

City Council Won't Stop Trump-like Sweeps of Unhoused Shelters, Ignores Winter Shelter Emergency, Declines to fund MHCAN, & "Housing Matters" Cut-Off

The last Council and Supervisors meetings of the year have no funding for walk-in Winter Shelter as temperatures drop. Nor did they restore MHCAN, Downtown Street Team, operational drinking fountains, warming centers, or other emergency services. Instead they went on vacation and told folks outside to wait until next February 28th for possible action. Too late to impact the "Housing Matters" showers, mailbox, water spigot cut-off. The following *Santa Cruz Local* story recounts some of the background.

City, county of S.C. formally begin process to replace Housing Matters' day services

by [Max Chun](#) 12-10-25 Santa Cruz Local

The Santa Cruz City Council moved to form a group of city and county staff members to begin exploring options to replace the day services that homelessness nonprofit Housing Matters is poised to halt at the end of March. Staff are expected to return no later than Feb. 28 with a recommendation.

The Santa Cruz City Council is officially beginning the process to establish basic amenities and services in place of local homelessness nonprofit Housing Matters, which is closing its day services at the end of March. Staff are expected to bring options and a recommendation back to the city council no later than Feb. 28.

In mid-October, Housing Matters announced that [it would close the only public, drop-in day services facility in Santa Cruz County](#) at the end of March. That means access to showers, restrooms, rest areas, the mail room and other basic amenities will no longer be available for an estimated 50 to 80 unhoused people who use the services daily. Those services have been open during daytime hours & are also available to people who are not staying in a Housing Matters shelter.

The closure is mainly due to the organization's upcoming opening of Harvey West Studios, a 120-unit permanent supportive housing project on the Housing Matters campus. The organization's daily services at its Coral Street campus, such as the Hygiene Bay, which offers showers and restrooms, and the Nook, a rest area, will no longer be available to the general public. They will still be open to shelter guests and residents.

According to a Santa Cruz [staff report](#), city officials have met with county officials and Housing Matters leadership several times to figure out next steps necessary to continue providing the services come April. The report lays out a number of possibilities, including standing up the same services at a new location, providing access to restrooms and showers at multiple locations, expanding mobile shower access and installing more portable hygiene facilities throughout the city.

The report also mentions the possibility of transferring Housing Matters' mail room clients to either the U.S. Postal Service or another provider or location where they can send and receive mail.

The [mail room is considered a vital service for many](#), especially those who are homeless or lack stable housing, as it allows them to access government assistance & other resources they need to work their way out of homelessness. Officials say that there are approximately 1,400 homeless

City and county staff will form a group that will likely include other community members who have experience working with homeless services to come up with options for replacement services and figure out how to secure funding for them. Once the group has identified options as well as funding requirements and potential sources, city or county staff will begin a process to choose one or more providers to administer the services.

A number of community members spoke to the urgency of replacing the day services as quickly as possible, given how vital they are to the entire county's unhoused population. One speaker, who introduced herself only as "Athena," told the council that it's been "a scary few months" with the news that day services would be shut down and [the closure of the Mental Health Client Action Network \(MHCAN\)](#). She advocated for any replacement service to include device charging and clean water, and asked that the city refrain from performing encampment sweeps near any day services area. The Coral Street area near Housing Matters' main campus is [often the subject of sweeps](#) due to many people living in tents along the road; "It's destructive and makes it so that people can't grow," she said.

Keith McHenry, co-founder of nonprofit [Food Not Bombs](#), expressed frustration with what he believes is insufficient funding flowing into helping the homeless population, and also spoke against encampment sweeps. "It's completely outrageous. Trying to get food to people every day is becoming insane because you show up to where you saw a lot of homeless people the day before, and they're gone," he said.

Karen Warren, a member of the Quaker group [Santa Cruz Friends Meeting](#), said the city needs to utilize its partnerships with local nonprofits and other groups like hers to reach an adequate solution quickly. "We have a shelter, safe spaces, parking, and we've volunteered and attended many meetings of Housing Matters. We know that our city and county staff and volunteers are very dedicated to addressing the needs of unhoused people," she said. "The fact that we're here with such a short time frame to address this problem points to our goal of being more integrated than we are. If we were much more integrated, we would have had a solution to address this earlier."

Let **HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom)** know if you've been hassled, cited, arrested, or threatened. Let us know if your property has been destroyed or seized. Let us know if "shelter providers" have been doing the job they're paid to do—provide real services to real persons who need them. Leave as many details as you're comfortable leaving. Tell us if the information is to be kept in confidence or told to the community so that others may see what is going on.

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