SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
Housing for Health
PARTNERSHIP

***Mission**: Build partnerships and promote strong collaborative action to ensure all residents within the County have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.*

Santa Cruz County
Housing for Health Partnership (H4HP) Policy Board
Regular Meeting Agenda
February 26, 2025; 3 pm
420 Capitola Ave., Capitola – Capitola City Hall - Community Room

Zoom Conference Link: https://santacruzcounty-us.zoomgov.com/s/1615630702
Call-In Number: +16692545252 Webinar ID#: 1615630702

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Action Items (vote required) {3:10 – 4:00 pm}
1. Approval of Meeting Minutes: December 18, 2024.
2. Approval of Recommended CA Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Applications

Lived Expertise Workgroup Updates {4 – 4:20 pm}
3. Update on Status and Participation in Policy Board and other CoC Groups and Activities.

Information Items (no vote required) {4:20 – 4:30 pm}
4. Housing Santa Cruz County – Affordable Housing Month Events
5. 2025 PIT Count – Reporting Timeline

Report/Discussion Items (no vote required) (4:30 pm - }
6. CoC Policy Board Education Representative and 2nd Co-Chair
7. Feedback on County Encampment Response Protocol DRAFT
8. Aligning Strategic Plans to Address Homelessness

Board Member Announcements
Adjournment

Next Meeting: **Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 3 pm**

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate based on disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefit of the services, programs, or activities. This meeting is in an accessible facility. If you are a person with a disability and require special assistance to participate in the meeting, please call (831) 763-8900 (TDD/TTY- 711) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting to make arrangements. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format. As a courtesy to those affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent free.

Action Item 1: Approval of Meeting Minutes

(Action required) – Robert Ratner

Recommendation

Approve the December 18, 2024, Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Regular Meeting minutes.

Suggested Motion

I move to approve the December 18, 2024, Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Regular Meeting minutes.

Attachment

December 18, 2024, Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Regular Meeting minutes

![Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership logo]

Mission: *Build partnerships and promote strong collaborative action to ensure all residents within the County have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.*

Housing for Health Partnership (H4HP) Policy Board
Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2024; 3 pm

Call to Order/Welcome

Present: Heather Rogers, Kate Nester, Larry Imwalle, Mariah Lyons, Memo Cerias, Rosie Garcia, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, Karen Kern, Manu Koenig, Terence Concannon, Tom Stagg

Absent: Fred Keeley, Courtney Lindberg, Justin Cummings, Mali LaGoe

Additions and Deletions to the Agenda: None

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Action Items (vote required)

1. Approval of Minutes: Approval of Meeting Minutes: October 15, 2024.
Discussion:	*None*
Public Comment:	*Mora from Homebase and Kyrolos Saad from Lived Expertise Action Board introduced themselves.*
Motion:	*Approve the Housing for Health Policy Board (H4HP) Minutes.*
Motion to Approve:	*Karen Kern*
Motion Seconded:	*Terence Concannon*
Abstentions:	*Mariah Lyons, Tom Stagg*
Board Action:	*Motion passed*

2. Approve of Housing for Health Partnership Governance Charter Updates and Adopt New Charter.
Discussion:	*The Governance Charter of the Housing for Health Partnership (CoC) has been updated by staff in collaboration with County legal counsel. Mentioned that the updated charter clarifies the distinction between public meetings held by the Policy Board and the other working group meetings managed by staff. Questions were raised regarding evaluations for Coordinated Entry. Discussed that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the CoC to conduct evaluations for Coordinated Entry. Discussed that the board previously recommended that staff seek external contracts, resulting in contracts with Applied Survey Research (ASR) and Focus Strategies. Mentioned that the board will provide recommendations on how to implement any changes to coordinated entry as a result of reviewing the evaluations and community feedback.*
Public Comment:	*None*

Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2024

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Motion:	*Approve the proposed changes to the Housing for Health Partnership Governance Charter and to adopt the new Charter with an effective date of January 1, 2025.*
Motion to Approve:	*Terence Concannon*
Motion Seconded:	*Heather Rogers*
Abstentions:	*Tom Stagg*
Board Action:	*Motion passed*

3. Approve Provide Direction to Staff RE: Updated CA Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Funding Process.
   Discussion:

   Tony Gardner, consultant for the Continuum of Care (CoC) shared a PowerPoint presentation about changes to the California Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) guidelines and the anticipated 2024 ESG Notice of Funding Available (NOFA). The presentation highlighted that the 2024 ESG program guidelines have been changed to streamline the process, with an estimated allocation of $290,000 for the Santa Cruz County CoC. Mentioned that one of the significant changes is that while the NOFA will now be on a three-year cycle, the standard multi-year contract period of performance may extend up to five years. Discussed that the CoC will coordinate with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to develop performance measures, set funding priorities, and create relevant policies and procedures. Mentioned that if an agency fails to expend the full grant award by the deadline, it will be banned from receiving funding for two annual cycles. Concerns were expressed regarding the tight deadline for the 2024 ESG NOFA application process. Mentioned that Housing for Health staff will support agencies with their applications to HCD and will monitor grant recipients at least once during the contract period. Discussed that the funding priorities for Rapid Rehousing projects was based on the Housing for Health Framework goals and utilized data to identify how Rapid Rehousing projects lead to more positive housing outcomes.

Public Comment:	*Larry Imwalle would like to develop strategies that connect Shelter with Rapid Rehousing programs to increase shelter capacity.*
Motion:	*Approve one or two Applicants that are selected to submit applications directly to HCD.*
Motion to Approve:	*Manu Koenig*
Motion Seconded:	*Heather Rogers*
Abstentions:	*Tom Stagg*
Board Action:	*Motion Passed*

Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2024

Mission: *Build partnerships and promote strong collaborative action to ensure all residents within the County have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.*

Motion: *Approve one or two Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) projects that prioritize assisting families and connecting with shelters. Each RRH project will allocate 50% of its funding for rental assistance and no more than 50% for supportive services. The Board will develop and implement a local process, which involves creating the RFP process, forming a review committee of 3-5 non-conflicted Continuum of Care (CoC) members, and ensuring that at least one member of the review panel has lived experience.*

Motion to Approve: *Manu Koenig*
Motion Seconded: *Heather Rogers*
Abstentions: *Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, Tom Stagg*
Board Action: *Motion Passed*

Motion: *Approve Staff to present the selected awardee(s) for approval at the Policy Board meeting on February 26, 2025. The staff will proceed with the selection based on the review panel's recommendations and will inform the Board of the selection(s) at the next meeting.*

Motion to Approve: *Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson*
Motion Seconded: *Karen Kern*
Abstentions: *Tom Stagg*
Board Action: *Motion Passed*

Lived Expertise Workgroup Updates (no vote required):

4. Update on Status and Participation in Policy Board and other CoC Group and other CoC Group Activities
   Discussion: *Sheryl Norteye, staff member from Housing for Health, shared that staff from Homebase are consultants who have been supporting the Lived Expertise Action Workgroups. Board members Memo and Rosie expressed their positive experiences as participants in the board. Mentioned that they have finalized their charter and attended the National Lived Experience Conference. Discussed their upcoming participation in this year's Point in Time Count and their efforts to collaborate with community partners through a live project proposal request available on the Housing for Health website.*

5. National Coalition for the Homeless Conference Update
   Discussion: *Rosie, a member of the Lived Expertise Action Board, shared that the National Coalition for the Homeless Conference was inspiring and was impressed to see how Finland effectively implemented Housing First approach model. The Housing for Health Partnership shared a presentation titled "Housing First: From Principles to Practice" and shared Video on the Housing for Health Website- Events*

Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2024

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Information Items (no vote required):

6. *HUD YHDP-CoC Notice of Funding Opportunity and CoC Builds Application Submission Update.*
   Discussion: *The full YHDP-CoC funding application was submitted on time and included the project ratings approved by the CoC Policy Board. Award announcements are anticipated in the first quarter of 2025. The H4H staff and consultants collaborated with the Vets Village project sponsors to prepare a $5 million CoC Builds application for the project. This application was also submitted on time, with award announcements expected in the summer of 2025.*

7. *2025 PIT Count – January 30, 2025, Update*
   Discussion: *The Point-In-Time (PIT) Count will take place on January 30th at 5 AM. Mentioned that to cover all census tracks, 120 volunteers are needed. Mentioned that Watsonville has expressed a desire for more data on the demographics of unhoused individuals in a specific region. The Housing for Health Partnership staff are collaborating with Applied Survey Research (ASR) and community volunteers to prepare for the annual countywide PIT count.*

8. *2025 Policy Board Calendar*
   Discussion: *Next calendar year board meeting will take place on the following dates: February 26, April 16, June 18, August 20, October 15, and December 17 at 3pm. H4H staff are currently working to secure location(s) for the meetings.*

9. *2025 Homeless Memorial*
   Discussion: *The Homeless Persons Health Project, Housing Matters, faith leaders, and the Housing for Health Partnership are proud to support the 2025 Homeless Memorial. This event will take place on Friday, December 20th, at 10 AM at the Portuguese Hall of Santa Cruz, located at 216 Evergreen St., Santa Cruz. Communities across the country will gather to remember our neighbors who have died while unhoused in the past year.*

Report/Discussion Items *(no vote required)*

10. *Policy Board Co-Chair Interest and Nominees.*
    Discussion: *The Housing for Health Policy Board needs a Policy Board Co-Chair. Board members interested in a Co-Chair role should contact Robert Ratner.*

11. *Housing and Capital Facility Development and Funding Collaboration*
    Discussion: *Seven projects submitted funding proposals for the California Housing and Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) program. Staff from the Housing for Health Division are seeking recommendations from Board*

Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2024

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Members on how to enhance collaboration and expand resources to support these projects, which aim to increase affordable housing options in the County.

Board Member Announcements

No additional announcements.

Adjournment

Next Meeting: **Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 3:00 pm**

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Action Item 2: Approval of Recommended CA Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Applications

(Action Required) – Robert Ratner; Tony Gardner CoC Consultant

Recommendations

1. Approve ESG Funding Review Committee recommendations as presented below.
2. Approve submission of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Recommendation Form to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and authorize Robert Ratner, Housing for Health Division Director, as the signatory on the Form.

Suggested Motion

I move to approve the ESG Funding Review Committee Recommendations as presented by staff below and submission of the attached CoC Recommendation Form.

Background

The ESG Funding Review Committee met on February 20, 2025, to develop and agree on recommendations regarding ESG project approval for submission to HCD. Staff present were Sheryl Norteye, Housing for Health (H4H) Division, Senior Human Services Analyst, and Tony Gardner, CoC Consultant. The Funding Review Committee participants present were:

- Hugo Morales, Member, Housing for Health Partnership ((H4HP) Lived Expertise Action Board (LEAB)
- Larry Imwalle, City of Santa Cruz, Homelessness Response Manager
- Carlos Landaverry, City of Watsonville, Housing Manager, Community Development Agency
- Heather Rogers, County of Santa Cruz, Public Defender.

ESG Funding Review Committee recommended action for the Policy Board:

1. Approve submission to HCD of Monarch Services-Servicios Monarca's Rapid Rehousing (RRH) application for a three-year total of $359,094.
2. Approve submission to HCD of Housing Matters' RRH application for a three-year total of $359,094.
3. Decline submission of the Families in Transition (FIT) RRH, Walnut Avenues Family and Women's Center (WAFWC) RRH, and Downtown Streets Team Street Outreach applications.

Analysis

As discussed during the December 18, 2024, CoC Policy Board meeting, HCD made available to the Santa Cruz County CoC area an estimated total of $718,188 in ESG funds over three years. At least 40% of funds are required to be used for RRH and no more than two projects could be recommended by the CoC Policy Board. Among other decisions, the Policy Board decided to:

- Consider one project for all the funds or two projects to split the funds;
- Require applicants to apply directly to HCD rather than through the County;
- Convene a Funding Review Committee of 3-5 CoC members (including at least one from lived experience groups) to make recommendations to the Policy Board; and
- Prioritize RRH projects that :(1) target families exiting emergency shelters and that use at least 50% of ESG funds for rental assistance; and (2) document matching resources beyond the minimum requirements.

In carrying out the required fair and equitable process, staff issued a public local Request for Proposals (RFP) and application materials, held an online applicant orientation and posted the recording on the H4HP website, and made available technical assistance to applicants upon request. In response to the RFP, the following five qualified applications were received and scored by staff using objective rating criteria, and forwarded to the Funding Review Committee for review and consideration:

Applicant	Project Type	Amount Requested	Aggregate Score
Monarch Services	RRH for families fleeing domestic violence (DV) and exiting shelter	$359,094	110
WAFWC	RRH for families fleeing DV and exiting shelter	$406,384	97
FIT	RRH for families exiting shelter	$359,094	97
Housing Matters	RRH for families fleeing exiting shelter or referred through Coordinated Entry	$718,188	92
Downtown Streets Team	Street outreach	$327,000	78

The Funding Review Committee members reviewed the applications, and during their February 20th meeting heard a staff presentation on the State funding parameters, local priorities, and aggregate scores. They then participated in a thoughtful discussion of each of the projects considering community needs and priorities. As a result of this process, they reached unanimous consensus on the following:

- To recommend selecting two project to split the funds 50-50 rather than just one project.
- To recommend the Monarch RRH for the first project in the full amount requested ($359,094 – half the funds available) because it was clearly the highest scoring, met

the CoC priorities, and served a critical DV population centered in South County, where in 2024 there was an increase in homelessness.

- To recommend the Housing Matters RRH for the second project in a reduced amount (down to $359,094 – the other half of the funds available) because it met CoC priorities, proposed to use 100% of ESG funds for rental assistance as opposed to services (which were being leveraged), and served vulnerable families from North County and elsewhere in the county. Committee members were mindful that this project scored 5 points lower than the FIT and WAFWC projects. However, they determined that because the applicants appeared to have differing understandings of the data needed for some of the local application questions, that a 5-point differential could be explained by the applicant's different interpretations of the data requested.

Committee members wanted to point out that all the projects were well thought out and met important community priorities. Unfortunately, they could select only two projects under the State ESG requirements, and it was a very difficult choice. None of the applicants declined should interpret the result as reflecting badly on their agency or project.

Attachment:

CoC Recommendation Form

Continuum of Care (CoC) Recommendation Form

CoC Name and No.: _____

Continuum of Care Applicant Selection Process:

Each CoC may recommend up to two (2) eligible Applicants to apply for each Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), pursuant to the ESG Program Final Guidelines, Section 202(b).

The CoC certifies that a process was used that meets the following requirements:

- Is a fair and open competition that avoids conflicts of interest;
- Follows the applicable procurement requirements of 2 C.F.R. Part 200;
- Evaluates provider capacity and experience, including the ability to deliver services in non-entitlement areas;
- Evaluates eligibility pursuant to Section 202(b) of the ESG Program Final Guidelines;
- Evaluates adherence to Housing First practices pursuant to Section 317 of the ESG Program Final Guidelines;
- Utilizes data and considers community input to identify unmet needs;
- Prioritizes activities that address the highest unmet need, considering other available funding and system wide performance measures;
- Considers project-level performance measures when evaluating proposals; and
- Collaborates with the local CoC.

