

Written Public
Comment(s) for Item No. 4



January 22, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of San Mateo
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

To the Honorable Supervisors of San Mateo County and County Executive Callagy,

Thank you to the Board of Supervisors for your efforts to support functional zero homelessness in our county, and to County Executive Callagy especially for his leadership. As part of the Housing Leadership Council's mission to work with communities and their leaders to produce and preserve quality affordable homes, we have supported San Mateo County's efforts to provide adequate housing for the unsheltered.

Up until this point, the County has made significant strides to provide incentives for unsheltered individuals to be housed, first and foremost by creating genuinely desirable housing options. Rezonings in North Fair Oaks, unincorporated Colma, and elsewhere will increase the available housing supply for residents of all income levels in coming years; emergency rental assistance and other financial support helps residents stay housed now. The Navigation Center, farm labor housing developments, and Project Homekey acquisitions across the region demonstrate San Mateo County's commitment to provide adequate shelter for all residents. Regulatory changes to promote housing supply and investments to promote housing affordability are the key to ending the housing crisis and achieving lasting functional zero homelessness.

A recently proposed County Encampment Ordinance (otherwise known as the "Shelter Ordinance") could, as written, substantially undermine the county's functional zero homelessness goals. HLC recognizes the intent of the Encampment Ordinance to incentivize unsheltered county residents to use available county resources. However, as written, the ordinance lacks fundamental transparency, with the potential to further a cycle of trauma and displacement that would harm the unhoused community and undermine the ordinance's intent.

HLC's goal is to further the County's functional zero homelessness goals by supporting humane and dignified solutions to the housing crisis. We believe that incentivizing unhoused residents to seek shelter can be a part of the solution. Nonetheless, those incentives should be provided thoughtfully, with full consideration of potential unintended consequences and mitigation of those risks.

In order to ensure the County fully considers the impacts of regulating encampments, the Board of Supervisors should:

- Request County staff to study the impact of this ordinance in other localities and fully evaluate best practices, including the input of residents who have experienced homelessness and service providers.

- Request staff to consider the impact of different scenarios (defining “shelter bed” to include exclusively private vs. congregate shelters, availability of beds if other cities adopt similar ordinances, and more) on the County’s ability to safely and humanely clear encampments.
- If the Board of Supervisors votes on this ordinance, make it a one-year trial period with fixed evaluations at 6 months and 12 months, with a mandate to pause encampment clearances until after evaluations are completed.

If the Board of Supervisors chooses to pass the “Hopeful Horizons” ordinance, further amendments as described in this document would help ensure it achieves its stated goals. In order to make this ordinance as effective as possible, we believe the following amendments should be made:

This ordinance needs modifications to ensure unhoused residents receive the support they need.

- The first response to houseless residents should be made by unarmed peer-support specialists and other trained, civilian responders, not the police, in order to foster an environment of trust and support. The ordinance should specify the types of outreach that will occur before encampment clearances. When clearances occur, the ordinance should require mental healthcare workers or other unarmed civilians are present to facilitate the transition.
- In order to ensure unhoused residents receive dignified housing, the definition of “shelter bed” should be defined exclusively to mean homes with a private bedroom, such as those provided at the Navigation Center.
- Given the huge housing shortage and varied needs of many unsheltered residents, the County will not have enough secure beds to justify clearing all encampments in the near term. According to [a 2022 best practices report](#) prepared to help Redwood City transition encampment residents into interim housing, the County can better manage encampments by amending the ordinance to explicitly create a process for sanctioned encampments such as San Jose’s sanctioned encampment, the Guadalupe Gardens. Sanctioning encampments provides a managed safe space in which intensive outreach, navigation, medical and other treatment services will help build trust and transition individuals towards shelter.

The ordinance needs stronger accountability measures.

