

Public Input Strong for the Countywide Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce & Eventually End Homelessness in Santa Cruz County



WATSONVILLE & SANTA CRUZ, CA—On Dec. 2 & 4, 2014 over 160 members of the public joined in one of the two community conversations focused on how best to prevent and end homelessness in Santa Cruz County. The events, sponsored by United Way of Santa Cruz County, Smart Solutions to Homelessness, and the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP), were planned specifically to generate input for the initial recommendations of the new Strategic Plan.

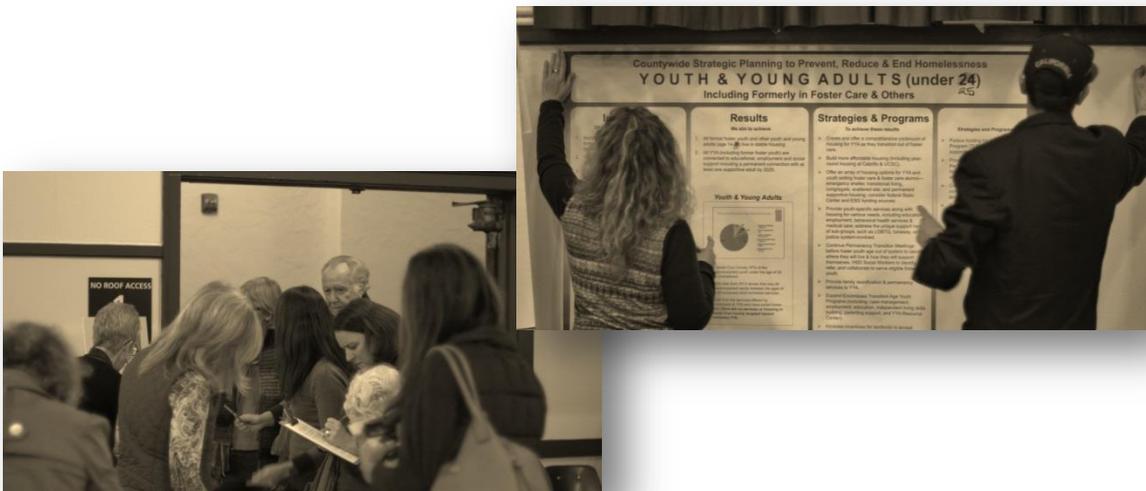
“This was not a ‘check the box meeting’” said event organizer Jessica Wolf. “We truly wanted to hear from the community--their thoughts for what is important and what they felt was missing so far. We had great engagement from participants and we received responses that will be meaningful to incorporate into the plan.”



On Tuesday, Dec. 2 over 40 individuals and families braved the rain to attend at the First Christian Church in Watsonville, and on Thursday, December 4th at least 120 people came out to participate in Santa Cruz at the Veterans Memorial Hall. Over 90 comment sheets were submitted and over 50 pages of notes were recorded and collected from the small group discussions.

This was the opportunity to hear and respond to draft recommendations produced by close to 100 participants over the 9 month planning effort focused on shifting systems, implementing the best strategies, and putting in place the policies that will result in a county where all its diverse residents have access to safe, stable housing, will have incomes to support their well-being, and will have access to culturally competent services empowering them to meet their basic needs and lead dignified lives.

Participants joined three discussion groups throughout the evening, choosing from a choice of six topics including: the distinct needs of adults, veterans, families, and youth and young adults who are currently unsheltered or at risk of homelessness in Santa Cruz County, what is needed to strengthen Pajaro Valley's service network; and finally, on how to best to address safety and meet people's immediate needs while longer term solutions are put in place.



The diverse leadership for this strategic planning process hopes that the unprecedented level of participation in the planning process and these public forums will help generate a continued public interest in and support for the plan: first as it is presented to the jurisdictions for adoption this spring, and later as we begin to work together to make sure the smartest, most money-saving, evidence-based and important recommendations of this community are implemented.

Says Strategic Planning Committee Chair, Jamie Goldstein, City Manager for the City of Capitola: "I am proud that so many members of our community have devoted significant time to develop consensus on a path forward together that can help us achieve a better community for all. All participants have carefully researched those evidence based strategies that hold real

promise to provide solutions to homelessness in this county. Overall it has been an incredibly inclusive process with diverse views represented and a lot of expertise engaged.”

Input from the public will be considered as the final plan is developed, a plan that will then be used to guide the community’s work to address homelessness for the next decade.

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[Pre Forums 12/1/14](#)

[Post Watsonville Forum 12/2/14](#)

