

Housing for Health Partnership – Community Meeting
Updating Action Plans Community Input Session
Watsonville, CA
Meeting Notes - February 7, 2024

Number of Community Member Attendees = 20

The information contained below includes a summary of information gathered on specific topics during the input session. Attendees rotated among tables to provide input on each topic. Ideas that other participants supported received supportive votes as part of the planning process. The number of votes in support of a suggestion are noted with each item listed.

Table 1: Access and Connections

How can we do a better job of helping unsheltered people access available housing and service resources?

How can we do a better job of addressing the impacts of people living in vehicles and in encampments on those with and without housing?

- Improve messaging – community education, utilize social media better to tell people stories, to improve public awareness, perspectives on homelessness, use texting, different modes of communication, communicate with different cultural groups (7 additional votes).
- Expand Watsonville Works and Downtown Streets Team service areas. Pay stipends not just gift cards. (5 additional votes).
- Neighborhood volunteer clean-ups (4 additional votes).
- Population/need specific shelters, e.g., youth, higher level needs, seniors, women only, etc. (4 additional votes).
- Workforce development collaboration with Housing for Health and housing programs (3 additional votes).
- Smaller shelters, spread out, more manageable (3 additional votes).
- Advocate to stop sweeps, increase services (3 additional votes).
- Encampments need access to water, electricity, wifi (3 additional votes).
- More overnight safe parking. Convert “dead” parking lots into living communities (2 additional votes).
- More housing and shelter (2 additional votes).
- Disseminate connector access/coordinated entry information better (2 additional votes).
- Help reduce family fear, remove stigma (2 additional votes)
- Employment focused outreach – education, training, trades training, increase access (1 additional vote).
- Create more accessible beds, more mental health beds (1 additional vote).
- More warm handoffs, resource guidance, connections, e.g., take to appointments, make calls, don’t just give resource guides (1 additional vote).
- Deploy outreach teams/connectors with mobile internet access or tablets (1 additional vote).
- Improve access to showers, laundry, restrooms (1 additional vote).
- Better public interagency data sharing (1 additional vote).
- Better trained for staff providing support to people with disabilities in shelters.

- Simplify connection services request form or add a simpler, shorter version for people to complete when they don't have someone to support them through the process.
- Disseminate resource information at institutions so people know how to access before exiting.
- Dump/waste access for people living in vehicles/RVs.
- Safe, lockable storage access.
- Improve resource awareness and support, information sharing, with schools, teachers, families, students.
- Lived experiencing sharing for community.
- More self-esteem/support programs, e.g., “homeless world cup.”

Table 2: Keep Housing and Prevent Homelessness

How can we do a better job of helping more people keep stable, healthy, and safe living situations and prevent homelessness?

- Mediation services for people in conflicts with a landlord and at risk of losing housing, referral based, hotline number open to landlords, service providers, and recipients. Like a mediation response team. (7 additional votes).
- Provide outreach/info at schools to make sure families know about services, train family outreach coordinated on housing supports families might need, hold events at schools, help families with a “crisis map” of resources, referrals, step-by-step (4 additional votes).
- Community health workers or “ambassadors” to help build trust among people at risk of losing housing that do not trust government to provide health/welfare services to help people stay housed, especially people with lived experience working in these roles (3 additional votes).
- More flexible funding (2 additional votes).
- Language accessible services that also make explicit no requirements for citizenship (2 additional votes).
- Training for youth and others on how to be a good tenant, maintain housing, life skills, financial literacy workshops (3 additional votes).
- Informing landlords of the benefits of accepting vouchers (2 additional votes).
- Use of smartphone application to consolidate info/resources for people, simple to use, not websites (2 additional votes).
- Provide housing resource info at additional clinic sites in language accessible formats (1 additional vote).
- Services to help people understand and complete housing forms – landlord supports so they know how to provide this (1 additional vote).
- Increase access to public benefits – Medi-Cal, CalFresh, social security – increase numbers applying for and getting benefits (1 additional vote).
- More voucher programs that help people sustain housing when at risk (1 additional vote).
- Provide services and resources at flexible, non-traditional hours (1 additional vote).
- Community connectors for unaccompanied minors 15-18yo (1 additional vote).
- Legal resources – nonprofit, free or low cost, to help with eviction prevention and enforce laws that protect people from illegal loss of housing (1 additional vote).
- Rent control – reasonable limits to increases, countywide, mirroring San Francisco (1 additional vote).
- Maximizing use of housing dollars to build more housing with diverse options (1 additional vote).
- Equal pay for equal work.