Recommended Eligible Applicants:

Applicant 1:

- Organization Name:

- Organization Address:

- City(ies) and county(ies) where proposed activities will be provided:

- Proposed budget by component:
  - Emergency Shelter:
  - Street Outreach:
  - Homelessness Prevention:
  - Rapid Re-housing:
  - HMIS:
  - Admin:

Applicant 2:

- Organization Name:

- Organization Address:

- City(ies) and county(ies) where proposed activities will be provided:

- Proposed budget by component:
  - Emergency Shelter:
  - Street Outreach:
  - Homelessness Prevention:
  - Rapid Re-housing:
  - HMIS:
  - Admin:

CERTIFICATION

Name: _____

Title of Authorized Representative*: _____

Signature of Authorized Representative*: _____

Date: _____

*Must be signed by the Authorized Represented named in your Resolution

This CoC Recommendation Form must be signed by the CoC and uploaded into the application by the recommended applicant. Please print or pdf this form and either provide an original signature, printed name, title, and date using blue ink OR you may electronically sign by using a form of eSign software. Once the document has been signed, please upload the signed copy in the below file upload button labeled "Upload signed copy here".

Lived Expertise Workgroup Updates

3. Update on Status and Participation in Policy Board and other CoC Groups and Activities.

The Lived Expertise Workgroups have nominated the following individuals to participate in the CoC Policy Board in 2025:

Lived Expertise Workgroup appointed member = Manuel Caceres
Lived Expertise Workgroup alternate member = Rosie Garcia

Youth Lived Expertise Workgroup appointed member = Kyrolos Saad
Youth Lived Expertise Workgroup alternate member = Makayla Nored

Members will provide a verbal update at the Policy Board meeting regarding current Workgroup priorities and projects.

Information Items

4. Housing Santa Cruz County – Affordable Housing Month Events

May is affordable housing month and the Housing for Health Partnership (CoC) plans to continue to provide support for the overall event as well as specific sessions during the month of May. Current events planned that involve the CoC include:

- The Kickoff Event will include a presentation from Sam Tsemberis, PhD on the origins of Housing First and the critical importance of affordable housing for true implementation. The Event coincides with Dr. Tsemberis providing training and coaching support to local programs and staff in model implementation as part of a community-supported strategy.
- A community-wide Continuum of Care (CoC) meeting to gather input on key goals for the July 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025, six-month action plan under the Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz Framework.
- Co-sponsoring a 2nd annual landlord appreciation event in partnership with the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz.
- Partnering with the Association of Faith Communities (AFC) on an event to highlight the involvement of faith communities in addressing community housing and support needs.

7. 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count – Reporting Timeline

Over 120 volunteers helped implement the 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count in Santa Cruz County in the early morning of January 30, 2025. The countywide visual outreach effort was followed by a youth specific visual count and a representative survey of people experience homelessness.   Preliminary PIT data is due to HUD at the end of March. The preliminary data

will NOT include demographic or geographic information. A final report with more comprehensive data is scheduled to be released on or before the end of July 2025.

Report/Discussion Items

6. CoC Policy Board Education Representative and 2ⁿᵈ Co-Chair

Mariah Lyons, Assistant Dean of Students, Student Support Programs, from UC Santa Cruz, informed CoC staff that she will not be able to continue serving as a CoC Policy Board member in 2025. This leaves an opening for an education sector representative nominee to be recruited by CoC staff and formally approved by current Board members at a future meeting. CoC staff would like recommendations from current Board members regarding potential nominees at this meeting.

H4H staff are continuing to look for a current or future Board Member interested in serving a two-year term as a Co-Chair. Tom Stagg is scheduled to serve one more year in his role.

7. Feedback on County Encampment Response Protocol DRAFT

The County of Santa Cruz developed and adopted strategic operational objectives for the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. Objective #352 states, *"By June 2024, CDI-Planning, in partnership with the County Administrative Office, Health Services, Human Services, and the Sheriff-Coroner, will develop collaborative, coordinated, and human response protocols for addressing humanitarian and environmental needs that arise when unhoused people camp or park in sensitive habitats within unincorporated areas of the County."* One of the key steps outlined for this objective is ensuring that the proposed procedures are also supported by the local CoC. The Board Packet includes the most current DRAFT protocol document developed by a multi-departmental staff working group within the County. ***CoC staff are requesting feedback from Policy Board members on the current DRAFT and if any process or content changes are needed to get support for the protocol from CoC Policy Board members.***

8. Aligning Strategic Plans to Address Homelessness

The County of Santa Cruz and Housing for Health Partnership (CoC) utilize the adopted Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz framework to guide collaborative efforts to ensure stable, safe, and healthy places to live for all County residents. The January 2024 – January 2027 adopted Framework calls for the creation of six-month action plans with specific measurable goals that align with the structure of the Framework. Historically, the six-month action plans have been developed by CoC staff with input from the CoC operational workgroup and community partners. The six-month action plans were historically presented to the County Board of Supervisors for their review and approval.

The original Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz Framework was accepted by all the cities in the County. Since that time, the original Framework was modified slightly, and the City of Santa Cruz has adopted its own "Homelessness Response Strategic Plan" for the period July 2024 – June 2027. The City of Watsonville is currently undergoing a process to develop its own City-specific action plan around housing and homelessness. Housing Matters has adopted a publicly

available strategic plan for the period 2024 – 2026.   The Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County is in the process of updating their 5-Year Public Housing Authority Plan for the period 2025-2030.   Housing Santa Cruz County generally adopts annual workplans that are not currently publicly available on their website. Many of the current plans refer to one another and a desire to have alignment across different groups.

CoC staff have the following recommendations to improve the six-month action plan development process: (1) Hold CoC community meetings twice per year in May and November to gather input on key goals for the community to undertake in the next six-month period; (2) Create a vehicle for capturing goals and actions taken by *all* CoC partners not just County staff; (3) Bring six-month action plans to the CoC Board for review and approval in June and December of each year; (4) Make the six-month plan documents more accessible to the public on the Housing for Health Partnership website.

Copies of the Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz Framework, the City of Santa Cruz Homelessness Response Strategic Plan, the Housing Matters Strategic Plan, and the current six-month action plan for the January – June 2025 period are included with the Board Packet as separate attachments for reference.

CoC staff are seeking input from Policy Board members on the above recommendations and other ways to increase collaboration and alignment among these different groups in our collective efforts to address homelessness and meet local housing needs.

Santa Cruz County
Encampment Response Guidelines

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PURPOSE

Unsheltered homelessness creates health and safety stressors for the entire community, but particularly for those living without shelter. The County of Santa Cruz (County) and its partners recognize that strategies to address these stressors must address the concerns of both unsheltered individuals and the larger community. The most effective long-term solution for addressing encampments is strong collaboration efforts to help people secure stable, safe, and healthy living situations.

This document provides guidelines for engagement of those living in homeless encampments or unhoused within unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County, specifically when health, safety, and environmental concerns arise. For this document, a homeless encampment is defined as "two or more tents, structures, or assembly of camping equipment or personal property that appears to a reasonable person to be used by individuals for shelter use in areas not generally designated for this purpose."

Nationwide, encampments have been removed in the past without adequate coordination between local governments, service providers, and the encampment residents themselves. At the same time, some encampments and their residents have been allowed to stay in particular locations resulting in health and safety issues for the encampment residents and other community members, environmental impacts, and potential violations of environmental protection regulations. Moving forward, these guidelines call for a balanced approach that upholds the needs and vulnerabilities of unsheltered residents, addresses health, safety, and environmental risks in a timely fashion, and ensures an appropriate coordinated response involving service providers, residents, and County government departments.

These guidelines outline two major processes:

1) How encampment sites are assessed for health and safety conditions and environmental impacts, and how residents are assessed for needs and connected to available housing and community service resources to help them secure a stable home as quickly as possible; and

2) If health and safety conditions or environmental impacts warrant encampment closure, how residents (and their belongings) are assisted in the closure process.

These guidelines include the following:

- A Health, Safety & Environmental Assessment Tool and recommended levels of response to address health and safety concerns, if any;
- Review of possible impacts to protected environmental resources;
- The coordination of County departments and service providers, and interaction with those living in encampments; and
- Specifics related to desired roles, outreach and engagement provision, notice requirements, storage of personal belongings, and coordination of available resources.

These guidelines do not supersede local jurisdiction emergency response plans for declared and emerging emergency response operations.

1

BACKGROUND

The County first adopted the Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County in March of 2021 with an updated version adopted in March of 2024. Among the specific goals and activities outlined in the Framework, one specifically states, "work together with city jurisdictions and other County departments to identify and implement best practices for collaborative responses to unmanaged homeless encampments and community health and safety issues that arise from people living without shelter in public places." This document brings together information gathered from multiple local jurisdictions and national technical assistance organizations to outline some collaborative practices that show promise of more positive outcomes for unhoused individuals and other community members.

According to the Santa Cruz County point-in-time count of persons experiencing homelessness conducted in January 2024, an estimated 1,485 individuals were living unsheltered on the day of the count. According to a few research studies, unsheltered individuals inhabiting encampments tend to be more likely to be adults with multiple chronic health conditions including behavioral health conditions. The California Policy Lab reported that individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness are 25 times more likely to report they suffer from the tri-morbid combination of physical health conditions, a mental health issue, and a substance-use condition than individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness (50% compared to 2%). Given these needs coupled with a lack of appropriate shelter, affordable housing, and supportive service options appropriate to meet these needs, it can take significant time to engage and connect unsheltered individuals to accessible and appropriate resources to end their homelessness.

Until there is enough safe, decent, affordable, and accessible temporary and permanent housing for everyone, people will continue to live in unsheltered environments. The Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz framework provides a general outline of the additional investments, and system improvements necessary to move the community closer to a goal of ensuring homelessness is rare and brief.

All sectors of the community must work together to mitigate and address health and safety hazards experienced by unsheltered individuals. Protecting the health and safety of all residents, both housed and unhoused, will create a healthier community for all. We need to work together to end our neighbors' homelessness rather than simply relocating unsheltered people from one area to another. Working toward ending rather than managing homelessness, requires medium and long-term strategies developed in coordination with multiple levels of government and community partners including, people with lived experience of homelessness, affordable housing developers, human services and public benefits, community mental health, substance-use treatment providers, hospitals, law enforcement, public health, community foundations, faith-based organizations, and others.

Short-term, crisis-oriented outreach efforts to address immediate health, safety, and environmental issues related to encampments and the individuals living in them are sometimes necessary. However, helping individuals on a pathway to long-term housing and stability requires more consistent and proactive outreach, engagement, and relationship building efforts focused on understanding individual needs, goals, strengths, and resources. Outreach efforts in a geographic region must find an appropriate balance between responding to urgent health and safety needs and goal-directed relationship building and engagement efforts.

Individuals with criminal histories frequently experience significant barriers to securing employment and housing. Fines and citations, encampment clearings, and other municipal practices and policies that disrupt and displace people create additional barriers and setbacks for people experiencing homelessness, making it more likely that people will remain homeless even longer. Enforcement actions for criminal activity and health and safety violations should be consistently applied to housed and unhoused individuals. Decisions about when enforcement actions are necessary should weigh the impacts and consequences of not addressing immediate health and safety needs against the impacts associated with displacement and enforcement activities with unhoused individuals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles provide a framework for expectations and decision-making. The following principles can help guide approaches to meet the needs of those living in encampments and their housed neighbors.

Principle 1: Delivery of municipal services must respect the needs of all residents, with special considerations for serving the unsheltered population.

A) *Meet people where they are.* People experiencing unsheltered homelessness may need multiple positive engagements before trust is built. Respect autonomy and a person's decision about whether to engage or to accept services and resources. People may refuse offers initially and change their mind once a trusting relationship is built. Communicate clear limits on appropriate and not appropriate behavior in public settings. Be patient and consult with the individual to identify their needs, how to best meet them, and how to ensure the individual and community can remain safe and healthy.

B) *Be guided by compassion and empathy in all interactions.* Take special consideration of a person's immediate needs, including making appropriate and reasonable accommodations for people living with physical and mental disabilities. Provide guidance on desired and appropriate behaviors when setting limits.

C) *Acknowledge a person's unique context and experiences.* Offer services sensitively and appropriately when interacting with individuals, with an awareness of how race, ethnicity, culture, disability, gender identify, sexual orientation, housing status, and other personal characteristics impact perceptions and levels of trust. Mental illness and other health conditions may limit a person's ability to understand communications and to communicate effectively.

D) *Consult with unsheltered residents meaningfully.* Work to listen to the perspective of a person experiencing homelessness and their personal story. Partner together to identify gaps in and opportunities for improved practices. Provide avenues for meaningful feedback. Develop clear grievance procedures and make those known publicly and to individuals when requested.

Principle 2: People experiencing homelessness have the same civil rights as housed residents and should not be subject to discrimination or arbitrary treatment based on housing status.

A) *Serve the needs of housed and unhoused residents equitably.* People experiencing homelessness are residents who deserve the same access to public services—such as sanitation, restroom and hygiene facilities, and protection by law enforcement—as their housed neighbors. Commit to protecting the civil rights and safety of all people in the community, with the recognition that people living on the streets are at greater risk of violence and victimization.

B) *Consider the special needs and circumstances of the situation.* When approaching a person experiencing homelessness to conduct municipal services, consider the activity they are undertaking and approach with respect; limit the interruption of life-sustaining behavior such as sleeping in public. The activities of persons experiencing homelessness should not be subject to more scrutiny than that of a housed person.

C) *Approach with a goal of engagement, not enforcement.* Interactions focused on engagement are more likely to build trust and rapport than those that lead with the goal of enforcement. Standard law enforcement activities such as requests for identification can be perceived as threatening, harassing, or intimidating and therefore disruptive to successful service and resource connections.

D) *Municipal ordinances should not criminalize homelessness.* Ordinances that limit necessary, life-sustaining activities such as sitting, sleeping, or eating in public spaces unfairly target people living on the streets. In the absence of adequate alternative or private places to undertake those activities, people have a right to perform these activities in public. Evaluate ordinances for disparate impacts on persons experiencing homelessness.

E) *Pursue alternatives to enforcement, citation, and arrest.* Citing and arresting unsheltered residents for low-level or quality of life infractions and/or life-sustaining activities can be emotionally and physically traumatizing – as well as disruptive to progress toward ending homelessness. Law enforcement officers should use citation or arrest as a last resort and instead promote referrals to services and resources, even when they may have been previously declined.

F) *Develop policies and integrate systems in support of diversion practices.* Fines and jail time make it more challenging for an unhoused resident to achieve stability, work toward their goals, and secure employment and/or long-term housing. Consider systems improvements such as pre-arrest diversion programs and programs that dismiss citations for low-level, non-violent crimes and connect unhoused residents to services and resources in lieu of fines and/or jail.

Principle 3: All people, both housed and unhoused, deserve access to safe public spaces as well as services that promote health and safety for all.

A) *Take an outreach-focused approach to encampments and unsheltered persons.* Mobilize outreach staff specially trained to build relationships over time, learn what people need, and connect them to those resources. Coordinate the delivery of municipal services with existing regional resources and services infrastructure with as much advance notice as possible. Existing resources and services often have limited capacity so additional notice time increases the chances of truly connecting unsheltered individuals with meaningful, long-term assistance.

B) *Explore ways to increase access to public health resources for the general public that are also accessible to people experiencing homelessness.* Ensuring that sheltered and unsheltered residents have regular access to clean water, personal hygiene, and sanitation resources, as well as containers for safe needle disposal and hazardous waste promotes public health for all.

