilmembers, a community-led Affordable Housing Committee intended to explore the potential for a revenue measure in 2018.

**ACTION:** Support the work of the Affordable Housing Committee or other efforts to identify, create and dedicate funding for development of housing, including affordable, permanent supportive and emergency housing types.

- **Cost:** No financial cost to the City organization at this time.
- **Savings:** No immediate savings but potential for tremendous long-term savings due to greater housing availability.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Low in the short-term. Extremely high in the long-term.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategies 7 and 9.
- **Partners:** Community, County, other four cities.

### 13. Coordinate State Advocacy with Other High-Ratio Homeless Communities

As of the last homeless census, California had 22% of the nation's homeless population and much of that population is concentrated in temperate areas along the coast. While homelessness is high in Santa Cruz, it is high in other California communities as well. The City is not actively engaged in sharing information with these other municipalities, nor does the City participate in any statewide group specific to homelessness concerns to amplify the concerns and need for state resources. The City would be served by coordinating with other similarly-challenged communities for state advocacy for legislative and resource support.

**ACTION:** Coordinate with the League of California Cities to develop a platform to unite California communities with high homelessness ratios (and numbers) to advocate for additional state support.

- **Cost**: No anticipated City financial contribution.
- **Savings**: No immediate savings. Potential future resources.
- **Human and Social Impact**: Low in the short-term. This action will not immediately benefit homeless or housed City residents.
- **All-In Plan Alignment**: Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategy 9.
- **Partners**: City partner with League of California Cities to identify and engage other high-ratio homeless communities. City supported but intended to be shared with similarly-situated communities.

#### 14. Engage and Advocate Federal Representatives on Homelessness and Mental Illness Needs

The Watsonville/Santa Cruz Continuum of Care is incredibly successful with HUD grants, a federal funding source. This Committee is grateful for the support but feels that the amount of resources allocated to housing support is simply not in line with the scale of the problem. Also, the federal stance on services to those with mental illness is not reflective of the reality of the need on the streets. This population is far overrepresented in our homelessness counts and urgent attention is needed.

**ACTION**: Develop and implement a long-range advocacy plan to educate and enlist the effective support of our federal legislators on homelessness and mental health challenges. Outreach to the National League of Cities and United States Conference of Mayors.

- **Cost**: No anticipated City financial contribution.
- **Savings**: No immediate savings. Potential future resources.
- **Human and Social Impact**: Low in the short-term. This action won't immediately benefit homeless or housed City residents. Future high potential.
- **All-In Plan Alignment**: Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategy 9.
- **Partners**: City work with the National League of Cities, and U.S. Conference of Mayors and City's federal representatives.

## 15. Improve City's Internal Coordination System and Homeless Protocols from Front Line to Public Safety Staff, and Ensure Training and Support

City staff at all levels and in every aspect of City services are impacted by homelessness. The City's front line and public safety staff, however, deal with homelessness as a daily aspect of their jobs. These interactions can range from clean-up of discarded materials by a parks maintenance worker, to a parking attendant attempting to deescalate a difficult confrontation with a homeless or transient person in a public garage, to a first responder handling a medical call-for-service. As the Council has seen over the past few years, the City has had to increase its security in some public areas in response to the growing problem of more aggressive behaviors by some homeless or transient individuals. The perceived growth in numbers and change in behaviors places pressures on our front line staff to be able to execute their duties, while staying safe. The protocols to address these situations, from front line to public safety staff, may not be clear or mutually supportive. Further, City staff who interact with homeless individuals with mental health or substance use disorders should be properly trained in communication and situational skills. This does not suggest that City staff will assume any service provider duties; rather, staff should be equipped with skills to navigate these situations, obtain proper support and keep themselves safe and able to carry out their jobs.

**ACTION:** Improve the City's internal coordination to ensure that a mutually supportive and consistent pathway from front line to public safety staff is in place. Provide training to frontline staff in identifying and dealing with individuals with mental illness or substance abuse disorders.

- **Cost:** Unknown cost of additional training and support.
- **Savings:** Efficiencies savings. Improvements through training and support networks to the daily interactions between staff and homeless individuals will provide benefits to City organization and community.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Low. This recommendation does not provide a direct homeless service but proposes an improvement to the quality of interactions with and between City staff.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategy 12.
- **Partners:** City.