- This ordinance would allow the County to confiscate personal property, but the County’s plans for storage and organization of “personal effects” lacks clarity in ways that will lead to chaos and mismanagement.
 - The 90-day minimum for the storage of personal effects should be extended to last 90 days after an individual leaves county shelter to ensure individuals do not feel compelled to leave necessary shelter to retrieve their possessions.
 - “Personal effects” should be broadly defined so as to include pets, non-tax legal documents,

- The ordinance should specify that the County will fund all storage rather than requiring people to pay costly storage fees in order to retrieve their belongings. Before voting on this ordinance, staff should study the financial impact of storing belongings from cleared encampments.
- The ordinance should contain mandatory audit requirements to ensure long term tracking of outcomes for residents whose encampments are cleared.
- The ordinance does not provide concrete accountability measures for language accessibility and compliance with County law. The ordinance should require clear accountability for compliance, including tangible enforcement measures, oversight mechanisms including regular audits, and public noticing requirements. Furthermore, the County's authority to promulgate regulations should allow for an appeal process and public noticing requirements.
- In order to ensure adequate civilian oversight, the ordinance should require the County to release public notices for which any individual can sign up to receive updates on when and where encampment clearances are occurring. Alerts should be issued at least 24 hours in advance of clearances to ensure adequate time for public support.

San Mateo County has made significant strides to provide incentives for unsheltered individuals to be housed by creating genuinely desirable housing options such as the Navigation Center and Project Homekey. Fundamentally, addressing the housing crisis and achieving meaningful, lasting functional zero homelessness will require regulatory changes to enable more development and further investment in affordable housing.

Still, HLC is willing to support the Encampment Ordinance if necessary changes are made to support the ordinance's stated goals. However, as currently written, this ordinance creates too much potential for harm to our county's most vulnerable residents in ways that contradict its objectives. We look forward to continuing to work with the county to promote the health, safety, and welfare of all San Mateo County residents, housed and unhoused alike.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Levine', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jeremy Levine
Policy Manager
Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County

From: [Beth von Emster](#)
To: [CEO BoardFeedback](#)
Subject: Agenda item #4: Oppose encampment ordinance
Date: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 7:34:58 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Dear Honorable Supervisors,

My name is Beth von Emster, I live in Belmont, and am a District 3 constituent. I am an ACLU – North Peninsula Chapter leader.

Please vote NO on the "Hopeful Horizons" ordinance. There is nothing hopeful about it. This ordinance criminalizes the status of being unhoused. The County should not create a new criminal punishment for indigent people living outside. People should not be arrested for the offense of camping.

This ordinance is not necessary. Other laws prohibiting dangerous activities in and around encampments already exist. The County's should prioritize providing high-quality affordable housing, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment for unhoused people, not criminal law enforcement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Beth von Emster

From: [Katherine Dumont](#)
To: [CEO BoardFeedback](#)
Subject: Agenda item 24-029
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 4:30:05 PM

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Agenda item 24-029 for Jan 23, 2024

I oppose the Hopeful Horizons: Empowering Lives Initiative regulating encampments on public property in the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County.

Homelessness is a failure of the system, not the individual.

This ordinance would further punish the very victims of our County's failed policies. Shelters that exist today are notoriously unsafe. This ordinance is an irresponsible and inhumane move to force individuals and families into situations where they feel unsafe.

It would further criminalize poverty and create further distrust amongst those already struggling on the streets. Taking what little possessions people have is unconscionable.

Let's not put the cart before the horse. First, make sure that the County is addressing the needs of the unhoused and can provide a variety of safe and appropriate housing options.

Regards,
Katherine Dumont
Menlo Park

From: [Suzanne Moore](#)
To: [CEO BoardFeedback](#)
Cc: [suzyqettu2](#)
Subject: Board of Supervisor 1/23/24 regular agenda item #4 on the shelter ordinance
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 5:43:44 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Honorable Supervisors,

My name is Suzanne Moore, retired nurse practitioner, housing advocate and member of Pacifica Housing 4 All and the Anti-Displacement Committee, sitting board member of Healthcare for the Homeless and Farmworkers Program, and one of the editors of a small on-line newsletter. I speak for myself today, and I oppose this ordinance as written.