C) *Explore ways to help people without shelter safeguard their important possessions and receive communications.* Provide individuals with information about storage facilities. Help individuals increase their financial resources and access to banking. Assist people with getting and keeping important public documents and storing them in an electronic form or with supportive contact people. Assist individuals with obtaining phones, phone service, and email accounts, help individuals access general mail services from the post office. Prior to clearing encampments urge individuals to secure all their important possessions before the date of the cleaning. Follow storage protocols outlined in this framework. Hours, location, and identification requirements should support the needs of unsheltered residents.

D) *Ensure public areas are accessible to all by providing clear guidance about access and egress.* Ensure that unsheltered residents are aware of the local standards through adequate notice, and that measures are in place to support their consistent application.

E) *Follow clear and person-centered protocol when conducting sanitation activities to ensure consistency and regularity.* These guidelines represent some best practices for outreach, notice, and handling of personal property.

F) *Facilitate opportunities for community education on homelessness.* The expectation for immediate resolutions to unsheltered homelessness drives short-term, counterproductive responses that often fail to resolve homelessness for unhoused residents and may prolong issues of concern in the general community. Publicly share information about the unique needs and stories of people experiencing homelessness. Provide information about the primary contributors to homelessness in the United States and locally. Encourage community members to engage in efforts to address the lack of accessible and affordable long-term residential and housing options in the community.

Principle 4: Local, state, and federal protections for environmental resources still apply when an encampment is in an environmentally sensitive area.

A) *Educate people experiencing homelessness and community members about environmental concerns and standards.* Local governments are subject to federal, state, and local laws intended to protect the environment. Examples include the federal Endangered Species Act, federal and state water quality standards, and local ordinances.

B) *Provide people experiencing homelessness and other community members with clear guidance on how to meet environmental standards.* Provide individuals with alternatives that ensure appropriate environmental stewardship while also meeting some of their needs.

C) *Include the evaluation of environmental resources in developing responses to encampments.* Utilize an assessment tool that evaluates environmental impacts, particularly water quality and habitat near riparian areas and buffers. When making decisions about encampment responses, include staff and agencies with environmental expertise in the process.

D) *Environmental restoration as deterrent*. Work with public agencies and private property owners to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and restoration of impacted sensitive areas and buffers.

E) *Environmental hazards.* Ensure that all residents are protected from environmental hazards and hazardous materials. Fire hazards exist in multiple areas throughout the County and fire safety should be considered in encampment assessment and decision-making.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The County's response to encampments requires a coordinated effort across County departments and will also involve non-County organizations, and potentially in the future other jurisdictions. Implementing entities must ensure that federal and state regulations related to encampment response are followed. County departments and community organizations involved in planning for and executing responses include:

County Departments:

- County Administrative Office (CAO) (team coordination, centralized reporting);
- CAO Office – Public Information Officer (public communications)
- Human Services Department - Housing for Health (H4H) (housing services, coordination with community partners);
- Sheriff's Office – Community Policing (noticing, storage of resident belongings, closure enforcement, safety);
- Health Services Agency (HSA) – Behavioral Health (mental health and substance use disorder treatment services and crisis response);
- HSA – Environmental Health Water Resources (water quality, environmental protection and restoration);
- HSA – Public Health (population health assessment and recommendations);
- Community Development & Infrastructure (CDI) – Code Compliance (coordination with private property owners);
- CDI – Environmental Planning (habitat protection and environmental restoration);
- CDI – Public Works (responses in public rights-of-way); and
- Parks Department (responses in County parks).

Representatives from the above County departments will assign a representative to participate in a leadership group to support the CAO's office in planning for and organizing responses, facilitating Assessments, prioritizing responses based on risk levels, identifying resident needs and potential resources, outreach, post-encampment restoration, post-encampment reporting and evaluation, and continuous improvement of the process.

Community Partners:

- Continuum of Care (CoC) Partnership (community input, coordination);

- Resident Outreach Team (contracted entity) (resident outreach);
- Relevant County Fire Districts (fire safety);
- Housing Authority (housing services and resources);
- Housing service providers (housing services);
- Clean up entity (contracted); and
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) (environmental restoration).

A broader range of additional partners may be engaged as needs arise with specific encampments or during implementation of the guidelines, including the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville.

ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE PROTOCOL

STEP 1: NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE TEAM COORDINATION

While reports or notifications of encampments may be received by several different entities, the process followed to organize the Response Team and assess the health, safety, and environmental conditions of an encampment should remain consistent. All encampment notifications will be routed to designated CAO staff to begin the Response Protocol. CAO staff will notify departments conducting the needed Health, Safety & Environmental Assessment (Step 2). Along with regular coordination meetings , CAO staff will oversee the development of a portal for public reporting of encampments of concern.

Timeline: 1-2 days after complaint received.

STEP 2: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

County staff will be assigned to visit the site and complete a Health, Safety, & Environmental Assessment (Appendix A). The Assessment is adapted from guidance provided by the Benioff Homeless and Housing Initiative at the University of California, San Francisco. The Assessment documents the location, number of residents, accessibility, safety, public health concerns, and environmental impacts associated with a particular encampment. The Assessment provides information that can help with assessing the need for, and level of, appropriate response. County departments typically engaged in the Assessment process include staff from the following departments:

- Housing for Health;
- Sheriff's Office;
- Health Services Agency – Public Health, Environmental Health, Behavioral Health, Clinics (Health Care for the Homeless)
- CDI – Environmental Planning.

Staff from CDI – Code Compliance, CDI – Public Works, and the Parks Department may accompany those conducting the Assessment, depending on location. County supported ArcGIS software can be used to help collect and share Assessment information across County departments.

Resident Engagement/Outreach

The above staff will be accompanied by the Resident Outreach Team to engage with residents. The Resident Outreach Team consists of contracted representatives from one of the County's community organizations that specialize in assessing resident needs and facilitating housing resources. The Resident Outreach Team will receive details of the encampment and its residents so they can engage with residents to provide support and connection to resources. Initial engagement will occur along with the Assessment and after any immediate safety concerns are addressed. The goal of outreach is to assess resident needs, connect them with appropriate resources and services, and, in the event of a necessary resident relocation, determine the next steps for all residents and their belongings in coordination with other participating departments.

Timeline: 3-5 days after Step 1.

STEP 3: PRIORITIZATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the Assessment, the response to an encampment will be prioritized by the CAO's Office and the leadership group based on the presence and severity of the following factors: population needs, locational factors, public health concerns, safety risks, and environmental impact to sensitive habitat/riparian areas. Utilizing the assessment and prioritization tool in Appendix A, encampments will be allocated a high, medium, or low priority.

- High Priority : High risk levels, including resident safety, imminent health concerns, and severe weather; requires immediate resolution and relocation of residents
- Moderate Priority: Moderate risk levels; requires removal at non-emergent timeline
- Low Priority : Low risk levels; no removal or immediate action required.

Recommendations

Recommendations will be based on the priority ranking above and include detailed reasons behind the recommended action and any next steps required. Recommendations may involve mitigation strategies that require follow-up to determine if any further action is needed, as well as any other entities that would need to be engaged beyond the Resident Outreach Team (e.g., housing and community services providers).

STEP 4: RESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS AND NOTICE

Targeted notice to residents is critical, as is communication with service providers and other relevant departments for successful implementation of these guidelines. All communication, whether verbal or written, will be done with consideration for the needs of vulnerable unsheltered residents, including the following:

- Language used should be clear and population appropriate and consistent with the language used by encampment residents.
- Multiple verbal and in-person notifications are critical, especially to address any literacy and language barriers, as well as to accommodate thinking in day-to-day or hour-to-hour terms.

High Priority Response

If the Assessment determines a high level of risk, health and safety assessors will immediately notify the CAO staff and share the Assessment and recommendations. Communications and notice protocol to residents are as follows:

1. Within 3 days (72 hours) of the Assessment, the Sheriff's Office will post written notices (Appendix B) in visible locations that communicate outreach and service provider contact information, relocation date/time, and where belongings can be retrieved. Notices will be printed in English and Spanish. If residents are present when signs are posted, the posting entity will also verbally notify residents of these details.

2. Concurrently, the Resident Outreach Team will attempt to contact all residents. The Resident Outreach Team is responsible for engaging with residents and determining next steps for the individuals and their belongings. This will also help residents prepare for and understand the official notice, the reason for the urgency, and help enforce the timeline.

If the relocation is not completed on the day listed on the notice due to unforeseen circumstances, to treat people with dignity and respect, a new notice must be given and posted. If rescheduling is after 24 hours, the new date will be determined based on risk to resident safety, outreach, and the Sheriff's Office and clean-up entity's schedule.

Moderate Priority Response

If the Assessment determines a moderate Level of risk, health and safety assessors will notify the CAO staff and share the Assessment and recommendations. Moderate risk level communication and notice protocol is as follows:

1. Within 30 calendar days of the Assessment, the Sheriff's Office will post a written notice (Appendix B) in a visible location that communicates outreach and service provider contact information, relocation date/time, and where belongings can be retrieved. Notices will be printed in English and Spanish. If residents are present when the sign is posted, the posting entity will also verbally notify residents of these details.

2. Concurrently, the Resident Outreach Team will attempt to contact all residents. The Resident Outreach Team is responsible for engaging with residents and determining next steps for the individuals and their belongings. This will also help residents prepare for and understand the official notice and enforce the timeline.

If the relocation is not completed on the day listed on the notice due to unforeseen circumstances, to treat people with dignity and respect, a new notice must be given and posted. If rescheduling is after 24 hours, the new date will be determined based on outreach, as well as the Sheriff's Office and the clean-up entity's schedules.

STEP 5: RESIDENT PLAN AND RELOCATION

If encampment closure is recommended, CAO staff will ensure careful coordination with all required departments as needed. These policies recognize that additional coordination and resources may be required for encampments of 10 or more individuals. In larger encampments, there are often multiple entities already assisting residents with meeting their daily needs. It will be critical for these entities to

understand the relocation process as outlined in this document, as well as be involved in relocation efforts. Housing for Health will coordinate with additional health, housing, and human services providers that may be required.

Outreach Expectations

During a recommended resident relocation, the Resident Outreach Team is responsible for helping residents determine next steps for all residents and their belongings, in coordination with other key entities involved in the location.

The following are expectations of the Resident Outreach Team:

- Engage with encampment residents regarding the need to relocate and the reasons for the relocation and offer services and resources as soon as possible after an encampment has been identified for closure;
- Communicate to residents what is going to happen and the contents of the written notice;
- Compile a list of encampment residents and details about individuals that will be relevant to successful engagement and linkage to housing;
- Connect individuals to resources and services based on need (e.g. mental health, medical);
- If an individual has not already been referred to or linked with coordinated entry, a coordinated entry connection services request form will be completed;
- Participate in scheduled meetings with relevant partners as appropriate to track and review needs and status updates for encampment residents, as well as connect residents to housing and service resources when possible;
- Assist individuals to move themselves and their belongings to an identified, safe location before or on the day of the closure. This may include a safe parking program, shelter, transitional housing, residential treatment, sober living or recovery residence, or other safe sleeping or living situation options.

The recommended relocation time of day is in the morning while residents are likely still present. Resident Outreach staff shall be present at the commencement of any relocation activities on the date resident relocation is scheduled to start according to the posted notice and shall be available to offer shelter alternatives and other services until the relocation is completed. A Post-Relocation Notice (Appendix B) should be posted by the Sheriff's Office in a visible location where the encampment or campsite existed prior to relocation. The notice shall be posted for a minimum of 10 days after the relocation and state:

1. The day relocation was performed

2. Whether personal property was stored by the local jurisdiction

3. Where personal property will be stored

4. How personal property may be claimed by its owner

5. Contact information for supportive services and housing resources

Waste receptacles and bins should be made available to allow residents to choose to discard items or belongings for removal from the site.

STEP 6: STORAGE OF BELONGINGS AND SITE CLEANUP

Storage of Belongings

When residents must be relocated, they are encouraged to take all their belongings. In respecting personal property, approved items of value (see below) that are not removed by residents or left unattended for more than 24 hours will be stored when possible and room is available. The Sheriff's Office will maintain a log of dates and locations of any relocations that occur. Personal property shall be kept for at least 90 days from the date of collection to allow for recovery by its owner. Property left for longer than 90 days from the date it was stored will be disposed of.

Approved Items of Value

To determine whether property has any apparent value, the following factors must be considered:

1. The property constitutes identification, deeds or other legal documents, non-narcotic medication or essential medical supplies, cell phones or other small electronic devices, cash, or credit cards.

2. The property is damaged, broken, or used to an extent such that it cannot be used for its intended or original purposes, as well as any other typical alternative uses; or

3. The property is severely soiled, stained, torn, damaged or extensively used particularly for an item of clothing; or

4. The property is not likely to be reclaimed, such as torn or soiled clothing, shoes, blankets, or sleeping bags, damaged or extensively used books or papers; or

5. There is reasonable evidence that the owner does not intend to return to claim the property, or that the owner intended to dispose of the property as refuse or trash. For example, property that was found in or near a trash can or dumpster or the fact that the property has been left for an extended period of days; or

6. The item is so infested with vermin that no one would want to continue to use or possess it.

Storage and item recovery will be at no cost to the individual that owns the property. Access to belongings will be as low barrier as possible and will not require an identification. Those wishing to collect their belongings can provide a date and location from which the property was taken. Individuals will be asked to describe the personal property with particularity. Personal property that is retrieved will be reflected in the log.

Site Clean-Up and Restoration

Sites shall be cleaned up and restored as necessary after all residents have been relocated. The CAO's staff will identify a department, contracted entity, or community organization to assist with clean-up. The Sheriff's Office will also be present if there are safety concerns. Depending on the health or safety conditions, other entities may also be engaged to participate.

If damage to protected habitats has taken place, document the extent of damage and necessary restoration. Riparian areas and buffers shall be restored and signed to protect resources and prevent further encampments. If located on private property, CDI-Code Compliance will utilize the County's code enforcement procedures to ensure that the private property owner restores the property, which may

include a lean procedure for clean-up/restoration costs. Parks will be lead on restoration in public parks, and CDI-Public Works will be lead on restoration within the public right-of-way.

STEP 7: DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

CAO Staff will gather from the participating departments documentation of the entire relocation process, including the Health, Safety & Environmental Assessments and recommendation(s), notes from the Resident Outreach Team, and any notes from the clean-up entity.

Within 30 days of relocation, CAO staff will schedule a meeting with all entities involved in the relocation to assess any challenges and opportunities for improvement. Improvements to the guidelines will be made if determined through this process. Part of the ongoing evaluation will be to collect and analyze data on residents and the results associated with implementing these guidelines (e.g., how many were housed, how many returned to an unsheltered setting, etc.)