- Increase information sharing about housing rights and qualifications.
- Ongoing case management for impacted/marginalized populations.
- Economic supports for undocumented population who cannot access benefits/employment.
- Make sure housing is near walkable areas or public transit so transportation is not a barrier to keeping housing.

Table 3: More People Temporary and Permanent Housing Quickly

How can we do a better job of helping more people experiencing homelessness get into temporary and permanent living situations more quickly?

- Build tiny homes with services for temporary stays (approximately 7 days); consider Pajaro levee area; use property owned by local government; use solar panels for power (9 additional votes).
- More flexible funding that is easy to access (4 additional votes).
- Streamline the voucher process (3 additional votes).
- Use smartphone technology to increase access to resources, e.g., shelter bed availability (2 additional votes).
- Create connections between new housing developments and Housing for Health Partnership, housing programs (2 additional votes).
- Shelters that allow families to stay together (2 additional votes).
- Shelters for older adults, people with disabilities with services toward housing (2 additional votes).
- Diversity of options in housing/shelter, e.g., substance use, pets, harm reduction, etc.; housing first principles (2 additional votes).
- Consider different engagement perspectives with persons of different cultures, ages, etc., authenticity, transparency (2 additional votes).
- Work with persons who are unhoused to address fears, concerns, about moving into temporary or permanent housing; build relationships, trust, be transparent (1 additional vote).
- Streamline the housing application process (1 additional vote).
- Use available hotels/hotel rooms for shelter (1 additional vote).
- Policies that remove criminal background as a reason to deny people for housing vouchers (1 additional vote).
- Educate people who are unhoused regarding housing/shelter opportunities.
- More access to vouchers/new vouchers.
- More security deposit and rent support.
- Incentivize shared housing, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
- Tiered system of who gets prioritized for shelter/housing based on need.
- Modular housing.
- Convert unused retail/office space to housing.
- Increase transitional housing to provide rental history and gain tenancy skills (3-5 years).
- Increase # of landlords wanting to work with programs. Educate landlords of benefits of working with programs (\$, support services).
- Limit number of vacation rentals.

- Partnership with Airbnbs to provide housing. Use for temporary housing while waiting for permanent housing.
- Extend the length of time people are offered support services.
- Increase the number of community health workers who engage and build trust with people living outside.
- More shelters.
- More safe spaces.
- Additional incentives to make housing affordable for persons with extremely low/no income.
- Create additional storage spaces for unhoused persons.
- Remove any restrictions related to substance use in shelter, housing, other.
- Support and build more housing.
- Simplified applications for housing, shelter, services, etc.
- Coordinated outreach between different providers.
- More flexibility in time limits for participating in programs.
- Housing in locations that make sense – accessible, near services, etc.
- More new construction housing.

Table 4: Fewer Exits Into Homelessness from Institutions

How can we do a better job of reducing the number of people exiting institutional settings - foster care, hospitals, jails/prisons, mental health or substance use residential treatment and others – into homelessness (shelters and streets)?

- Promote and support “host home” models that involve property owners/renters offering rooms for use/rent for those exiting from institutions with linked supports (6 additional votes).
- Expand number of providers with CalAIM capacity and contracts to provide enhanced care management and housing community supports as part of institutional transitions work. (5 additional votes).
- Support education and connections with people before release with incentives for people to participate (4 additional votes).
- More education and training on mental health and substance use issues for staff in institutions (4 additional votes).
- Increase case management services through Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) for individuals with serious mental health issues (3 additional votes).
- Update Supported Independent Living Program (SILP) policy changes that allow for separation of housing subsidy and personal financial subsidy so participants can get a long-term housing voucher (FUP) with a financial stipend (3 additional votes).
- Ensure individuals are discharged with an adequate supply of needed medications, at least 30 days. Use long-acting medications whenever possible for substance use, mental health, and other health care treatments (2 additional votes).
- Have more sobering center/service/connection centers open for when people exit at near key sites (2 additional votes).
- Involve people in making their own exit plans early (1 additional vote).
- Utilize existing services (211) for Hub for resource sharing (1 additional vote).