I was privileged to receive a post for our recent newsletter from a young woman formerly unhoused. Her story was brutally truthful: 8-10 years of encampments and shelters, 17 incarcerations, years of substance use before achieving her recent sobriety. The author identifies her day of surrender as the first day of her last arrest, but the moment that prevented her relapse was the support of her school counselor who provided her housing when a false positive drug test forced her from shelter. It is important to recognize that recovery may require substance use programs, but relapse avoidance needs determination, courage, hard work - and a helping hand.

I have real concerns about this ordinance. I feel it weighs heavy on enforcement and prematurely depends on infrastructures - interim housing, mental health and medical services, legal systems and the courts - that are currently strained if not overwhelmed. More time is needed to build and refine a system - based on the best practices of housing first and trauma reduction - a system that assures success of a transition from chronic homelessness to successful permanent housing. I believe this ordinance, as written, will cause harm and disrupt relationships of trust established by our homeless outreach teams. As one Bay Area law enforcement officer states, "We can't arrest our way out of homelessness."

I am truly grateful that this County embraces a path to end homelessness. Many in our County agree. Our faith community argues a moral imperative, our social justice community reminds us of our obligation due to years of past decisions contributing to homelessness. Medical and mental health advocates remind us that early intervention in health conditions save money, suffering, and lives. But I like best what the author of the newsletter article said: "If we can all look to improve ourselves, even in the slightest way, the light from each of us can ripple into the next person and throughout our communities."

Please return this ordinance to the authors for further collaboration from those providing support services and from the impacted homeless community. Thank you.

--

Suzanne Moore

Home 650.557.0867

Cell 650.243.7310

From: [Sherry Golestan](#)
To: [CEO BoardFeedback](#)
Subject: Fw: Emergency information for all of the supervisors regarding tomorrow Tuesday's decision on how to deal with on House people in San Mateo county. A solution that will provide a never before or expected answer that will benefit both sides of the table...
Date: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 6:58:58 AM

From: Random Citizen <citizenrandom36@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 12:13 AM
To: Sherry Golestan <sgolestan@smcgov.org>
Cc: citizenrandom36@gmail.com <citizenrandom36@gmail.com>
Subject: Emergency information for all of the supervisors regarding tomorrow Tuesday's decision on how to deal with on House people in San Mateo county. A solution that will provide a never before or expected answer that will benefit both sides of the table. Fr...

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

To whom it may concern

Please pass this email to the supervisors of this county in regards to tomorrow's vote on criminalizing homelessness.

I think I've got something for them to consider that will be innovative and will show San Mateo to be ahead of the game when it comes to dealing with the own housed.

My name is Mavin Carter Griffin,

I used to reside in Hillsborough California for most of my adult life and child life. I bought a house in Crockett California and Contra Costa a county that is without argument the most corrupt county that I've ever seen in my entire 59 years of living. My house was stolen through an opportunistic move that rendered me displaced for the last 16 years and in those 16 years I have made it my duty to be responsible in my land use and in my responsibility to the public for using public land. This is not been without problems, however it has made me a lead advocate very well known from Gavin newsom's office to the table with Libby schaaf in city of Oakland and Alameda county where I sit also with supervisors much like yourself faced with this very huge question about how to deal with the unhoused.

Let me explain to you I'm not some bleeding heart liberal I'm actually rather right wing. Out here I run across all different kinds of people of course there's some drug things and of course there are some people that are a few sandwiches short the picnic, but all in all I've seen just as many crazy people and drug fiends living indoors is outdoors. We all know the fact of the matter is is that things have become very expensive and the economy is shifted. Currently I'm working under the premise of my study of over 15 years of displacement that has happened over several counties across three states and where I live now in Oakland California where I have started the Wood Street people's Collective which was a proactive group of Black Panthers and burning man artists I myself am one who were displaced and for whom came together with a proactive ethic for dealing with displacement and living curbside not as homeless people because home actually means land it's not a structure.

