

**From:** [Mitchell Carter](#)  
**To:** [\\_CityCouncilListPublic](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Homeless Strategic Plan  
**Date:** Sunday, November 13, 2022 6:43:40 PM

---

To whom it may concern:

Please include strategies to address the needs of the sizable portion of the homeless population here suffering from mental illness and drug addiction. Any homelessness plan that ignores these issues is seriously deficient.

Thank you,

Mitchell Carter  
Brigitte Carter



Santa Rosa

**From:** [Denise Hill](#)  
**To:** [CityCouncilListPublic](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 11/15 City Council Agenda Item #14.1: REPORT - HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN  
**Date:** Sunday, November 13, 2022 7:52:37 PM

---

**Hello Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members,**

I'm writing to provide input on **Item #14.1 – REPORT – HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN** scheduled for this Tuesday's council meeting.

After reading Exhibit A attached to this agenda item, I would like to **commend and applaud the City** for the inclusion of these two elements in the Plan:

- **#2.5 Provide Enhanced Community Support to Neighborhoods. Support** neighborhoods impacted by unsheltered homelessness and serving as hosts to interim and permanent supportive housing programs.
- **Strategy Area 2g (page 25).** Provide outreach, engagement, and increased services for neighborhoods impacted by unsheltered homelessness.

As a resident of the St. Rose neighborhood (the neighborhood surrounded by the highest concentration of homeless services in the City), this report acknowledging that neighborhoods near facilities that provide services to the homeless need consideration and support is truly encouraging and I look forward to seeing further details on what this will look like.

**There are a few key elements that I believe need to be added to the Plan to make it more successful by producing more effective results. These are:**

#### **B. Guiding Principles (page 17)**

**Data-informed.** Focused on results. Strategies, priorities, and investments for reducing homelessness will be informed by data to best serve people experiencing homelessness, achieve desired outcomes, and guide strategic investments in programs and services.

- In order to increase transparency with residents, the most recent homeless data collected by the City should be included as an attachment for all Council agenda items on the homeless and with every Homeless Emergency proclamation.

#### **D. Goals and Measures to Track Progress (page 18)**

##### **1. Improve the performance of the city and regional homelessness response system.**

- Detail what would be needed to achieve "improved performance."

##### **2. Expand service-oriented responses to unsheltered homelessness.**

- Quantify (year 1, year 2, etc.) the desired expansion goals using metrics that can be tracked for results.

#### **Strategy Area 1: (pages 19 and 20)**

##### **1. Prevent Homelessness.**

- Include addiction and mental health treatment to expand statement beyond just housing services.

##### **1.3 Provide Low Barrier Shelter**

- Add requirement that those utilizing homeless services should be asked to agree to a Code of Ethics, especially when near neighborhoods/businesses and strongly encouraged to participate in "give back to the community" programs (i.e. trash and debris pickup, sweeping of sidewalks, etc.)

##### **1.4 - Expand Housing Solutions:**

- Add requirement that EU housing needs to be spread *throughout* the city (not just downtown and west of downtown).

### **1.5 Embrace Housing First:**

- In California and specifically Sonoma County, the Housing First model is proving too slow and costly to be an effective method to efficiently and quickly address the chronic homeless population. In addition, it doesn't focus adequately on addressing the large % of those living on our streets with addiction and mental health problems. While service providers may want to utilize the Housing First model, they should be strongly encouraged to branch out beyond Housing First with other programs that address those suffering from chronic addiction and mental health issues.

### **1.6 Support People to Retain Housing:**

- Given the recent failure of Palms Inn, 1.6 needs a lot more detail on what defines case management: how many visits per week, response time to client with a crisis, etc. Service providers offering these services should have an inspection by the City's Code Enforcement Department on a quarterly basis.

### **1.7 Implement Performance Measures:**

- Add these System Performance Measures:
  - The number of people who refused services and why.
  - The number of people who did not live in Santa Rosa the previous year.

## **STRATEGY AREA 2: (page 21)**

### **2.1 Provide Services and Support to Encampments and People Living Unsheltered.**

- Behavioral Health services need to go beyond InResponse . As part of the collaboration effort with other cities and the County, it is critical that the number of beds in the local short and long-term treatment facilities be increased.
- Free needles, needle exchange programs, and areas where drug use is allowed should NOT be part of "substance use services".

## **STRATEGY AREA 3: (page 22)**

### **3.3 Develop Formal Partnerships With Regional Partners.**

- Include metrics to measure progress. How many long and short-term beds in treatment facilities for addiction and mental health issues are there now in the County and what is the desired increase? Timeline?

## **TRACKING AND REPORTING ON RESULTS (page 23)**

- Add: Tracking and reporting of those who refuse services, # of times services offered were refused, and why. (This data is critical to begin to effectively address chronic homelessness.)

## **YEAR ONE ACTION PLAN (page 24)**

### **STRATEGY AREA 1:**

- e. **Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of Safe Parking program:** *Effectiveness* is based on what metrics?
- g. **Funding Partnerships. Add:** Including, but not limited to County Measure O funds and Drug Medicare funds.
- h. **Operational standards for emergency shelters. Add:** Have the City Code Enforcement Department inspect all City-funded facilities (shelters and housing with wrap-around services) quarterly.