- More community-based organization (CBO) presence in institutions – make clearance for access easier, have dedicated location(s) for outside providers to do “in-reach.” For example, substance use treatment providers and housing connectors in hospitals (1 additional vote).
- Create specialized communities or connectors designed to offer services unique to each exiting population (1 additional vote).
- Ensure jargon-free outreach communication.
- Identify what organizations can consolidate a list of resources/partners available to assist people when they exit institutions.
- Support construction of “real” affordable housing, that is, affordable to those at 15% of Area Median Income (AMI) or below.
- Advocate for more federal Section 811 supportive housing for people with disability vouchers linked with services like the California Community Transitions or similar projects.
- Linking Housing Choices, nonprofit serving adults with developmental disabilities, with the Santa Cruz County coordinated entry system.
- Promote and support rental housing lease co-signing strategies.
- Expand landlord education and outreach around partnership opportunities.
- Support and encourage strong follow-up from service providers especially when housing issues arise.
- Promote more co-op housing options.
- Provide more tenant rights and responsibilities education.
- Expand and identify dedicated transitional/short-term housing options for populations exiting institutions.
- Advocate for more foster youth housing vouchers and services.
- Strengthen partnerships with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and their network for supporting current and former foster youth.
- Have a dedicated contact person/liaison at specific institutions.
- Conduct weekly resource fairs at jails.
- Adjust approaches based on anticipated length of stay for participants.
- At intake ask if people are working with a support person.
- Better data/information sharing to coordinate care.
- Include community-based organizations (CBOs) in re-entry center services.
- Extend motel voucher lengths of stay to give people more time to transition.
- Do better matching of people to specific programs. Don’t just refer higher needs people to open slots when program is not setup to serve the higher need population.
- Send referrals on Mondays, earlier in the week, timing of making connections matters.
- Better monitoring of current standards for institutions and create avenues for complaints, grievances, whistleblower reporting.
- Reduce duplication of services for one person/family; increase coordination among providers.
- Assess for the right and realistic services that people need. Understand their daily realities and challenges when setting goals and plans.
- Watch out for assumptions especially around mental health issues. Don’t jump to conclusions they “don’t want services.”
- Improve staff training.

- More short-term post hospitalization housing paid for by CalAIM/managed care and don't require individuals to enter recuperative care programs first.
- More consistent services.

Table 5: Increasing Incomes and Assets

How can we do a better job of helping people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness to increase their income and economic assets (public benefits, education, employment, etc.)?

- Facilitate partnerships with trade organizations to create a seamless pathway for employment opportunities, e.g., construction, etc. (7 additional votes).
- Strategic public information campaign about opportunities (5 additional votes).
- Childcare for family shelters (4 additional votes).
- Supported employment for people with serious mental health issues (3 additional votes).
- Stipends for basic needs (2 additional votes).
- Computer literacy training – bilingual training, people experiencing homelessness get priority, create referral process, school partnerships, community/nonprofit partnerships (2 additional votes).
- Financial literacy education – early education, break cycle with transition age youth, providers also need education and tools (2 additional votes).
- Mobile benefits specialists – redevelop this in the Human Services Department (1 additional vote).
- Growers should pay farmworkers a living wage, increase taxes on growers (1 additional vote).
- Working with credit unions/banks to create low barrier banking products for undocumented people (1 additional vote).
- Create a north county site for employment, Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) services.
- Provide secure/safe environment for undocumented community to come forward to access services/benefits; leverage school “wellness centers” meeting people where they are.
- Assist with documentation/housing.
- Simplify applications to access resources, funding. Standardize language.
- Increasing access to resources. Greater flexibility and increased capital.
- Easier permit access for small businesses.
- Allow affordable homeowners to sell at market rate.
- Develop partnerships to support undocumented folks to gain skills for employment.
- Expand targeted outreach for farmworkers on resources available.
- Regulation to ensure growers record and report earnings of farmworkers.

“Small Cost and Big Impact” – Ideas Not Covered Wall

- Landlord/tenant mediation services.
- Make growers responsible for farm workers well-being through an additional county tax.
- Prevent wage theft.
- Work toward a living wage for all farmworkers, currently \$5K-\$20K/year.