If you want more about that part of my study we can discuss that later but here's what I'd like

to offer for the situation as it comes up. The same question seems to be on everyone's table what to do about the unhoused and where Martin V Boise has stated the fact that adequate shelter has got to be offered and that everyone has the right to rest I agree, however I agree that they're also should be some ordinances that illustrate to the unhoused people eye of which am now still currently one, that gives a criteria for independent land use and public spaces when you have private people using public land they too are also the public and the fact that we are living in a housing crisis that should take predominant role over whether or not some House people are comfortable or happy with the way that the public land is displaying private people lounging about we're living quite actively. What needs to happen is there needs to be a grading system. This is a good idea because it provides jobs for people and this grading system ought to be constructed in such a way that it allows for the unhoused people using public land are allowed to use the public land. They should have a structured layout. They should have good garbage control with no explain garbage flying about everywhere marking up the territory with little bits of trashy fodder and rappers and open food containers and crap like that it looks bad for them it looks bad for everybody who the hell wants to see that that's gross. And what that tells people is that they have no respect for the land that they're using. Disgrading system is included in some of the projects that I'm pushing forward for city of Oakland who right now currently is working with some of the lamest government elect and government higher officials and administration that I have ever seen or worked with they are quite unreasonable. I just saw the current article written about how tomorrow Tuesday you plan on coming up with rules about whether or not people can stay whether they've been offered adequate sheltering. I'd like to say so that you all could bring it up as if it was your very own idea to the public just don't forget me somehow because I'm here to help this is how I pay my rent for living on the land that I've been using for the past 14 years in Oakland I speak on people's rights I advocate for responsible use of land and for giving back to community and that's what people should be using as a rental exchange when living on public land they should come up with something on their own or be offered ideals as to what they can be doing in the neighborhood picking up trash or creating some type of little public service anything let them be creative in creating these ideas and then just do it and they should be also on the list with their name their phone number and email address where people can complain to them or ask questions of them or hire them for jobs and they should be on good report specific leaders. The idea of just somebody propping a tent up in the middle of a park and going well hey I'm going to stay here and then turn crap everywhere it really gets on my nerves. I don't like the word homeless. Homeless means that you are not from here it means you've got no place of origin my place of origin is California I'm a 5th generation native and I don't like the way my community is constantly sprawled in trash however we live off that trash we build our homes or what could be considered sheltering with this and there's a sense of pride and let me tell you when people with idle hands are busy building things and creating things of beauty or of interest it keeps them dizzy it keeps them from breaking into vehicles it keeps them from doing bad things it keeps them from feeling feudal it gives them a sense of themselves and reflection it's good for them it's good for everybody when people are creating things. That's what happened on Wood Street is we started building these forts out of stuff that we were finding and it became competitive and we wound up getting a daily parade of people going to work that would take pictures and then would stop and ask us questions and offer us jobs and talk to us about the situation we were in and it changed a lot of people's minds about what we were going through. We were less the corner monster and more the good-hearted neighbor in those circumstances then we are currently under the new management of our city by the new mayor and by the new administration who unfortunately don't understand the term adequate and let me explain to you what adequate means. Of course you could look it up but what I've been need to understand and I do write a lot of policy with officials prior to the last