APPENDIX A: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Assessment Date:

Assessor Name: **Assessor Department:**

Assessor Phone #:   **Assessor Email:**

Location

Location (Draw on map)

Location General Description/Notes:

Size of Encampment

# of estimated people =

# of estimated tents/dwelling unit structures =

Size Description/Notes:

Encampment Organization

Group Cohesion (Scale of 1-5 with 5 being most cohesive and 1 being the least). *Degree to which the encampment operates as a group or as a collection of individuals. High degree of cohesion indicates the entire encampment understands itself as a group and will seek to remain together or near each other versus)*

Self-Management (Scale of 1-5 with 5 being most capable and 1 being the least). *High degree of self-management would include formal or semi-formal leadership structures, adopted camp rules or requirements, organization of chores/activities, collective negotiations for camp members.*

Provider Engagement (Scale of 1-5 with 5 being most engaged and 1 being the least). *Degree to which outreach or service providers routinely engage with residents of the encampment. Low engagement (1) = contact once per month or less. High engagement = at least weekly, regular contact.*

Organization Description/Notes:

Location Factors

Proximity to Sensitive Use. Is the encampment near the **main** entrance of a private property OR within 0.2 miles of schools, daycares, nursing homes, playgrounds, ballfields, public gardens, tourist attractions, or hospitals? (Yes/No)

Accessibility Issues. Is the encampment impairing ADA access by blocking ramps, sidewalks, or ADA specific transit infrastructure, e.g., elevators to or from transit stations? (Yes/No)

Challenge to Frequent Public Use. Is the encampment in a location often used by the public, e.g., frequently used park, tourist attraction, highly used walkway or path? (Yes/No)

Construction Zone: Is the encampment within 0.1 mile of a property slated for development of buildings, roadways, utilities, or other infrastructure or near a staging area for a construction project (Yes/No)?

Danger to Encampment Residents: Is the encampment in a location that presents an extremely high risk of serious injury and safety risk for the residents, e.g., on or near freeways, floodplains during rainy seasons, path of an active wildfire, etc. (Yes/No)?   If yes, activate hazard protocol.

Public Service Access: Is the encampment in the way of entry or access for public agencies – blocking fire, law enforcement, utility service, etc.? (Yes/No)

Location Description/Notes:

Public Health

Infestation. Does the site have large numbers of insects or animals to cause property damage or increase the risk or spread of disease, e.g., body lice, rats, mice, rodents, etc. (Yes/No)?   If yes, contact Public Health and/or vector control.

Infectious Disease: Does the encampment contain individuals known to have the presence of diseases that are easily transmittable and create a risk to other encampment residents or the surrounding neighborhood, e.g., shigella, tuberculosis, Hepatitis A, COVID-19, and others. (Yes/No)?   If yes, activate public health response.

Public Health Description/Notes:

Safety Risks

Sexual Violence. Have there been reports of forced, unwanted, and/or violent sexual activity in the camp? (Yes/No)

Physical Violence. Have there been reports or observed incidents of physical violence in the camp? (Yes/No)

Uncontrolled Fires. Have there been reports or observed incidents of uncontrolled fires in or near the camp? (Yes/No)

Theft. Have there been reports or observed incident of theft I the camp? (Yes/No)

Conflict. Have there been reports or observed incidents of interpersonal conflict among residents in the camp? (Yes/No)

Hazardous Materials. Are hazardous materials, such as chemicals, paints, oils, or other present? (Yes/No)

Safety Description/Notes:

Population Needs

Age. What percentage of the residents are 50 years old and above or under 21 years old in the encampment?

ϒ 75% or more   ϒ 50-74%   ϒ 25-49%   ϒ Less than 25%

Severe Medical Needs. What percentage of residents have severe medical needs that likely require attention before entering housing, e.g., end stage liver disease, unmanaged diabetes, unmanaged kidney disease or need for dialysis, severe lung disease, cancer, etc., in the encampment?

ϒ 75% or more   ϒ 50-74%   ϒ 25-49%   ϒ Less than 25%

Severe Behavioral Health Needs. What percentage of residents have severe mental health or substance use needs that require attention before entering housing?

ϒ 75% or more   ϒ 50-74%   ϒ 25-49%   ϒ Less than 25%

Activities of Daily Living. What percentage of residents struggle with 2 or more activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, and eating)?

ϒ 75% or more   ϒ 50-74%   ϒ 25-49%   ϒ Less than 25%

Population Description/Notes:

Environmental Resource Impacts

Environmental Resource Areas. Is the encampment within a riparian area, wetland area, protected buffer, or flood area? (Yes/No)

Water Quality Impacts. Are there noted water quality impacts, such as sediment, pathogens, trash, runoff? (Yes/No)

Vegetation/Habitat Impacts. Is vegetation or protected habitat areas at the site impacted? (Yes/No)

Environmental Resource Description/Notes:

APPENDIX B: NOTICES

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

72-HOUR NOTICE TO VACATE PROPERTY

THIS IS AN OFFICAL NOTICE

PERSONS REMAINING ON THIS PROPERTY AFTER THE DATE LISTED IN THIS 72-HOUR NOTICE MAY BE SUBJECT TO CITATION, ARREST, AND/OR PROSECUTION FOR TRESPASS AND/OR UNLAWFUL LODGING PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE SECTIONS 602 AND 647(e)

Date Posted:_____

Deputy: _____

PROPERTY LEFT IN THIS POSTED AREA AFTER 0800AM FOLLOWING THE DATE OF THIS 72-HOUR NOTICE IS SUBJECT TO REMOVAL/DISPOSAL

A.   Personal items that objectively appear to be temporarily unattended, and not abandoned, will be stored for a period of 90 days. These items can be claimed by scheduling an appointment with the Sheriff's Office Community Policing Unit. Stored items that remain unclaimed after 90 days (by [_____]) will be considered abandoned and will be disposed of.

B.   The following classes of items will be subject to immediate disposal: (i) trash; (ii) items that are objectively determined to be intentionally abandoned by their owners; and (iii) items that would present a health hazard to store.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact _____.

The storage facility will be open by appointment only Monday through Friday. If you intend on picking up your stored items, please call the storage facility (phone number _____) ahead of time so the storage facility can facilitate pickup.

Date Posted:_____

Deputy: _____

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

THIS IS AN OFFICAL NOTICE

On [_____], the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office removed and stored personal items from this property that objectively appeared to be temporarily unattended and not abandoned. The foregoing items are being stored and can be claimed by Contacting the Sheriff's Office Community Policing Unit and will be stored there for a period of 90 days. Stored items that remain unclaimed after 90 days (by [_____]) will be considered abandoned and will be disposed of.

The following classes of items were subject to immediate disposal: (i) trash; (ii) items that were objectively determined to be intentionally abandoned by their owners; and (iii) items that presented a health hazard to store.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact
_____

The storage facility will be open by appointment only, Monday through Friday. If you intend on picking up your stored items, please call the storage facility (phone number _____) ahead of time so the storage facility can facilitate pickup.

Date Posted:_____

Deputy: _____

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Build a Coalition	Connect Workforce Development Board information and resources with key Housing for Health workgroups, including, but not limited to the operations, lived expertise, connectors, general membership, youth, and others. Have at least two information sessions between groups over the next six-month period.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Work with the Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County and HMIS staff to develop a proposal for incorporating additional permanent supportive housing subsidy information into HMIS to increase HMIS bed coverage according to HUD standards.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop a plan with Housing Santa Cruz County to implement periodic check-ins with housing development staff from local government jurisdictions, health and human services partners, and the Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Complete testing of CalAIM Medi-Cal billing report out of HMIS in partnership with Abode Services.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Work with United Way/2-1-1 to create a regular (at least annually) summary report of the housing-related requests for assistance they receive, how those requesting assistance are linked to specific resources, and where resource gaps exist based on the requests received.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Continue resource networking groups with United Way/2-1-1 on a quarterly basis to increase involvement in efforts to improve the quality of resource information and referral data available through United Way/2-1-1.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop an initial draft CoC comprehensive policy and procedure manual with initial draft documents incorporated	Focus Strategies

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Build a Coalition	Develop a project plan for linking Housing for Health Division housing services and resources with the Behavioral Health Integrated Housing and Recovery Team (IHRT)	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop a project plan and begin implementation of plan regarding training and coaching in evidenced-based Housing First practice	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Support the Behavioral Health Department's efforts to prepare for CARE Court and SB 43 (LPS conservatorship reform), including the development of a shared residential and supportive housing inventory for the County utilizing Proposition 1 and other available resources.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Support the County Community Development and Infrastructure (CDI) Department with developing county protocols for addressing encampments within unincorporated areas of the county.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Support general planning and funding for May is affordable housing month	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop and implement project plan for landlord appreciation event during affordable housing month	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop and implement project plan for a faith-based housing education and celebration event during affordable housing month	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Develop and implement a project plan for a CoC community meeting on six-month plan development for July - Dec 2025 period.	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Launch utilization of HMIS contract performance metrics report	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Launch HMIS report on quarterly report deadlines and develop approach for regular reminders to HMIS leads	Housing for Health Division

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Build a Coalition	Conduct orientation for new members to the CoC Policy Board and recruit a new educational representative for the Board	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Support incorporation of lived expertise members into the CoC Policy Board	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Support local selection of applicants to apply for ESG funding from California Housing and Community Development	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Complete Housing Inventory Chart and Point In Time Count reporting to HUD	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Support the Housing Authority in promoting awareness of the Conflict Resolution Center of Santa Cruz County resources available to tenants and landlords participating in Housing Authority programs.	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Select lead vendor to operate South County Homelessness Prevention Project between July 1 2025 and June 30 2028 using CORE set-aside funds	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Conduct an affordable housing month fundraising campaign for the Housing for Health Partnership housing assistance fund	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Hold at least one strategic communications planning sessions with Housing Santa Cruz County, Housing Matters, and Housing for Health	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Finalize contract for HOPWA housing retention/homelessness prevention services	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Finalize contract for HOPWA connector/housing navigation services	Housing for Health Division
Build a Coalition	Conduct a substance use disorder information session at a quarterly connectors meeting and a Housing for Health coordinated entry sessions for SUD providers	Housing for Health Division

Housing for Health Partnership Six-Month Action Plan
January - June 2025

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Prevent Homelessness	Obtain updated information from Abode Services regading their basic income pilot research study with Notre Dame University	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Support launch and communications related to a basic income pilot program in Santa Cruz County with Miracle Messages and the Association of Faith Communities	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Engage in collaborative efforts to prevent the loss of affordable housing units and tenant stability with housing projects that have expiring affordability restrictions (St. George, Palomar Inn)	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Develop plans for securing funds and extending housing related legal assistance contract with Tenant Sanctuary	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Develop a project plan for incorporating Janus case managers into the Housing for Health coordinated entry system	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Improve referral process, communication, and data collection between County Sheriff and Housing Matters unincorporated outreach program	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Develop a proposal for improving General Assistance and linkages to employment services and disability advocacy services for GA participants	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Develop and begin implementation of a project plan to expand disability advocacy services for HSD divisions working with people with disabilities	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Update the coordinated entry process to address disparities identified through a review of local data, e.g., provider assessment questions	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Develop and implement a project plan for incorporating health and other coordinated entry matching factors into the HMIS system	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Start development of Recurso de Fuerza low-barrier navigation center in Watsonville	Housing for Health Division

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Increase Connections	Start development of Behavioral Health Bridge Housing low-barrier navigation center in Soquel	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Start construction of Freedom House youth transitional housing project	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Explore potential collaborative investments with the City of Santa Cruz to expand low-barrier navigation center capacity in the County using one time encampment response grant funds secured by the City	Housing for Health Division
Increase Connections	Develop an approach for collecting Miracle Messages services and outcome data in HMIS	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Apply for CA Department of Health Care Services funding to establish local infrastructure for managing a Medi-Cal transitional rent benefit	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Support local HUD funding recipients to secure funding from approved grants and to advocate for ongoing funding	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Explore the possibility of establishing a local flexible housing subsidy pool in partnership with Behavioral Health and other partners	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Conduct an analysis of barriers and opportunities for the County of Santa Cruz to become a California designated prohousing community in partnership with staff from the County's Community Development and Infrastructure (CDI) department	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Complete lease-up of 41 stability vouchers and 20 DMV vouchers	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Explore ways to help the Park Haven Plaza development secure the additional funding needed to complete the project	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Explore ways to help the Veterans Village development secure the additional funding needed to complete the project	Housing for Health Division

Strategic Framework Area	Goal	Lead Responsible Organization
Increase Housing Affordability	Work with Housing Santa Cruz County to bring together housing/community development staff from all County jurisdictions to explore ways to collaborate to secure resources for affordable housing development and preservation	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Fully uitilize CalWorks HSP funding to help families experiencing homelessness to secure stable housing	Housing for Health Division
Prevent Homelessness	Fully uitilize Home Safe funding to help seniors and people with disabilities served by Adult Protective Services to get and keep housing using a housing assistance fund	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Finalize agreement with Housing Matters and secure state Housing Disability Advocacy Project Targeted Strategic Investment funds for a Harvey West Studios capitalized operating subsidy reserve of $4M	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Help 20 or more households experiencing homelessness with serious mental health issues to move into designated No Place Like Home (NPLH) units in the community	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Partner with the Central California Alliance for Health and the Housing Accelerator Fund to explore potential uses of a Santa Cruz County specific supportive housing investment fund	Housing for Health Division
Increase Housing Affordability	Shift some funding allocations and contracts to increase supportive services availability for youth experiencing homelessness to maximize the use of Housing Authority subsidies available for former foster youth	Housing for Health Division

Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz

A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County

January 2024 to January 2027

Our Mission
Strong collaborative action to ensure all residents within the County have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.

Who We Are
The Housing for Health Division was created in November 2020 within the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department to support the implementation of this Framework by bringing together a coalition of partners and resources to prevent and end homelessness within our County.

Overview

Homelessness severely impacts the health and quality of life of those living without homes and the entire community. The County of Santa Cruz, cities within the county, and community members recognize the need for strong collaborative action to ensure all county residents have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.

The County and its partners created the Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz County Strategic "Framework" through a collaborative process that used the experience, knowledge, and input of a broad set of community stakeholders including cities, non-profit organizations, County departments, and people with lived experiences of homelessness. Work on the original Framework began in March 2019 with a review of current local efforts and data on homelessness, along with an evaluation and discussion of experiences in other communities. The first Framework covered the period of January 2021 to January 2024. This updated version incorporates input gathered from multiple community forums held in early 2024.

The Framework outlines coalition action steps that support continued reductions in unsheltered and overall homelessness countywide over the next three years. The County Human Services Department's Housing for Health Division will continue to provide leadership and the backbone administrative support for the implementation of this Framework.

The updated Framework sets ambitious goals based on federal Housing and Urban Development standards for high-performing communities. These standards include:
- Reducing the length of time people experience homelessness
- Reducing returns to homelessness
- Ensuring we collect data from 80% or more of housing and service programs that work with those experiencing homelessness
- Documenting a comprehensive outreach plan among all the cities and county government departments to streamline access to housing and service resources for people experiencing homelessness

The updated Framework also calls for:
- Continued annual reductions in the number of people experiencing homelessness according to the annual Point-In-Time Count
- Supporting all jurisdictions in the County with meeting their Regional Housing Needs Allocation Very Low-Income housing production goals

Background

In 2022, California had the highest rate of homelessness in the United States, with 44 people experiencing homelessness out of every 10,000 people in the state. Vermont, Oregon, and Hawaii also had very high rates, with 43, 42, and 41 people per 10,000, respectively. Within California, Santa Cruz County has the fourth highest rate of homelessness at 87 per 10,000 residents. Only Humboldt, San Francisco and Mendocino counties have higher rates, with 122, 96, and 92 per 10,000, respectively.

