

# This is a homeless emergency



It is time to stop talking and start implementing compassionate solutions for those who live outside. You are invited to join our nonviolent direct action campaign to form stable living conditions for people who cannot afford housing in Santa Cruz.

Community members plan to form an emergency survival camp possibly in one of the downtown parking structures. We have started a GoFundme campaign to raise money to pay any bail and fines that survival sleepers might receive if the authorities interfere with the camp.

In the hopes of a human response to the crisis caused by the closing of the River Street Camp and reduction in shelter space and facilities a meeting was held with city councilors Chris Krohn and Drew Glover, their interns, local unhoused people, vehicle dwellers, members of HUFF, Conscience and Action and residents of the Ross Camp. The group spent hours drafting a realistic humane set of proposals to present. Councilors Brown, Glover and Krohn asked mayor Martine Watkins to place the proposal on the February 12th City Council meeting agenda. The proposal included:

1. A Declaration of Homeless Emergency
2. Transitional Encampments
3. Safe Parking Programs
4. Opening public facilities and bathrooms
5. Harm Reduction and Mutual-Aid
6. Anti-Homeless Ordinance Review and Reform

Councilperson Glover encouraged the community to support this realistic change in direction posting, “we have been idle for too long when it comes to progressive, compassionate policies. Join me in the fight for equity, justice, and unconditional love!

The mayor refused to place these proposals on the February 12th meeting agenda and instead calendared the business community’s agenda before the council. The City Manager’s proposal featured inadequate or non-existent services. The only concrete action in their proposal was the immediate closure notice for the Ross camp--a move that would eliminate shelter and increase suffering, illness from exposure and increased infection due to public defecation, County costs for emergency healthcare and death.

Millions of dollars have been spent on local homeless programs that rarely help those who live outside. We have watched the council announce one wish list of solutions after another that they never implement with the purpose of justifying the criminalization of those without housing. The February 12th council vote serves to justify the closing of the camp and seeks to protect the city from the Martin v. Boise Federal Court decision. A ruling that makes actions like the closing of the camp without real alternatives a likely violation of the law.

The Santa Cruz Sentinel February 9th story reminded, “A year ago, Santa Cruz heard a three-part plan that began with moving a similar large and partially managed homeless encampment from San Lorenzo Park’s Benchlands area to the River Street Camp, at 1220 River St. Phases two and three, which were a temporary new shelter site and final permanent “navigation-style” emergency homeless shelter and day services center, never came to fruition, however.”

A two-year campaign by the Freedom Sleepers inspired a challenge to the city law against sleeping outside or in a vehicle. The council voted to continue the cruel and now illegal ordinance but did agree to the formation of a Homelessness Coordinating Committee which issued its recommendations at the May 9, 2017 city council meeting. The city has yet to implement the plan.

The community is still waiting for the emergency recommendations of the April 11, 2000 Homeless Issues Task Force to be initiated. These recommendations celebrate a potential collaboration between the city and the county, a collaboration with little or no results other than citations and jail for those who cannot afford housing.

This is a homeless emergency. We cannot wait for city officials to take action. How can we let our neighbors who live outside suffer another cold sleepless night hiding from danger? We plan to form a survival camp in a parking structure. We are raising money to pay for the bail and fines of anyone charged for participating in the formation of a safe camping area in or near downtown Santa Cruz.

Donations will encourage participation in this nonviolent direct action campaign to form stable living conditions for people who cannot afford housing in Santa Cruz. We need to apply enough pressure for the city to end its years of delay in providing shelter and safe RV parking for those who have lost their housing.

We will not let the city and county squander another \$10 million grant to help the homeless without implementing safe camping and vehicle areas, providing showers, toilets, phone and computer charging sites and storage.

Please speak out in support of real solutions at the City Council Meeting on Tuesday, February 26, 2019

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**Please donate blankets, tarps, and tents.**

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**Support the Santa Cruz**

**Homeless Bail and Fine Solidarity goFundme**

[www.gofundme.com/santa-cruz-homeless-bail-and-fine-solidarity](http://www.gofundme.com/santa-cruz-homeless-bail-and-fine-solidarity)

**Join the emergency survival camp  
Call Conscience and Action 1-800-884-1136**

# Santa Cruz homeless camp fate left in limbo

## City Council votes for March 15 deadline, promises to reconsider

SANTA CRUZ — February 13, 2019 - Santa Cruz City Council will move forward toward opening several familiar and some new homeless shelter options, but have left the fate of a large unsanctioned camp uncertain.