two years you might see my work hear my work as people experiencing an unhoused condition that's my phrasing, as well as curbside community, it's really important what we say and the words that we use they need to be accurate they need to be adequate. What I understand adequate to mean and in terms of shelter is that it's equal to what you have if not slightly better. Slightly better for the reason of the problems that you go through in moving and adjusting because moving is a hassle whether you're moving your RV or your camp or moving your home from one area to another house you look for adequate housing. The problem comes in when you try to compare a tough shed to an RV. Or a spot of land where you can do creative space work art make things fix things do work that earns you money gives you a sense of yourself you really need to have that when you're displaced especially if you're a private person living publicly. What's adequate to an RV is not a tough shed . And tuff sheds are usually contained and run by some non-profits it really doesn't give a damn about what you think or feel and just fudge's numbers and takes money huge amounts of money and nobody gets housing and then they're kept there and they're treated like children most adults who are displaced have had houses had lives had families and had some kind of catastrophe happen whether they were burned out of their home or their rents went up and they had an illness these things need to be remembered but if we start criminalizing people and forcing them to move away from areas that are sustainable to them and has given them comfort to get over their sense of shock and humiliation what needs to be considered is whether or not they're creating an eyesore and and ruining the reputation of the American citizen who has been displaced?..

Displacement can be very ugly. And it can be deadly. People can be hateful. And terrible things happen so if you happen to find a space where you're not getting raped or murdered and if you happen to take care of that space all it takes is one hater to say oh look there's one of them homeless people you know they're all crazy and on drugs or doing something wrong quick arrest them or throw them out of San Mateo. I make sure all of our displaced people in district 3 are voters and I make sure that we all vote. I think it would be really an amazing thing because San Mateo is a wealthier county. That these considerations where a team goes around and grades the various camps gets names gets assigned email addresses or has them create one make sure that people have phones and explain to them that they need to be at least maintaining their space without any trash on the ground with all their personals kept personal. That any displays of loud and obnoxious behavior arguing fighting hate speech all that crap needs to not happen in the public space Monday through Friday or in the day times where children can see that or other member of society who happens to be housed and that they can save that kind of stuff or do that in a different way where did different hour but not after say 10:00 or 11:00 for noise ordinance. That they recycle. That they are respectful. That they contain their emotional outbursts as is reasonable. And to give them all the important information they might need for say counseling or to contact their government or medical staff or anything much like that because most people who are displaced have absolutely no clue how to go about asserting their rights or how to even approach being displaced. Most of the shelters are not adequate and I know this because I'm a professional advocate and an expert in my field and well respected. This question is bringing brought forward before it happened to any of the county surrounding me at this time. I do know that Alameda county has been considering my Co LABitat campus project, but seems to have a lot of issues going on with staff and recalls and things like that with city of Oakland. I myself was just offered housing but being that I have a cargo container a 40 ft trailer and a storage trailer that is 16x8 and outdoor cats, adequate has a whole different term for me and I fight for that and I fight for the rights of those people that are unhoused and housed and also try to provide leadership in showing how to be a responsible citizen when dealing with how I'm forced to curbside in

Oakland California. Let me tell you it's like juggling cats but still there's a lot of people just don't understand and need to. It's a supervisors are smart and I assume you are because you are paid to delegate responsibility throughout the county to make life better for all citizens and that would include the unhoused as well that you use this time to create a lab yourself to study the demographic of displacement because there's money to be made and there are people making s*** tons of money off of the unhoused. All in all people just want to be respected and treated like human beings truly it is very humiliating to be called Homeless and to live homeless it's important to have sanitary bathroom conditions. It's important to have access to showers where you're not humiliated and where you are safe. It's important to feel like you're part of a community and it would be wonderful if you all took that into consideration and stayed in contact with me I would be happy to give advisement. But please consider creating something new maybe along with me so I can get my butt up off this curb and be remembered for thinking about how to solve displacement as an American Patriot fighting for truth and justice equality and Liberty which means choice. Really it does. And that's the most important thing to remember is that everybody is equal housed on housed money no money our country was settled by unhoused people our state was built by people that came over here and wagons much like RVS and lived in encampments until they had houses ready for them that they built themselves or were built based on their struggle to pursue happiness. Let's focus on that again. That's what makes America better we just lose our way I mean currently Oakland has interment camps all over black panther territory it's rather disheartening and the people inside these tough shed encampments are miserable and they're not being offered real housing it's just that they become so desperate. I'd like to remind you also that when these are called tiny homes that they're not tiny homes homes have a front door and a back door they have kitchens and bathrooms and privacy they have bedrooms and there's room to walk around they have electricity and cable running plumbing fire extinguishers fire alarms. Putting people in sheds is an internment camp and that makes America look really ridiculous scary even.