Every day, thousands of people in Santa Cruz County live without stable shelter or a home. The 2023 Homeless Point-in-Time Count found 1,804 people experiencing homelessness on a single night, representing 1,373 distinct households experiencing homelessness. Three out of four households experiencing homelessness were housed within the County prior to becoming homeless.

1,804
People experiencing homelessness on a single night

1,373
Distinct households experiencing homelessness

Across the country and in Santa Cruz County, homelessness disproportionately impacts specific groups of individuals including certain racial and ethnic groups, youth exiting foster care, seniors and people with disabilities, individuals with behavioral health conditions, single parent households, veterans, people with criminal backgrounds, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S).

High rates of homelessness among subgroups of extremely low-income households reflect broad historical and present-day social, economic, political, and cultural forces that contribute to these disparities.

Approaches to addressing homelessness must understand and address some of the forces contributing to these disparate impacts.

What is Causing Homelessness in Our Community?

1 Housing affordability gap

2 Health issues

3 Lack of supportive connections

4 Loss of hope and sense of purpose

1 Housing Affordability Gap
Housing Costs Exceed Incomes

The larger the gap between incomes and housing costs in a region, the greater the risk of homelessness and housing instability in a community. This is a major factor contributing to homelessness across the United States.

The California Housing Partnership estimates over 6,600 renter households in Santa Cruz County do not have access to an affordable home. Among these households living with the lowest incomes, 54% pay more than 50% of their income toward housing. This group is the most likely to experience housing instability, overcrowded or unsafe living conditions, and homelessness. Within this group are people living on fixed incomes such as seniors and people with disabilities, as well as, unemployed, underemployed, and employed individuals who cannot afford local housing costs.

The 2023 Santa Cruz County Point-In-Time Count of persons experiencing homelessness found 28% reported being employed at the time of the survey. Employment itself cannot prevent homelessness when wages are not high enough to cover housing costs.

This Framework calls for implementing a range of strategies that support reducing housing costs and increasing household incomes.

28% Employment
Reported for persons experiencing homelessness in 2023

2 Health Issues Impacting Living Situations

Some health conditions impact a person's ability to manage daily living tasks essential to keeping a home. For example, a person with dementia may struggle to remember to pay their rent. The stressors associated with housing instability and homelessness can exacerbate health conditions and create new ones. Based on 2023 survey data from Santa Cruz County, half of people experiencing homelessness have a disabling health condition that interferes with their ability to get and keep housing. Substance use disorder and mental health conditions impact an estimated 46% and 39% of people experiencing homelessness. Chronic health conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure impact nearly one-third of the population. Studies have found the average life span of a person experiencing homelessness is 15-20 years less than the general population.

6

2 **Health Issues Impacting Living Situations (cont.)**

Health care systems, services and associated policies influence levels of housing instability, institutionalization and homelessness within a community. This Framework calls for implementing a range of policy and program changes to address the health care needs of people at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. This includes connecting people to holistic services, supports and treatment that address both their health and daily living needs.

This Framework calls for implementing a range of policy and program changes to address the health care needs of people at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. This includes connecting people to holistic services, supports, and treatment that address both their health and daily living needs.

3 **Lack of Supportive Connections**
Loss or Absence of Strengthening Relationships

The absence or loss of supportive relationships can contribute to housing instability and loss, particularly in areas with large housing affordability gaps. Histories of traumatic events and relationships, in both childhood and adulthood, are prevalent at far higher rates among people experiencing homelessness compared to the general population. The 2023 Santa Cruz County Point-In-Time count of homeless persons, found:

39% were living with friends or relatives before becoming homeless

10% reported family/domestic violence as a primary event leading to their homelessness

13% identified a divorce, separation, or breakup as a primary cause

This Framework calls for implementing a range of strategies that help grow long-term and broadly supportive relationships for those experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness.
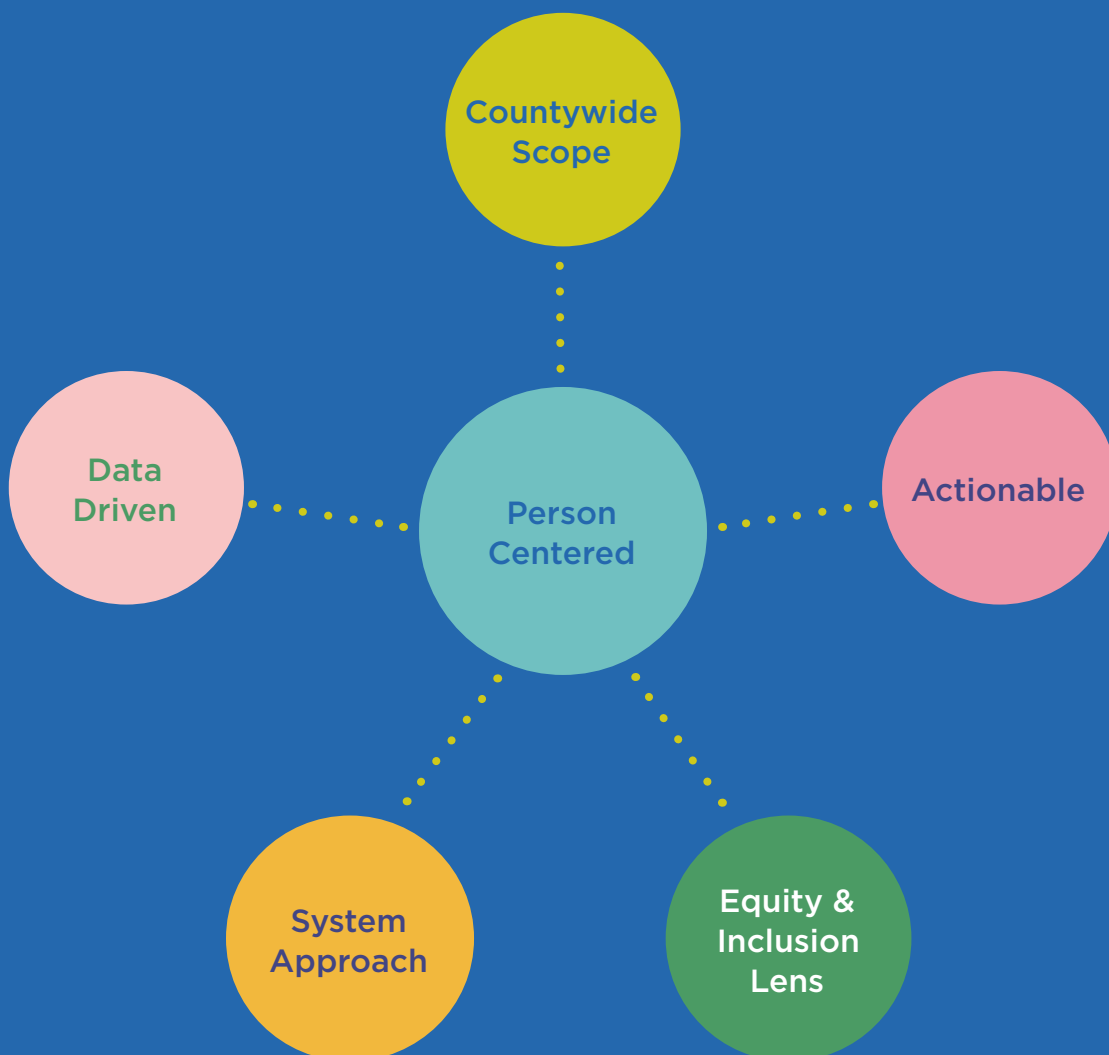
4 **Loss of Hope and Sense of Purpose**

A loss of hope and sense of purpose, at the community and/or individual level, can contribute to events that compromise a stable living situation and lead to prolonged episodes of homelessness. Living without a home can be a profoundly stigmatizing and isolating event.

This Framework calls for implementing a range of strategies that enhance feelings of hope and meaning among community members, people experiencing homelessness, and those working to make a difference in their lives.

Our Vision

To align and develop the array of resources, stakeholders, and collective wisdom across the greater Santa Cruz community to promote public health and make significant impacts on the crisis of homelessness, benefiting all residents, particularly those without homes.

Countywide Scope

Data Driven

Person Centered

Actionable

System Approach

Equity & Inclusion Lens

Person Centered

People experiencing homelessness are experts about their own goals, priorities, and support needs. Housing and services coordinated by the housing crisis response system must center around the self-identified needs and goals of people seeking support.

Countywide Scope

Homelessness occurs in all parts of Santa Cruz County, whether urban, suburban, agricultural, or rural. Implementation of this Framework will address each area of the community and develop appropriate solutions to homelessness. Geographic equity must be at the center of this framework.

Data Driven

Decisions about programs, resources, and approaches must be informed by high quality, well-understood qualitative and quantitative data about the system and its outcomes for the people it serves, including measures of disparities and inequity.

System Approach

A coordinated system approach that streamlines access to housing and services will maximize efforts to address homelessness.

Equity & Inclusion Lens

Certain subgroups of people experience higher rates of homelessness. Efforts undertaken through this Framework will work to eliminate disparities in access and outcomes within the housing crisis response system.

Actionable

This Framework must result in actionable steps. It must be understood, implemented, and evaluated with the resources available and with clear responsibilities and accountability. System leaders and stakeholders will regularly review progress and update plans to ensure continued progress towards meeting goals and targets.

Our Goals

Our overall goal remains to substantially reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness within the County, as measured by the annual Point-in-Time count of persons experiencing homelessness.

In the next three years, the Framework calls for our community to reach "High Performing Community" goals established by the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department:

Core Goal #1
Reduce the length of time people experience homelessness

The Housing for Health Division and its partners will oversee a robust effort to improve the effectiveness of all programs and interventions for people experiencing homelessness. This includes shortening the amount of time people remain unhoused or in programs prior to securing housing. HUD High Performing Communities decrease the length of time people experience homelessness by at least 10% each year with a goal of getting to 20 days or less. In the federal fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023), local Homeless Management Information System data indicates the average length of time people experienced homelessness across all programs was 894 days or nearly 2.5 years.

Core Goal #2
Reduce the percentage of people returning to homelessness

When local housing and service programs help individuals move from homelessness back into stable housing, we need to work together to ensure that people can maintain their housing over the long term. HUD High Performing Communities monitor the percentage of people that return to homelessness within two years of exiting a program to permanent housing. High Performing Communities reduce the percentage of people returning to homelessness by 20% each year with a goal of 5% or less of people returning to homelessness within two years of exiting a program. In the federal fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023), local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data indicates that 15% of households that exited to permanent housing returned to homelessness within two years.

Core Goal #3
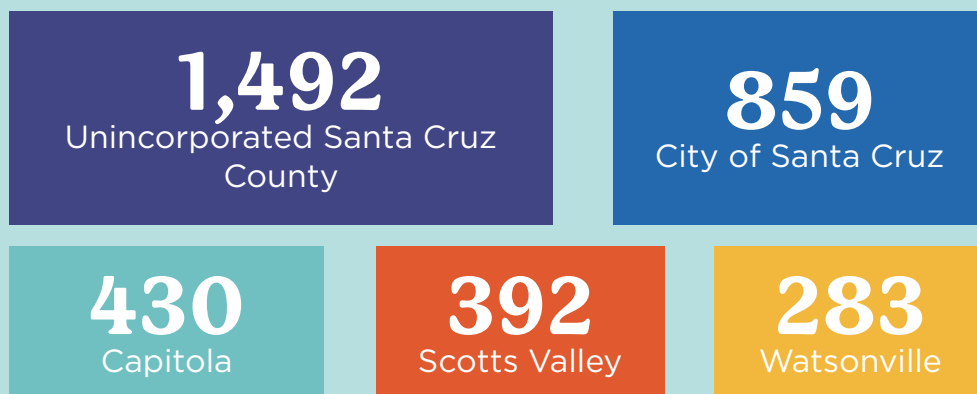## Ensure our local data captures information on program outcomes and community needs

According to federal and state standards, the Homeless Management Information System is the primary data system local communities should utilize for tracking efforts to prevent and end homelessness, including, housing and services program outcomes, utilization, participant demographics and needs. HUD High Performing Communities have 80% or more of local programs that contribute to addressing homelessness entering data into the local Homeless Management Information System system.

Core Goal #4
Coordinate outreach and access to services across the region

To become a HUD High Performing Community, the Continuum of Care, the County, and all four cities in the County must develop a comprehensive outreach plan to help identify and connect people experiencing homelessness with appropriate housing and services resources. HUD standards articulate metrics for ensuring outreach covers the entire county, including regular training for outreach providers and that more unsheltered people gain access to housing services than the number of unsheltered people counted on the PIT count.

Finally, the Framework calls upon our collective efforts to work toward ensuring all jurisdictions within the County meet or exceed their Regional Housing Needs Allocation very low-income housing production goals over the 8-year period between (2023-2031).

Very-Low Income Housing Units to Produce

1,492 Unincorporated Santa Cruz County

859 City of Santa Cruz

430 Capitola

392 Scotts Valley

283 Watsonville

Strategies and Key Objectives

The Framework promotes aligned and coordinated efforts among housing crisis response system partners. Individual programs or initiatives may yield results with a specific subpopulation or group but making overall progress requires a systematic approach.

Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz County sets out four high-level strategic areas and numerous specific objectives to transform current efforts to address homelessness. The objectives listed below will span over multiple six-month action plan cycles between January 2024 and January 2027.

How Change Will Happen

1

Build a Coalition

Develop a strong and informed action-oriented partnership with leaders and key community partners.

2

Prevent Homelessness

Use targeted prevention and early intervention housing problem solving to help people and families keep or return to housing as quickly as possible.

3

Increase Connections

Expand and improve "front door" programs and services including outreach, temporary housing, and supportive services.

4

Increase Housing Affordability

Increase permanent housing and income growth resources and opportunities to become housed.

NOTE: The goals for this next three-year period are informed by feedback gathered from community forums held during the month of February 2024.

1 Build a Coalition

What We Are Doing

Expanding partnerships and provider capacity to support implementation of California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal services throughout the County.

Improving community outreach, education, and communications to increase public awareness and involvement in positive actions to address homelessness.

Developing and fostering more workforce and educational partnerships for people at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness.

Establishing more standards of care and training resources for housing services efforts.

Increasing the involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness in our collective efforts through lived expertise action boards, mentoring opportunities, and other approaches.

Building cross-system collaboration networks to reduce entries into street homelessness from health care, criminal justice, and child welfare systems.

2 Prevent Homelessness

What We Are Doing

Expanding education and resource tools for renters on rights, responsibilities, and housing search.

Establishing a targeted homelessness prevention program based on effective practices from other communities.

Supporting family preservation and support programs and programs for foster youth.

Supporting "pre-release" planning from systems and institutions.

Engaging in "upstream interventions" to reduce adverse childhood experiences.

3 Increase Connections

What We Are Doing

Expanding and improving sheltering options and outcomes for specific subpopulations throughout the County.

Expanding and improving targeted street outreach and connection services to reduce disparities in access and outcomes.

Creating more regional service centers or hubs to engage with specific subpopulations at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness.

Developing more centralized, accessible, and updated resource guide information for those seeking help.

3 Increase Connections

What We Are Doing (cont.)

Expanding low-barrier safe parking options throughout the County.