## 16. Create Homelessness Information and Resource Page on City Website

The City is often asked about homelessness, about its governmental response or the services available in the City. Developing a simple clearinghouse webpage that describes the participants in the system and their roles (i.e. service providers, County and City) with links to the direct service providers and referral information would be useful for our residents. In addition, Coordinated Entry information could be posted on such a dedicated webpage—offering another door for prospective clients.

**ACTION:** Develop a webpage on the City’s website to serve as a clearinghouse for information about the roles of local partners in the homelessness challenge, the City’s response to homelessness and information about service providers, and the Coordinated Entry portal.

- **Cost:** No financial cost to the City. Staff time to compile and update.
- **Savings:** No savings to the City, except in incremental time savings in responding to ad hoc queries. Indirect benefit in having a publicly available statement of the City’s position and information about the spectrum of partners and services engaged in homelessness solutions and services.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Low. This page will not provide a direct service to homeless individuals. It could serve as a consolidated information source.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategy 6.
- **Partners:** City.

## *Long Horizon Solutions (5+ years)*

The preceding 16 recommendations are ones that the Committee found could be substantially advanced or completed in a relatively short timeline, given the low to medium complexity of the solutions. The following set of solutions, in contrast, are considerably more intricate, partner-involved and require a very large investment of resources and operational commitment.

Chief among them, the Committee found that there is an immense need for year-round emergency shelter. The seasonal Emergency Winter Shelter funded through the Homeless Action Partnership (County and the four cities, including Santa Cruz) is a necessary but insufficient system of shelter. Santa Cruz County has too persistent and substantial a problem of homelessness not to provide for the basic needs of sheltering from the elements and safety in the darkest and coldest hours of the day. The year-round sheltering resources that are available are commendable and extremely impactful for the individuals who are able to access them, but they cannot meet the numbers of individuals in need.

This Committee explored a number of emergency housing models and centered on the San Francisco Navigation Center Model as the ideal. The Committee recommends pursuit of the Navigation Center Model and only if this full-support, low barrier facility becomes unachievable, should a permanent, regional emergency shelter be considered. Failing that, at a minimum, a day center with case management services should be pursued.

Also, as these shelter models are under exploration, the City should continue to partner, and partially fund, the seasonal emergency shelter program. Operating from December 1, 2016 through April 7, 2017 this season, this temporary program provided about 100 bed nights of shelter, plus meals and access to hygiene services, in our wettest and coldest months. While ideally, this seasonal shelter would be supplanted by a permanent supportive shelter, this is an important component of the homeless support system for now.

### **17. Consider San Francisco Navigation Center Model**

San Francisco's Navigation Center is a one-stop facility that integrates rehabilitation, employment, shelter and wrap-around services under one roof. The Navigation Center provides all the key elements of a night shelter, a day center and a homeless resource center. Importantly, the Navigation Center meets clients where they are and welcomes pets, partners and large volumes of possessions, all of which pose typical barriers to entry in other shelter types.

Once at the Center, clients are offered a spectrum of services to address physical and mental health needs, housing support, and basic human services. This fully-integrated model, while complex, appears to be the best emergency or first contact system to support a person out of homelessness. Attached as Appendix G is a detailed summary of the San Francisco Navigation Center operations and outcomes.

In addition to being a full-service integrated center, physical and program design should be carefully crafted to be trauma informed and gender-specific, in alignment with best practices, to provide the best care for this population.

**ACTION:** Engage in partner and community discussions about a regional Navigation Center. Organize a group visit of stakeholders to the San Francisco Center. Organize or participate in a working group with partner agencies and entities to explore siting, operations and funding.

- **Cost:** Millions. San Francisco’s Navigation Centers cost about \$3 million to construct and operating cost of about \$1 million per center annually.
- **Savings:** Once operational, very large savings to the system of care. Reductions in public safety interventions and safety resource consumption. Reduction in public resources to deal with encampments.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very high. A low-barrier center than can shelter and directly serve homeless individuals is an ideal model of emergency-into-transitional supportive shelter.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 6 and 10; and, Strategic Priority 3: Action Strategy 2.
- **Partners:** Community, County, other cities.