The council, in a 4-3 vote late Tuesday night, approved a plan to evict an encampment of between 150 and 200 people from city- and state-owned lands between the Gateway Plaza and Highway 1 by March 15.

Responding to fears that the camp could be closed before an equivalent number of shelter beds were made available elsewhere, Vice Mayor Justin Cummings backed the deadline, but asked that the council continue discussing the matter at its Feb. 26 and March 12 meetings. He said the council could “determine at that point whether or not it would be a point where we want to close the camp or keep it open and consider other options.”

The city of Santa Cruz has added a large depository for used intravenous needles at the Ross camp.

Earlier in the meeting, Assistant City Manager Tina Shull and Assistant to the City Manager Susie O’Hara told the council they could not definitely ensure that shelter options, all would come to fruition. Shelter options include reopening a winter shelter at the Salvation Army on Laurel Street, a new pilot safe parking plan, reopening a city-run camp at 1220 River St. and expansions of the Association of Faith Communities shelter program and overnight Warming Center programs. Shull said she was 80 percent confident they would all open. “I think a lot of our potential moving forward does hinge on being able to use 1220 and finding an operator,” O’Hara said. An alternative site that was considered and discarded last year was reopening the former National Guard Armory building shelter in DeLaveaga Park. Though federal officials cited a pending property renovation project as reason not to rent the site out to the city, the project had not taken place, O’Hara said.

### Public weighs in

For many audience observers of the council action, Cummings was considered a swing voter for a divided council. Abbi Samuels, a leader with the local Food Not Bombs chapter, yelled out to Cummings that she wished she had not voted for him in November.

Resident Ursula Reed said creating new shelter space only for 150 people would “just not cut it,” as there were many more people at the existing encampment.

“If even one person winds up on the street because this camp has gone down, then you’re doing a disservice,” Reed said.

Speaker Scott Graham said Santa Cruz’s winter shelters, requiring participants to line up for a shuttle bus around 4 p.m. and sent back to the streets by 7 a.m., did not work for everyone, particularly those with odd-job hours.

“Homeless people that I talked to, when they had the Boneyard campground, they called it a ‘concentration camp,’” Graham said. “That’s the way most of these services are run. These are human beings. These are not cattle. They are not criminals. You have to treat them as humans. You have to have free will.”

Warming Center operator Brent Adams said his program, operating only on the coldest and wettest nights, serves anywhere from 80 to 150 people, who are not staying at the homeless camp and not making it into the winter shelter. The evening’s options, he said, did not address that “completely different subset.”

Several speakers questioned the city’s intention to zero in and clear out the homeless camp near Gateway Plaza, when hundreds of homeless people are sleeping unsheltered around the city and county.

### Alternative options

Speaker Linda Weaver said the only definitive action the council was trying to take was close the camp, while the other proposals might very well “stall out.” She suggested the city see the existing encampment as an opportunity instead of a blight, and turn it into a more highly organized transitional camp.

“The unsheltered need consistent long-term solutions,” Weaver said. “It is cruel and nonproductive to not give them consistency in one place so they can regain their stability.” Discussion of the camp’s closure date was part of the council’s first comprehensive examination of homeless shelter options of the year. A similar discussion took place with the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors earlier in the day, with both bodies approving a joint strategy.

Diverging from their county peers, the council also voted to move toward numerous additional homeless-related actions at coming meetings. Councilmen Drew Glover and Chris Krohn offered an amendment to the council action that could result in a citywide homeless state of emergency and to remove overnight vehicle parking restrictions on Delaware Avenue, from Swift Street to Shaffer Road, at the council’s Feb. 26 meeting. The Warming Center Program also was awarded \$5,000 to purchase additional blankets and sleeping pads, and efforts to open a fence between the homeless encampment and the storage program on Felker Street will move forward.

### Support the Santa Cruz

#### Homeless Bail and Fine Solidarity goFundme

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