Creating innovative hotel voucher option programs for specific populations to get onto a path to permanent housing.

4 Increase Housing Affordability

What We Are Doing

Expanding housing subsidy resources for key populations.

Creating and expanding evidenced-based, targeted supported education and employment programs for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

Promoting alternative housing development and living situation options, e.g, ADUs, shared housing, small modular unit housing, etc.

Expanding and improving a centralized housing assistance fund to help with preventing and ending homelessness with one-time financial assistance.

Actively tracking and providing support for a countywide housing opportunity development pipeline.

Expanding and improving landlord outreach, education, and support for participation in housing partnership programs.

Acknowledgments

Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz County calls for the entire community to join in being part of the solution to homelessness.

Housing for Health Partnership Organizational Members
***as of March 15, 2024**

Abode Services
Association of Faith Communities
Beyond Elemental
Bill Wilson Center
Cabrillo College
CFSC, Inc.
Collins Consultancy
Community Action Board
Community Bridges: Enhanced Care Management Program
Crossover Sound Waves
Dept of Veterans Affairs
Encompass Community Services
Evolving Divine Journey
Equity Transit
Families in Transition
First 5 Santa Cruz County
The Free Guide
Front St Inc
Giving Grace Through Joy
GoldenPace Health
Homeless Garden Project
The HomeMore Project
Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz
Housing Choices
Housing Matters
Housing Santa Cruz County
Independent Living Services
Janus of Santa Cruz
Miracle Messages
Monarch Services
Nations Finest
Nonprofit Connection Santa Cruz County
Office of Congressman Jimmy Panetta
Raíces y Cariño
Santa Cruz Black
Santa Cruz Bread and Roses
Santa Cruz Cares

Santa Cruz Health Information Organization (SCHIO)
Senior Network Services
Siena House
United Veteran Council of Santa Cruz County
United Way of Santa Cruz County / 211 Santa Cruz County
VICTORY
Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center
Warming Center Program
Wings Homeless Advocacy

No single individual, organization, city, or County Department can do this alone. This strategic Framework is one that all stakeholders can use to align, coordinate, and collaborate to accomplish the shared goal of helping unhoused residents in Santa Cruz County secure housing. In a community with a severely limited affordable housing supply and homelessness at a crisis level, it is necessary to invest in and support practices that help the most people get and keep permanent housing. By involving those with histories of homelessness and housing instability in our efforts, setting measurable goals, working collaboratively across sectors on proven strategies, using data to assess progress, and continually improving and refining the work, Santa Cruz County can and will ensure all its residents have a healthy and safe place to call home.

The Housing for Health Partnership represents the federally-designated Santa Cruz County Continuum of Care, which is a local coalition of stakeholders working to create, support and coordinate a regional system to support people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. Responsibilities of the Housing for Health Partnership include developing and coordinating a system of housing and service programs, developing a strategic plan, and implementing processes for applying for funding. Housing for Health Partnership Membership is free and open to any person or organization in Santa Cruz County that is committed to making an impact in our ongoing and collaborative effort to ensure all residents have a stable, safe and healthy place to live.

Join now:
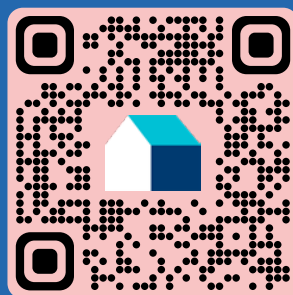
HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE STRATEGIC PLAN

July 2024 – June 2027

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ

City of Santa Cruz Citywide Strategic Plan (2023 – 2028)

Homelessness Response
Working with the County and community partners, the City moves toward positive outcomes in homelessness response, safety, and health, balancing the interests of persons who are unhoused and housed, and the business community.

The Strategic Plan aligns with the State and County's identified goals and objectives to address homelessness.

This alignment and coordination leverages current work at the State and County levels to be more efficient and effective within the City. The Strategic Plan includes the utilization of data from community surveys, outreach to those with lived experience, and research from various sources to inform our goals and objectives.

The Strategic Plan also aligns with the 2023–28 City of Santa Cruz Citywide Strategic Plan, where Homelessness Response is listed as one of the City's seven focus areas.

- Fiscal sustainability and transparency
- Homelessness response
- Housing
- Natural and built infrastructure
- Public safety and community well-being
- Strong business communities and a vibrant downtown
- Thriving organization

> "To design effective programs and policies to address homelessness, we need to understand who is experiencing it, how they became homeless, what their experiences are, and what is preventing them from exiting homelessness."
>
> University of California San Francisco Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

This Strategic Plan was informed by a robust community engagement program that included eight stakeholder sessions and an online community survey. Stakeholder meetings were held with people who had lived experience of homelessness, community service providers, and City staff. At each session, the previous Homelessness Response Action Plan was reviewed, and stakeholders addressed issues, strategies, and future priorities.

Feedback from People Experiencing Homelessness

The City of Santa Cruz Homelessness Response Team conducted surveys and focus groups in November and December 2023 with individuals who are sheltered in City-funded programs and unsheltered individuals in encampments.

Priorities for People Experiencing Homelessness

- Expand shelter capacity with a diversity of low-barrier shelter programs. Examples include sober living environments, tiny homes, indoor shelters, and women-only options.
- More day services to meet basic needs
- Increased access to hygiene and health services
- Access to training and classes, including financial literacy, job training, and legal support
- More assistance navigating the complex network of regional social services (access to care coordination, case management, housing navigation, and more)

Feedback from the Community

The Spring 2024 survey asked community members to provide feedback on the City's current homelessness response actions. 690 community members completed the survey. Survey results reflect a recognition of the complex relationships between social, economic, and environmental factors and a desire for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that prioritizes immediate needs and long-term solutions.

Priorities for Community Members

- Accessible parks and open space
- Citizen safety
- Business and economic concerns
- Humanitarian concerns
- Environmental concerns
- Equitable enforcement of the law
- Community well-being and quality of life
- Clean neighborhoods and streets
- Affordable housing and housing solutions
- Service provision and support for the unhoused

Feedback from Service Providers

The City's Homelessness Response Team held a focus group with local service providers to solicit their input on strengths, weaknesses, and gaps related to homeless services within the City.

Priorities for Service Providers

- Expand shelter capacity with a diversity of shelter programs
- Improve coordination between City departments and community-based services when resolving encampments
- Increase the number of case managers in the region
- More supportive housing (sober living environments and recuperative care)
- Assistance with collaboration across regional service providers (case coordination meetings, shared trainings, and more)

Feedback from City Staff

The City's Homeless Response Team held a workshop with internal City departments, including the City Attorney's Office, Police, Fire, Planning, Economic Development, Parks & Recreation, Library, Human Resources, Water, and Public Works.

Priorities for City Staff

- Staff Safety
- More permanent supportive housing
- Expand shelter capacity with a diversity of shelter programs
- Continue collaboration across City departments
- Increase collaboration with the County
- Increase the number of case managers, housing navigation, and outreach staff
- Ongoing community education about the City's homelessness response efforts

2022 -2023 Accomplishments

29% decrease in unhoused people in the City of Santa Cruz since 2022

121 People Moved to More Stable Housing

776 People Served in Shelter & Safe Parking

960 New Affordable Housing Units

Homelessness:
A Crisis at All Levels

Homelessness at the National Level

Homelessness continues to be an urgent, life-and-death public health crisis across the nation. Homelessness rose 12% nationally from January 2022 to January 2023. The rise was seen across all subgroups — families, older Americans, Veterans, youth, and young adults — and was driven by:

- Rising housing costs and a dire shortage of deeply affordable housing units
- End of pandemic-era resources and protections
- Lack of Congressional support for adequate funding to address the crisis
- Large numbers of recently arrived asylum seekers and other immigrants living in shelters and on the streets

Source: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023*

Homelessness is Deadly

People who experience homelessness die nearly 30 years earlier than the average American and die at the average age Americans died in the year 1900.

55 years old

77 years old

● People who experience homelessnesss   ● Average American

Source: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.
https://www.usich.gov/guidance-reports-data/data-trends#homelessnessff

Homelessness in California

A comprehensive study on homelessness conducted in June 2023 by the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative found that the majority of adults in California who experience homelessness are:

- Single
- Over 25, with nearly half over 50
- Homeless in the community where they were last housed
- Reporting significant trauma in their lives
- Reporting high levels of mental health distress and substance abuse

Reasons people became homeless:
- Losing their housing (more than half were previously renters)
- Living in poverty
- One in five enter homelessness from an institutional setting

Nearly all of the study's participants stated that housing costs posed the most significant barrier to regaining housing. Other barriers include:

- Lack of help from a case manager
- Finances
- Logistical barriers such as no phone, transportation, or documents
- Criminal justice involvement
- Poor credit

The California Homeless Housing Needs Assessment (December 2022) concluded that California could solve homelessness through investments of $8.1 billion in housing, shelter, and supportive services every year for the next 12 years. This is equivalent to 2.7% of the state budget.

The California Interagency Council on Homelessness's *Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California* (September 2022) focuses on prevention and ultimately ending homelessness in California.

Action areas:
- Strengthening our system to better prevent and end homelessness
- Equitably addressing the health, safety, and services needs of Californians experiencing homelessness
- Expanding communities' capacity to provide safe and effective shelter and interim housing.
- Expanding and ensuring equitable access to permanent housing in our communities
- Preventing Californians from experiencing the crisis of homelessness

California has the most people experiencing homelessness of any state in America.

Source: Department of Housing & Urban Development, *Annual Homeless Assessment Report*, March 2022

Source: *Towards a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study on People Experiencing Homelessness*, UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, June 2023

> ## On any given night in California, more than 161,000 people experience homelessness — this equals 25% of all Americans who are homeless.
>
> *California Interagency Council on Homelessness* Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California, *September 2022.*

Santa Cruz County: Housing for Health Partnership

Collaboration at a regional level is essential if we are to be successful in reducing homelessness in our communities. The Housing for Health Partnership (H4HP) is the federally designated continuum of care (CoC) entity for Santa Cruz County. H4HP coordinates resources, programs, and services that move us forward in preventing and ending homelessness in the region.

H4HP is a collaborative body that includes the County; the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola, Watsonville, and Scotts Valley; housing and service providers; people with lived experience of homelessness; and other relevant stakeholders.

In the past year, H4HP received and distributed approximately $6.0 million in federal Housing and Urban Development funding, over $5.0 million in homeless housing assistance, prevention funding from the State of California, and other one-time grant funds.

In April 2024, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved the *2024–27 Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz, A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness in Santa Cruz County*. This strategic framework identifies four high-level strategic objectives:

- Build a coalition
- Prevent homelessness
- Increase connections
- Increase housing affordability

The Countywide strategic framework includes four core goals:

- Reduce the length of time people experience homelessness
- Reduce the percentage of people returning to homelessness
- Ensure our local data captures information on program outcomes and community needs
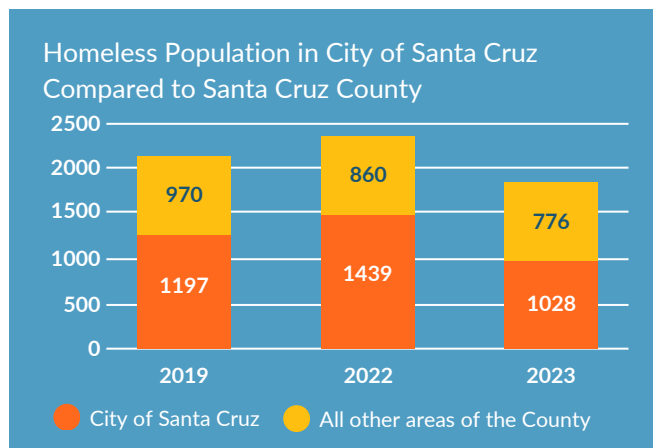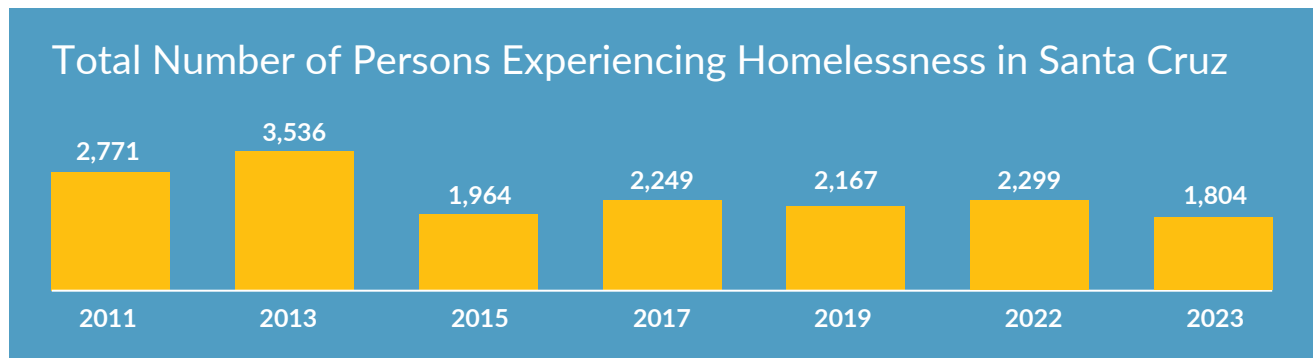- Coordinate outreach and access to services across the region.

Source: Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership

Homelessness in the City of Santa Cruz

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the City of Santa Cruz was named one of the least affordable places to live in the United States in 2023. The necessary "housing wage" for a two-bedroom rental in Santa Cruz is $63.33 per hour, compared to the national 2023 housing wage of $28.58 per hour for a modest two-bedroom rental home. Research shows that communities can expect a more rapid increase in homelessness when people spend more than 32% of their income on rent.

Every two years, typically on a day in January, communities across the country conduct a comprehensive point in time (PIT) count of local homeless populations to measure the prevalence of homelessness. The 2023 Santa Cruz County PIT count shows a decline in persons experiencing homelessness by 21% County-wide and 29% Citywide.

Total Number of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Santa Cruz

2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022	2023
2,771	3,536	1,964	2,249	2,167	2,299	1,804

Homeless Population in City of Santa Cruz Compared to Santa Cruz County

	2019	2022	2023
All other areas of the County	970	860	776
City of Santa Cruz	1197	1439	1028

● City of Santa Cruz ● All other areas of the County

City of Santa Cruz

The City of Santa Cruz has the highest percentage of the homeless population in the County — 57% of the homeless population lives in the City of Santa Cruz. In the 2023 PIT count, there was a 29% drop in persons experiencing homelessness in the City of Santa Cruz.

2023 Survey on Homelessness in Santa Cruz

In the weeks that follow the street count, a more comprehensive survey of sheltered and unsheltered individuals is conducted to obtain more detailed information.

Causes of Homelessness in Santa Cruz

Survey results revealed that the primary causes of homelessness in our community are **job loss** followed by **substance use.**

The majority of homeless in the County are
- White (81%)
- Male (71%)
- Over 25 years old (65%)

75% of unsheltered survey respondents indicated they had lived in Santa Cruz County before losing their housing.