## 18. Pursue Permanent, Regional Year-Round Homeless Shelter Center

Should the Navigation Center model not be achievable, the Committee then recommends pursuit of a permanent, regional, year-round homeless shelter. While the Committee feels that some level of case management and service support should be included in any shelter type, there is a need to simply have a greater number of shelter beds available each night of the year in Santa Cruz County. Further, the year-round homeless shelter is recommended to operate with low barriers, allowing pets, partners, families and large possessions. Any permanent shelter should carefully address the considerable challenge of mixed-gender shelters by providing gender-specific spaces and services to

ensure a guarantee of safety and security for all occupants. In addition, design and programming should be trauma informed, in keeping with best practices to serve this population.

**ACTION:** Engage in partner and community discussions about a regional year-round homeless shelter center.

- **Cost:** Millions, but less than fully-supported Navigation Center model.
- **Savings:** Large savings to the system of care. Reductions in public safety interventions and safety resource consumption. Reduction in public resources to deal with encampments.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very high. Access to predictable and safe nightly shelter would increase quality of life substantially for those unsheltered in our community.
- **All-In Plan Alignment:** Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 6 and 10.
- **Partners:** Community, County, other cities.

## 19. Explore a Day Center with Basic Services and Case Management

With the closure of the Homeless Service Center’s Day Essential Services Program in 2015, there is no location in the city where homeless individuals can go to obtain daytime shelter, access basic hygiene services such as bathrooms and showers and importantly, stay in connection with a case manager to get on a trajectory for permanent housing. As a result, homeless individuals spend their days on the streets and may not be in regular connection with supportive services that can help them out of homelessness. The Committee recommends that if a Navigation Center cannot be attained and a year-round shelter cannot be attained, that resources shift to providing a Day Center. Even in a more basic Day Center model, care should be taken to support trauma informed and gender specific practices.

**ACTION:** Explore the re/establishment of a day center with basic services and case management workers to provide a productive environment that helps with immediate and long-term needs. This necessarily would be a partnership with the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) agencies.

- **Cost**: No current estimate but likely costly in the range of hundreds of thousands to millions.
- **Savings**: Large direct and indirect savings through provision of a location and services for homeless individuals. Savings in waste management, on street contacts through law enforcement and case workers. Tremendous benefit to the community to have numbers of homeless individuals off of the streets.
- **Human and Social Impact**: Very high.
- **All-In Plan Alignment**: Strategic Priority 1: Action Strategies 6 and 10.
- **Partners**: Community, County, other cities.

## 20. Cultivate Development of Housing

The Committee finds that all housing types are needed in Santa Cruz and adding to supply in general will have a productive impact on housing prices and availability. Given the built-out nature of Santa Cruz and the longstanding community value to maintain the open space greenbelt lands and develop instead within the City, infill development is the pathway available to grow our housing stock.

The City already has aggressive and leading policies supporting the development of small, efficient housing types: Single Room Occupancy Units (SROs), Small Ownership Units (SOUs) and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), our version of Tiny Homes. On the latter, recent changes to state law further reduced development standards and fees. Similarly, the City continually assesses its development regulations and fees to align the regulatory environment with the policies set forth in the General Plan 2030.

The City also has a set of plan updates coming forward to promote housing development. The Downtown Recovery Plan Amendments recommend increased density in the lower downtown, locating housing in the main urban core of the City, with the most access to transit and retail. An inclusionary ordinance and density bonus update will come forward this year. Policy around preserving existing housing from the conversion of long-term rental housing for residents into short-term vacation rentals for visitors is also being developed this year. Finally, the Corridor Rezoning Plan, a long-range (50-year) plan to concentrate density and development along the City's corridors, as opposed to neighborhoods, is under review. These policies and plans will guide the development and preservation of housing.

Through efforts to adopt a regulatory framework that incents development in the right places of the City, to preserving existing housing, to promoting the development of affordable housing, the City needs to actively pursue every avenue to develop housing. There is a deficiency of all housing types and an increase in any sort of supply to the system will alleviate some of the pressures of cost.