**Add "i":** Determine what approach should be enacted for individuals who refuse offered shelter multiple times.

- **Add "J":** " Inform City staff at those departments besides Housing and Community Services (i.e. Permit Parking, Police - Calls for Services Operators, Public Works Debris Removal) receiving calls for service from the public regarding homeless issues how they can provide the most effective response to residents in a way that ensures the responses from all departments are uniform and based on the most current City-approved approach.

### **STRATEGY AREA 3: (page 26)**

- #3e-Include an annual target percentage for increasing the amount of beds in long- and short-term treatment facilities the City has access to.
- #3f- Stakeholders should be specified (which organizations, individuals, and City staff) and include non-homeless residents and business owners located in the City.
- #3g - Add to RFPs and service contracts that service providers interface with the nearby residents and business owners respectfully, professionally, and effectively.

All calls and emails from the public should be responded to within 48-72 hours with detail on how and when the situation reported will be addressed.

#### **Other:**

- Embrace Governor Newsome's Care Court and start working towards its implementation in our city.

**Thank you for your time and consideration of this input.**

Best,

*Denise Hill*



**From:** [Collin Thoma](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Agenda item 14.1  
**Date:** Monday, November 14, 2022 4:27:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[Santa Rosa Homeless Strategic Plan.pdf](#)

---

Dear City of Santa Rosa City Council,

My name is Collin Thoma and I am the Systems Change Advocate with Disability Services and Legal Center and I have submitted comments on agenda item 14.1 Homeless Solutions Plan.

Sincerely,  
Collin Thoma  
**Systems Change Advocate**  
**Disability Services & Legal Center (DSLCL)**  
521 Mendocino Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
(707)636-3076



## Santa Rosa Homeless Strategic Plan

Dear City of Santa Rosa City Council,

My name is Collin Thoma and I am the Systems Change Advocate with Disability Services and Legal Center. I do encourage the city to approve the plan but only if the plan takes into account the needs and challenges of people with disabilities and are homeless.

Many people with disabilities rely on Social Security Insurance (SSI) and/or other public benefits as their only source of income. These benefits can pay up to over a thousand dollars less than the average rent in the city. This can make them very susceptible to becoming homeless due to the high cost of living. Thus, it is very important that a top priority is to increase the affordable housing supply for those in the very-extremely low-income categories. Since many people rely on public benefits it's vital that programs to prevent homelessness can support them. The city should consider providing financial assistance with security deposit, first and last months rent or rent subsidies. In addition, the city will need to make sure it can adequately provide mental health and substance abuse services as this may be the missing link to keeping people housed. It will also be important for temporary, transitional and temporary housing can house people that may be in debt. The city should make sure that a top priority will be to make sure it has a sufficient supply of rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. To help with this the plan will need to be able to take advantage of AB 2483 when it goes into effect sometime in 2023. This bill will provide incentives for multifamily homes with at least a hundred units to have a certain amount set aside for those experiencing homelessness.

The city will need to do better outreach of shelters, services they provide and how to get there. I agree with stakeholder comments on that these outreach efforts will need to happen outside of business hours. The city should adopt the suggestions for person centered system and equity lenses. In particular more outreach and education should be done for the Home First principles. To be equitable shelter staff will need to be trained on the multiple different types of disabilities and how to properly work with and serve people with disabilities.

Shelters will also need to be accessible by being able to accommodate people with mobility devices and/or medical equipment or those with lots of belongings. Another very important need is whether or not they will accept a service or emotional support animal. These

animals are vital for a person wellbeing and shelters that don't accept them it creates a huge barrier to accessing the shelters. For safe parking and sanctioned homeless sites, they will need better security, maintenance and better cleaning. Shelters, sanctioned sites and safe parking sites will need to have better amenities. These amenities will need to include showers, additional beds and water and electricity access. Services for mental/behavior health and substance abuse will need to be available at the shelters or be able to connect people to these services. For shelters that connect people to services, the shelter will need to make sure the person actually receives the services. It is good to see that the city will make an effort to establish relationships with people in homeless encampments. A part of building these relationships will need to give notice of the camp being cleared at least a week in advance. In addition, information will need to be provided of where to go after the camp is cleared.

The city should also reexamine the funding allocations for homeless services, programs and housing to ensure they receive the maximum amount of funding. In addition, the city should also peruse other sources of funding, from the state, federal and private sources. Perusing these funding sources will also be important for building or expanding shelters.

Thank you for taking time to review my comments on the Santa Rosa strategic plan. Overall, I was happy with the plan as it is sorely needed given the severe homeless crisis. However, it is important that the needs and challenges for people with disabilities are taken into account so the plan can truly be effective in reducing the homeless crisis.

Sincerely,

Collin Thoma

**Systems Change Advocate**

**Disability Services & Legal Center (DSLCL)**

521 Mendocino Avenue

Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707)636-3076