Primary Conditions that Led to Homelessness

35% LOST JOB	**24%** SUBSTANCE USE
19% EVICTION	**13%** DIVORCE/ BREAKUP
11% CONFLICT WITH FAMILY OR FRIEND	**13%** FAMILY OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Source: 2023 Point in Time Count Survey

Support Needed to Secure Permanent Housing

When asked what kind of support respondents needed to obtain permanent housing, rental assistance was the most common (77%) answer. 60% reported that an increase in the availability of affordable housing would support their ability to obtain permanent housing.

Federal, State, and Local Partnerships

The City of Santa Cruz cannot solve homelessness alone. We need partners at the County level to provide much needed mental, behavioral, or physical health services. Cities are not responsible for these types of health and human services.

In recent years, cities across the country have had to develop and implement programs and services to address the growing crisis of homelessness in our communities. Temporary shelter is crucial to address the immediate needs of people living in our parks, open spaces, doorways, and streets. While we make progress on building permanent supportive housing, people need shelter now.

The City is one piece of the puzzle to solve homelessness. To eliminate homelessness, ongoing collaboration with state and federal governments is needed to achieve stable, longer-term funding.

City of Santa Cruz History of Homelessness Response

Over the past seven years, the City has taken the following actions regarding homelessness response: In addition, the City fostered partnerships with local service providers, such as Downtown Outreach Workers (1994) and the Homeless Outreach, Proactive Engagement and Services (HOPES) program (2014).

2018
- The first City-funded emergency shelter opens at 1220 River Street

2019
- The Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness established to support City policy on homelessness response.

2020
- City hires first Homeless Response Manager.

2021
- City adopts ordinances for oversized vehicles and camping services and standards.
- City receives a $14 million grant for homelessness response from the State of California and combines this with $4 million from ARPA.

2022
- City creates Homelessness Response Division and first three-year Homelessness Response Action Plan.
- City hires first Homeless Response Field Crew Team, including Outreach Specialists.
- Police Department assigns two dedicated Community Service Officers to the team.
- City opens a 135-person shelter called the City Overlook at the Armory.
- City opens 1220 River Street Transitional Community Camp.
- City opens long-term, overnight-only, and emergency safe parking programs.

2023
- City hires a legislative lobby firm to advocate for state and federal funding.
- City receives the Pro-Housing Designation from the state in recognition of the City's efforts to build affordable housing and meet the state Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

2024
- City dedicates $9.6 million from the general fund to homelessness response programs.
- City Council adopts three-year Homelessness Response Strategic Plan.
- City receives $4.0 million Encampment Resolution Grant.

Homelessness Response Strategic Plan
2024 – 2027

Building on the success of the 2022 Homelessness Response Action Plan, the 2024 Homelessness Response Strategic Plan represents a significant step forward in the City's efforts to tackle homelessness.

Developed collaboratively, it includes input from nonprofit providers, staff, and community members, including individuals with lived experience. The plan is a blueprint for the City of Santa Cruz's homelessness response over the next three years.

This Strategic Plan leverages insights, data, and priorities gathered from stakeholders, the annual PIT count, current City programs, the Citywide Strategic Plan, and Santa Cruz County's *Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness*.

With clear policy goals and actionable strategies, the Strategic Plan aligns the work of the City with homeless service providers and Santa Cruz County's efforts.

The result is an enhanced, collaborative, and coordinated response to homelessness.

The City's values are updated to explicitly include equity as an important aspect of our work.

Our community has a substantial need for shelter, and we must all work together to focus on what matters most — compassion and care.

OUR COMMITMENT

In Santa Cruz, our homelessness response will strive to balance individual needs with broad community impacts, spanning from prevention strategies to successful pathways to stable housing.

VALUES

Our City's response to homelessness centers on:

Health		Transparency
Safety	Equity	Economic Vitality
Collaboration	Environmental Stewardship	Fiscal Responsibility

Homelessness Response Strategic Plan
GOALS

Decrease Homelessness: reduce the number of people who are unsheltered and the total number of people experiencing homelessness.

Prevent homelessness: reduce the number of people who fall into homelessness.

Increase affordable housing units: meet and/or exceed RHNA goals.

Reduce the impacts of encampments: protect environmentally sensitive areas and ensure equitable access to parks and open spaces for everyone in the community.

Build regional capacity and partnerships to resolve homelessness: build strong partnerships across all sectors to leverage resources, share expertise, and effectively coordinate efforts.

ACTION AREAS

HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

July 2024 – June 2027

In March of 2022, the City of Santa Cruz recognized the changing landscape of homelessness response and the new role the City plays in shelter provisions.

The City Council took the important and necessary step to create the first Homelessness Response Action Plan (HRAP) to guide the City's homelessness response.

This updated Homelessness Response Strategic Plan will provide staff direction from July 2024 through June 2027. During each year of the plan, a yearly Action Plan will be created to implement the Strategic Plan based on the changing funding landscape.

The HRAP is the foundation for the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan builds off the work already accomplished and carries that work forward with more informed perspectives.

While some of the terminology has changed, and our values have been updated, the commitment has stayed the same. The Strategic Plan will guide the City through the next three years of our homelessness response.

The Strategic Plan does not promise to end homelessness in Santa Cruz. Still, it provides the community and staff with a pathway to focus on actions that fall within the City's responsibilities.

Long-term solutions demand more affordable housing and better supportive services across the County. These necessitate investments beyond what any single entity can provide.

Without sustainable funding, our current programs are at risk. As a community, we must commit to resourcing this ongoing endeavor.

Consistent, ample funding is critical, as it will transition individuals to homes, thereby enhancing the quality of life for everyone. This is about safeguarding human dignity, promoting prosperity, and preserving our environment.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Building Capacity & Partnerships

An organizational response to homelessness and housing instability, including greater internal coordination and alignment of services. Expanding our community's overall capacity and effectiveness. Expanded legislative outreach and public engagement.

Maintain and expand organizational capacity and internal collaboration	• Create and implement an action plan documenting the progress of the Strategic Plan, identify annual funding resources, and refine the Strategic Plan as necessary. • Continue to fund a dedicated staff for the Homelessness Response Program. • Conduct weekly internal coordination meetings between City departments.
Collaborate with community-based and faith-based organizations to provide effective and efficient service delivery	• Support community-based organizations (CBO's) to create more transitional employment programs, including expansion of Downtown Streets Team. • Continue to partner with CBOs to increase available case management for people experiencing homelessness. • Conduct quarterly meetings with our CBOs. • Establish partnerships with faith-based organizations.
Work in alignment with the County to increase our effectiveness at reducing homelessness	• Continue regular City-County Collaborative meetings. • Support and utilize data to enhance effective coordination. • Partner with the County to secure funding for emergency shelter, severe weather shelter and a navigation center. • Formalize roles and responsibilities with the County via a MOU.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Building Capacity & Partnerships

Continue pursuing legislative action to obtain support from state and federal levels

- Develop annual targeted state and federal legislative asks for policy reform and funding related to substance use disorder, mental health and homelessness response.
- Work with legislative groups (League of Cal Cities) to build a statewide coalition of municipalities for legislative changes and funding.
- Identify opportunities to influence & support legislation that aligns with Santa Cruz's homelessness strategies.

Increase community engagement and education on the City's homelessness activities and programs

- Continue regular updates to staff, council, and community partners.
- Post and share on city channels (social media, website, email newsletters, webinars, events).
- Develop timely and relevant communications for at-risk community members and unhoused individuals to ensure they know how to access services and programs.
- Conduct an annual survey to measure awareness of city services, service gaps, experiences, and opinions.

Establish sustainable funding sources

- Continue to pursue state and federal grants to support programs, including the 2024 Encampment Resolution Grant of $4.0 million. For that grant, implement programs and services related to the grant in partnership with Housing Matters and the County.
- Work with our County partners to secure funding for emergency shelter programs.
- Continue to commit general fund dollars to support ongoing programs.
- Assess existing programs for efficient use of funds.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Affordable & Supportive Housing

Santa Cruz is a leader in proactive and innovative approaches to expanding affordable and supportive housing. Affordability and availability are two of the most significant contributors to our region's homelessness crisis. These actions will advance the City's longstanding commitment to expand housing opportunities in our community.

Retain, protect and increase the supply of housing

- Support the development of affordable housing projects.
- Identify ongoing funding for supportive housing projects.

Increase access to housing navigation and essential services by continuing to develop a vision for the Coral Street area including a navigation center

- Issue an RFP to identify and contract with a design firm.
- Work with the County departments to develop the project.
- Apply for grant funding to develop the project.

Expand the City's capacity to identify and utilize policy changes to increase housing

- Evaluate and enact local housing policies to promote housing development, particularly additional low and very-low income housing.
- Advocate state & federal legislation for housing funding.
- Monitor state legislation and take positions on bills to further housing production statewide.

Increase homelessness prevention efforts

- Obtain funding to support local eviction prevention, rental assistance, legal assistance, and tenant education.
- Support efforts for housing stabilization.
- Support the development of affordable housing projects.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Environmental Stewardship

Protect our environment by reducing the impacts of illegal disposal of trash & debris. Address community impacts and neighborhood concerns from illegal encampments.

Address community impacts and neighborhood concerns from encampments and litter

- Resolve encampments quickly as shelter space allows.
- Employ contractors to provide services for refuse removal and restoration.
- Quickly remove abandoned refuse to mitigate the potential for environmental damage.
- Continue to work with City departments to implement environmental design options and deter re-encampment in open spaces.
- Partner with community groups for restoration of affected habitats.
- Maintain City parks and open spaces for community-wide use.

Reduce illegal dumping of hazardous waste & debris

- Continue to work towards the goal of establishing free or extremely low-cost waste disposal site within the City, and keep the Council updated on progress.
- Expand the Homelessness Response Field Crew Team's ability to regularly remove abandoned litter by providing additional support through contractors, additional equipment, and supplies.

Wildfire and flood protection

- Conduct assessment and outreach to encampments affecting the City's open spaces in preparation for wildfire and flood season.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Shelter, Care, and Support

Individuals experiencing homelessness often have complex needs, including mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and chronic health conditions. Comprehensive support services are essential to help them stabilize their lives, in addition to providing shelter until permanent housing solutions become available.

Ensure equity & access

- Utilize HMIS data to identify potential equity issues in both rates of homelessness and access to services.
- Include the voices of those with lived experience in design of programs and services.
- Identify ongoing funding for permanent supportive housing projects.

Reduce the number of unsheltered individuals by providing emergency shelter and supporting programs

- Continue to offer emergency shelter programs:
  - City Overlook at the Armory
  - 1220 River Street Transitional Community
  - Severe Weather Shelter Program
- Continue to offer safe parking programs:
  - Long-term safe parking
  - Overnight-only safe parking
- Partner to expand emergency shelter capacity, women-only shelters, tiny homes, and sober living environments.
- Provide storage program for persons experiencing homelessness

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Shelter, Care, and Support

Connect people to behavioral and medical services

- Collaborate with the County to expand substance abuse and mental health treatment services.
- Develop partnerships with healthcare providers to reduce exits from the hospital system to homelessness (Janus, HPHP, and Dignity Health).
- Work with community partners to provide behavioral. health and substance abuse treatment services.

Improve assistance to people in navigating the complex network of social services

- Evaluate and enact local housing policies to promote housing development, particularly additional low and very-low income housing.
- Advocate state & federal legislation for housing funding.
- Monitor state legislation and take positions on bills to further housing production statewide.

ACTION AREAS & STRATEGIES

Community Safety

Balancing public safety with addressing homelessness is a complex challenge that requires careful consideration including legal, ethical, and practical concerns. While being homeless itself is not a crime, people experiencing homelessness at times engage in unlawful behavior which requires the response of law enforcement.

Equitable enforcement of criminal behavior	• Collaborate between SCPD, Homeless Response Field Crew, and Outreach Teams to provide equitable & compassionate response. • Work with the district attorney to successfully prosecute criminal behavior. • Work with the County to enhance diversion programs for repeat offenders.
Decrease number of calls to law enforcement from individuals experiencing mental health crises	• Implement the Mobile Crisis Response Team in collaboration with the County. • Continue to fund the Mental Health Liaisons positions in collaboration with the County. • Utilize City outreach specialists to assist officers with individuals who need support.
Provide access to basic health needs on the street.	• Reduce the number of calls for service by the Santa Cruz Fire Department by adding an EMT to the Mobile Crisis Response team.

Measuring Our Success

Preventing and Resolving Homelessness

How will we know that our strategic plan is working? The following data points will help us remain focused on our commitment to balancing individual needs with broad community impacts, from prevention strategies to successful pathways toward stable housing.

Decrease Homelessness: reduce the number of people who are unsheltered and the total number of people experiencing homelessness.
- # of people who have moved into more stable housing after participating in City programs
- # of people served through City programs
- Point-In-Time Count (PIT Count)
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data

Prevent homelessness: reduce the number of people who fall into homelessness.
- PIT Count
- # of people served by the City's eviction prevention program

Increase affordable housing units: meet and/or exceed RHNA goals.
- # of transitional, permanent supportive, and below-market-rate housing units that are preserved or produced

Reduce the impacts of encampments: protect environmentally sensitive areas and ensure equitable access to parks and open spaces for everyone in the community.
- Reduction in # of calls for service
- Amount of refuse removed from encampments
- Community engagement and annual survey

Build regional capacity and partnerships to resolve homelessness: build strong partnerships across all sectors to leverage resources, share expertise, and effectively coordinate efforts.
- Create opportunities to partner on funding, service connection, and outreach.

Strategic Plan
2024-2026

HOPE Matters

DIGNITY Matters

SPEED LIMIT 5

Housing Matters

In my role as President of the Board of Directors of Housing Matters, I am delighted to share this dynamic continuation of our Strategic Plan that represents what we intend to accomplish during the three year period of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2026.

The previous strategic plan laid the groundwork for this version by expanding and solidifying our organizational identity. On reflection, the successes and the opportunities for growth over the last three years have brought us to the realization that housing is really at the heart of what we do. We recognized our focus on supportive housing [see page 8] needed to be reflected in this new plan to illustrate our commitment to developing more of it along with the crucial services we already provide such as emergency shelter with case management and housing navigation, supportive services, respite care and so much more.

We identified five areas of focus for this plan:

1. Organizational Excellence: Build a resilient organization characterized by excellence, equity, integrity, and accountability.

2. Program Impact: Deliver effective programs that move more people into housing.

3. Shelter & Supportive Housing: Develop and/or acquire property for supportive housing, emergency shelter, navigation center, and services.

4. Community Engagement: Build a network of allies to support the vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

5. System Leadership: Deepen our leadership across the system by advocating for our vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

As you read through the plan, you will notice a theme around the continued expansion of CalAIM. This is a source of ongoing financial stability that we are encouraged by as we continue the development of our organization to meet the need for services in Santa Cruz County.

Cecilia Espinola,

Housing Matters Board President

Table of Contents

Strategic planning is essential to Housing Matters' organizational success. It guides us and keeps us focused on our mission and values as we grow in response to the needs in our community.

As the largest nonprofit based in Santa Cruz County specifically focused on solutions to homelessness, we recognize and accept our responsibility to lead our community's response to this humanitarian crisis.

Deciding where and how to best focus our resources to move our mission forward is central to that responsibility, and that's where "strategy" comes into play. In creating this three-year strategic plan, we wanted to create a dynamic, flexible, and useful document for directing our day-to-day and long-term decision-making.

In short, our strategic planning directly informs our focus over the next few years based on what is specifically needed in our community, and how we can meet those needs based on our organizational expertise and other proven solutions.