The Committee is also interested in emerging housing models. An intriguing recent one is a new program in Portland that is piloting city-funded construction of ADUs in backyards of single-family homes, in exchange for the home owners' agreement to rent the ADU to a homeless person or small homeless family for five years. The tenant will pay rent back to the city and at the end of the five years, the home owner hosting the ADU will have full ownership of the unit and the ability to rent to whomever the home owner chooses. This model requires substantial upfront city resources, however, even considering the much lower cost of construction in Portland (\$75,000 estimated for ADU construction there; basic construction in Santa Cruz starts at about \$150,000). Should more revenue become available to assist with housing, programs such as this would be worthy of additional exploration.

Finally, the *All-In* Plan and Housing First model prioritize the development of permanent supportive housing as the most effective and efficient for the homeless community. The Committee agrees that this subtype of housing is critical for our homeless population, especially given the complexity of their circumstances necessitating wrap-around services to support each individual in the transition to and maintenance of housing.

**ACTION:** Support the development of housing.

- **Cost:** No current estimate. Changes to regulations and fee structure may result in a loss of revenue to the City. The City has no funding source to develop housing and will have to work with the development community through its processes and requirements to encourage more housing.
- **Savings:** Sufficient permanent housing yields very high savings for the community. Housing is the ultimate solution and can prevent years and decades of homelessness that persistently drain local systems of care and City services.
- **Human and Social Impact:** Very high. Under the Housing First model, having stable housing eliminates the high degree of stress experienced by homeless individuals, allowing each person to be better positioned to address any underlying challenges.

- **All-In Plan Alignment**: Strategic Priority 2: Action Strategies 10, 11 and 12.
- **Partners**: County and City.

## **Policies or Programs Considered and Not Recommended**

The scope of this Committee was sharply focused on the City's visible, unsheltered adult homeless population. Given the acuteness of the need and the interest and compassion from our community, many ideas and possible solutions were put forward by individuals and groups. This Committee carefully collected and considered a wide set of ideas. After testing these ideas with the solutions goals listed at the beginning of this section of the report, the Committee did not add the following ideas as recommended solutions, as they did not substantially advance the goals:

- Declarations of a State of Homelessness Emergency
- Temporary tent encampments on public property
- Temporary villages or RV housing on public property
- Changes to Santa Cruz Municipal Code Chapter 6.36 "Camping"
- Changes to transitional support from governmental institutions (foster care, jail)
- Establishment of a local Homeless Court
- Adoption of service eligibility rules similar to the Santa Monica model
- Contracting with homelessness consultant Dr. Marbut

## CONCLUSION

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The Homelessness Coordinating Committee set out with the ambitious task of grappling with the homeless problem in our community and how the City of Santa Cruz can take a meaningful role in solutions, in robust partnership with other municipalities, service providers and stakeholders. Maintaining its objective to alleviate the suffering and negative externalities of the large, visible unsheltered homeless population, 20 recommendations were developed. We recommend that the Council accept them and direct staff to start the work to advance each one.

We also recommend that the City continue the dialogue about homelessness by engaging more consistently and strategically with its partners and the greater community. Given the limits of this Committee's time, the Committee could not pursue the broad-based engagement it wished to accomplish. With these recommendations in hand, however, and an openness to adapt to changing circumstances, the needs of our partners, and to complement other ongoing efforts to improve homelessness countywide, we hope that the City can embark upon a long-term, strategic and successful path that delivers a safe and supportive community for all.

We thank you for your consideration and support of this work.

*The Homelessness Coordinating Committee*

Mayor Cynthia Chase  
Councilmember Richelle Noroyan  
(former) Councilmember Pamela Comstock

## APPENDICES

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- A. Listing of Works Reviewed
  
- B. *2015 All-In Toward a Home for Every County Resident: The Santa Cruz County Community Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce and Eventually End Homelessness*
  
- C. 2015 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-In-Time Census and Survey Executive Summary
  
- D. 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey Executive Summaries for San Jose, San Francisco, Santa Clara County, Monterey County, Marin County, Solano County, San Benito County and Sonoma County
  
- E. Comparison Tables of California Continuum of Care Homeless Count and Shelter Bed Resources
  
- F. Report to the Santa Cruz City Council: Summary of Homeless Programs and Facilities (September 24, 2015)
  
- G. San Francisco Navigation Center Summary