Planning: Our Operational "North Star"

This Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026 is intended to function as our operational "North Star." It builds on Housing Matters's substantial progress over the past three years in meeting the goals outlined in our last Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023. It also reflects the experience we've gained in doing this work for the past 35+ years, and our commitment to empowering people on their pathway to stable housing. Additionally, it reflects our continued focus on evidence-based solutions that follow a Housing First approach -- such as permanent supportive housing.

Purpose: Growing to Meet Demand

As the number of people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County fluctuates, our organization must scale to meet the demand for services. Housing Matters has grown from 65 to 101 employees over the past three years. At the same time, our annual budget has grown from $6.2M to over $21M. This steady growth directly reflects our ongoing efforts to increase capacity and flexibility and scale our programs to meet community demand.

Owning and operating Casa Azul, for example, our newly opened permanent supportive housing facility, is one example of how we have scaled our programs and services to meet demand. Harvey West Studios and the expansion of the Recuperative Care Center (RCC) at an offsite location and the planned Navigation Center are examples of how Housing Matters continues to evolve as an organization — not for the sake of growth, but to meet the evolving needs in our community.

Process & Inputs: Understanding What's Needed

Understanding the specific needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in Santa Cruz County is critically important, as it directly informs our operational strategy.

As a data-driven organization, we're continually monitoring data collected both internally and externally to understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our community. This data also allows us to understand the success of our programs and services in meeting those needs. Gathering input from our partners and collaborators is equally important because we know data doesn't always tell the whole story.

Who are our partners and collaborators?

▪ People with lived experience of homelessness in Santa Cruz County

▪ Local service provider partners

▪ Representatives from state and local agencies

Alignment with Community Priorities

Housing Matters is committed to aligning itself with the City and County of Santa Cruz in addressing the community's needs. Specifically, Housing Matters is committed to supporting the goals and initiatives outlined in the City of Santa Cruz's **Homelessness Response Action Plan** and Santa Cruz County's **Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz** updated three-year framework.

Additionally, Housing Matters is committed to working closely with the City to establish and operate a new navigation center adjacent to the Housing Matters campus, as outlined in the **2022 - 2023 Coral Street Visioning Report**. The future navigation center will provide low-threshold, temporary emergency shelter with on-site housing navigation and wrap-around services for adults experiencing homelessness.

As part of our ongoing process to develop this strategic plan, we conducted one-on-one interviews and small focus groups to explore Housing Matters' strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This gathered input served as a body of insight to inform our strategic plan.

Participants in this process included people who previously experienced homelessness in Santa Cruz County, service provider partners, and representatives from local public agencies. A partial list of these participants is as follows:

Housing Matters program participants with lived experience of homelessness

City of Santa Cruz
Matt Huffaker, City Manager, City of Santa Cruz

City of Watsonville:
Rene Mendez, City Manager
Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director

County of Santa Cruz:
Monica Morales, Director, Health Services Agency
Randy Morris, Director, Human Services Dept.
Dr. Robert Ratner, Director, Housing for Health Division, Human Services Department

Local nonprofits:
Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County:
Susan True, CEO
Pajaro Valley Shelter Services:
Mike Johnson, Executive Director
Destination: Home:
Ray Bramson, COO & Housing Matters Board member

Healthcare providers
Dr. Nan Mickiewicz, President/CEO, Dominican Hospital
Dominique Hollister, Director, Administrative Services and Community Benefit, Dominican Hospital
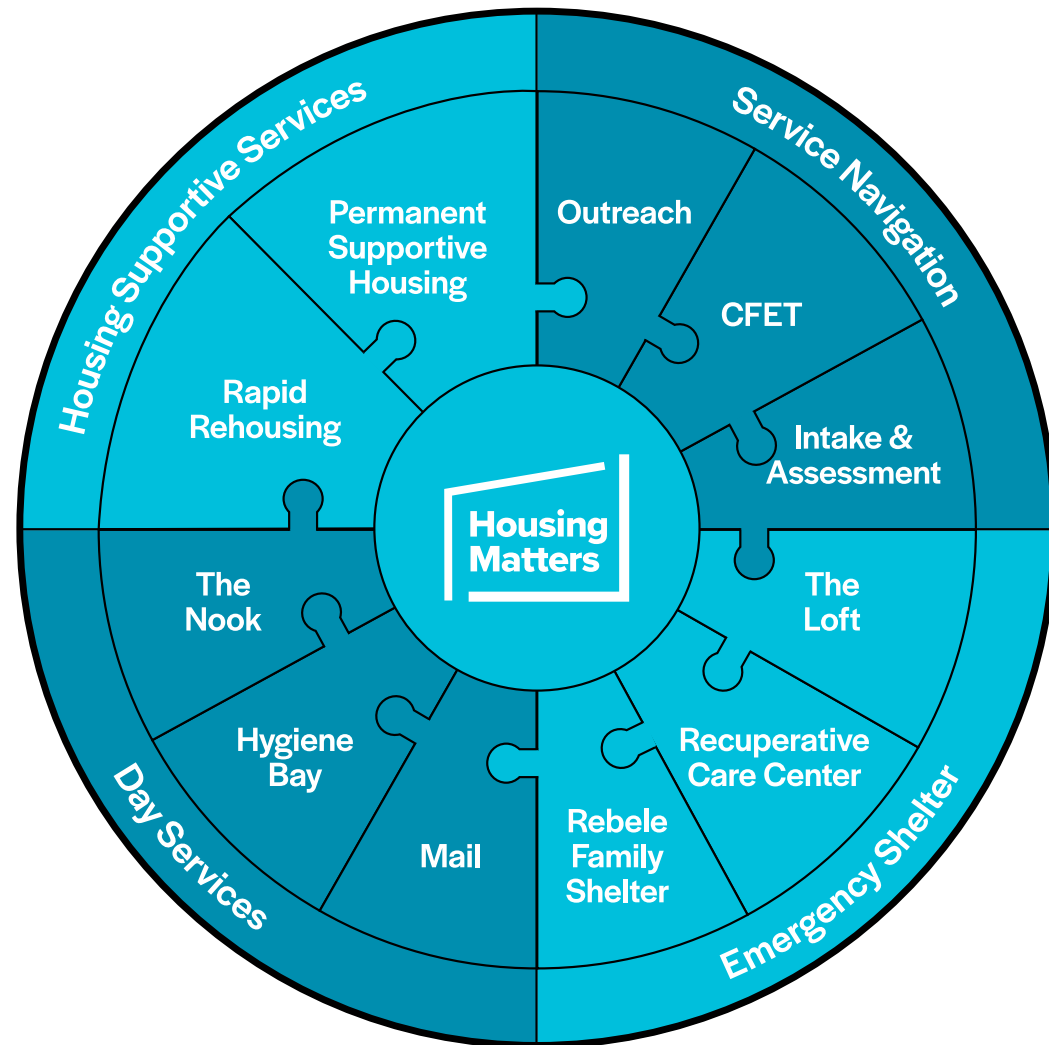**Joe Foster**, Public Affairs Officer, Kaiser Permanente
Lisa Hom, Community Health Manager, Sutter Health
Michael Schrader, CEO, Central CA Alliance for Health

Housing Matters serves over 3,000 people each year. Our services and programs — based on a Housing First approach to resolving homelessness — touch the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County.

Housing Supportive Services
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Rapid Rehousing

Service Navigation
- Outreach
- CFET
- Intake & Assessment

Emergency Shelter
- The Loft
- Recuperative Care Center
- Rebele Family Shelter

Day Services
- The Nook
- Hygiene Bay
- Mail

Housing Matters

Mission & Vision
Housing Matters partners with individuals and families to create pathways out of their homelessness into permanent housing.

We hold firmly to a vision that homelessness in Santa Cruz County should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Our Values
- We stand for equal and just treatment of all people.
- We treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect.
- We empower our participants to move forward on their pathway to housing through establishing trusting relationships, providing safe, compassionate, and flexible services that meet people where they are.
- We provide leadership and advocacy for collective impact, and we support public policy that leads to a reduction and eventual ending of homelessness in Santa Cruz County.
- We value integrity, and are accountable and transparent in all interactions.

Benefit Statement
Housing Matters is the only non-profit organization in Santa Cruz County focused on the whole-system flow for a person or family experiencing homelessness.

From outreach and intake to housing placement, supportive services, and permanent supportive housing, we meet people where they are and partner with them along the path to stable housing.

Our "Special Sauce"

Housing Matters is a unique organization that is unlike any other in Santa Cruz County. We offer programs that aren't offered anywhere else, and our services have become integral to the fabric of the community. But it's the combination of our strongest organizational attributes that create what we call our "special sauce." These attributes include:

- Our ability to respond swiftly and compassionately to meet community needs — and even anticipate needs before they arise.

- Our enthusiastic commitment to ending (not just reducing) homelessness.

- Our trailblazing attitude and growth mindset, which gives us the courage to try new things.

- Our organizational resilience and ability to nimbly adapt to changing circumstances.

- Our human approach to meeting people experiencing homelessness where they are, and elevating their voices in the community.

2 Program Impact
Deliver effective programs that move more people into housing.

4 Community Engagement
Build a network of allies to support the vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

1 Organizational Excellence
Build a resilient organization characterized by excellence, equity, integrity, and accountability.

3 Shelter & Supportive Housing
Develop and/or acquire property for supportive housing, emergency shelter, navigation center, and services.

5 System Leadership
Deepen our leadership across the system by advocating for our vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Overview: Five Areas of Focus

Housing Matters has accomplished much over the past three years, housing more people than ever before. Our progress in meeting past goals gives us the tools and insight to set our sights even higher — ending homelessness for veterans and families, for example, and expanding our impact and visibility in Watsonville.

At the same time, we recognize that our role in the community is now more significant than ever, and that demands an interconnected strategy within the broader services ecosystem in Santa Cruz County. Deepening our relationships with partner organizations has become critical to our mission.

A more visible role in the community also compels us to increase our efforts in educating community members about issues related to homelessness and in advocating for positive system change.

To accomplish these objectives, we've identified five areas of focus, along with clear goals and tactics.

1 Organizational Excellence

Build a resilient organization characterized by excellence, equity, integrity, and accountability.

Goal #1:
Develop the right team to lead Housing Matters and execute the strategic plan.

Actions we are taking:
1. Identifying gaps and opportunities for leadership development
2. Promoting or hiring to expand and diversify our current team
3. Enhancing the skills of current and future team members

Goal #2:
Build staff capacity to achieve resilience, well-being, and operational excellence.

Actions we are taking:
1. Strengthening our robust, competitive, and equitable HR practices
2. Supporting staff with wellness and resiliency tools
3. Enhancing staff training that emphasizes quality improvement and clear, documented standards
4. Laying the foundation for CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) certification
5. Providing staff with suitable facilities and resources to do their best work

Goal #3:
Maintain our strong financial position.

Actions we are taking:
1. Maximizing existing revenue sources with an immediate focus on expanding CalAIM billing
2. Improving our finance and data systems to identify problems early and respond quickly

3. Enhancing internal control, enterprise risk management, governance, and fraud deterrence processes using established frameworks for effectiveness, efficiency, and reliability

Goal #4:
Cultivate a dynamic and collaborative Board of Directors who act as effective advocates, ambassadors, and fundraisers for Housing Matters.

Actions we are taking:
1. Recruiting dedicated, passionate community members to serve on our Board who support Housing Matters' mission and want to volunteer their time and talent to help us realize our strategic goals

Goal #5:
Develop and foster an organizational culture that aligns our strategic initiatives with our values.

Actions we are taking:
1. Assess and characterize our current culture
2. Define the culture we aspire to and identify and implement the process to transform where needed

Goal #6:
Commit to continuous improvement to ensure programs, services, activities, and initiatives align with best practices, community priorities, and our Mission, Vision, and Values.

Actions we are taking:
1. Implement a process for rolling assessment of all programs, services, activities, and initiatives

2 Program Impact

Deliver effective programs that move more people into housing.

Goal #1:
Expand high-quality services to meet (and exceed) our housing goals, and contribute to county-wide priorities for decreasing homelessness.

Actions we are taking:
1. Incorporating CalAIM Community Supports and Enhanced Care Management
2. Increasing inventory of tenant-based and project-based rental assistance
3. Using evidence-based practices including Housing First, Trauma-informed Care, and Harm Reduction as well as low-barrier shelter and coordinated entry

Goal #2:
Create conditions for successful operation of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.

Actions we are taking:
1. Learning from others
2. Strengthening staff capacity
3. Building partnerships with complementary service providers and property management entities

Goals for Housing Success

475 move ins annually by year-end 2026

End family homelessness by year-end 2025

End veteran homelessness by year-end 2025

Reduce total PIT count to 1,200 by year-end 2026

Maintain a 90% retention rate for our PSH programs

3 Shelter & Supportive Housing

Develop and/or acquire property for supportive housing, emergency shelter, navigation center, and services.

Goal #1:
Expand shelter and services county-wide.

Actions we are taking:
1. Creating a countywide plan for Housing Matters sites and services, including a Coral Street campus master plan
2. Participating in the City of Santa Cruz Coral Street visioning process
3. Creating and implementing a decision-making framework for operations

Goal #2:
Sustain the recent expansion of recuperative care.

Actions we are taking:
1. Engaging Recuperative Care Center (RCC) partners and building shared long-term goals
2. Expanding CalAIM program
3. Evaluating RCC property for permanency

Goal #3:
Expand supportive housing.

Actions we are taking:
1. Creating a countywide plan for Housing Matters sites and services
2. Creating and implementing a decision-making framework for property acquisition and operations
3. Developing an opportunity fund and "land banking" to ensure future opportunities can be secured

4 Community Engagement

Build a network of allies to support the vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Goal #1:
Activate community-wide collective action.

Actions we are taking:
1. Building our capacity to convene and lead efforts for collective action
2. Developing a multimedia educational toolkit to empower the community to become housing justice allies and advocates
3. Engaging people with lived experience in action efforts

Goal #2:
Grow revenue streams in order to anticipate, respond to, and meet community needs.

Actions we are taking:
1. Developing and expanding relationships with donors, and the community at large, to ensure adequate financial resources
2. Advancing current relationships with private foundations, and pursuing new certifications to expand our portfolio of foundation involvement
3. Leveraging partnerships with public agencies to grow their investment in Housing Matters

Goal #3:
Create positive narrative change around homelessness and its solutions.

Actions we are taking:
1. Developing a comprehensive two-year strategy for community-wide narrative change
2. Convening community-wide conversations that support evidence-based approaches to resolving homelessness, as well as Housing Matters' mission and vision
3. Furthering the development of the Community Conversations program lived experience story archive and speakers bureau

5 System Leadership

Deepen our leadership across the system by advocating for our vision that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Goal #1:
Develop and lead a collaborative effort with service provider partners to build community ownership and action.

Actions we are taking:
1. Mapping the existing ecosystem of service providers and funding in Santa Cruz County
2. Building relationships and creating a framework for the Coalition to End Homelessness

Goal #2:
Influence policy change.

Actions we are taking:
1. Developing a robust policy advocacy function focused on local, state, and federal government
2. Creating and implementing an advocacy campaign to uplift and support our work, leveraging our partnerships and network of allies for policy change

We believe
homelessness should
be rare, brief and
non-recurring.

**Housing
Matters**