And closing I'd like to say there's more money in treating the demographic rather than the crisis. Join me in a fight for freedom please let's keep it equal let's make both the house and the unhoused feel comfortable and let's fight for Innovation and solutions. Because you can sit at a table and be offered a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in a bologna sandwich and they call that a choice and guess what on Wednesdays you get a different choice of jelly.. but then when you look out the window if there is a window and you see all kinds of people eating from a banquet table that stretches for Miles with every type of food that you've ever thought of and all your offered is a sandwich that's bologna or a sandwich that's peanut butter and jelly with choice of jellies on Wednesday where is the Liberty in that. Be the leader, surprise them all discuss this consideration for managing people living in public spaces and give me a call.

My phone number is 510-719-1353

My email address is citizenrandom 36@gmail.com.

And I am a co-leader of the Wood Street people's Collective and internationally famous intentional curbside community.

This community has seen better days it's been in movies including one that went to the Oscars for best short documentary called "lead me home"

And another film by Colt film director producer and actor boots Riley called " Sorry to Bother You."

And has been in numerous videos and documentaries and on YouTube in newspapers magazines subject of reports that UC Berkeley UC Stanford UC San Francisco. All for the fact that we have been characters in an Innovative movement started by yours truly.

Mavin Carter Griffin

5th generation California
Former landlord
And California tenant.
Mother wife artist.



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January 22, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

TO: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Re: Homeless Action Center's Comments on San Mateo County's Proposed "Hopeful Horizons: Empowering Lives Initiative Ordinance"

Dear Honorable Supervisors:

On behalf of Alameda County Homeless Action Center ("HAC"), we write in response to San Mateo County's request for public comments on the Hopeful Horizons: Empowering Lives Initiative Ordinance ("Proposed Ordinance"), to be introduced on January 23, 2024.

The Homeless Action Center ("HAC") is a nonprofit law office that provides Social Security representation at no cost to residents of Alameda County. We serve thousands of clients experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. In Alameda County, we have seen various ordinances enacted to reduce homelessness fail to achieve their goals because they focus on the removal of encampments rather than addressing the root causes of homelessness.¹

When the government spends money on expensive property seizure and displacement operations, it commits cruel and unnecessary harm while doing nothing to remedy homelessness. This approach is guaranteed to require perpetual and expensive operations that traumatize encampment residents. We urge San Mateo County ("the County") to learn from these efforts in Alameda County and direct resources towards affordable housing and services rather than criminalization.

HAC strongly opposes the Proposed Ordinance because it is harmful and will not contribute to the County's goal of ending homelessness.

The primary cause of homelessness in California is the high cost of housing and other systemic factors, not individual choice.² Thus, an ordinance criminalizing a person for choosing not to go into a congregate shelter fails to address the root cause of homelessness. The evidence-backed solution to homelessness is long-term housing, not coercion into congregate shelters.

First, the Proposed Ordinance's definition of "Shelter Location" has no minimum time requirement, which means that a person may be able to stay as little as one night indoors before ending up back on the street. Even shelters that offer multi-week or multi-month stays do not offer sufficient time for someone to secure permanent housing.

¹ See *2020 Encampment Management Policy City of Oakland*, <<https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/View-Supplemental-Attachment-C-10162020.pdf>> Despite a policy and practice of aggressive encampment closures, the number of unsheltered Oakland residents has continued to rise.

² *Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness*, citing high housing costs as the primary cause of homelessness, along with low wages, the disappearance of jobs from low-income neighborhoods, mass incarceration, and the ongoing effects of classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia on people's life chance, 25. Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative; University of California, San Francisco; <https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/sites/default/files/2023-06/CASPEH_Report_62023.pdf>

Additionally, displacing a person from their chosen form of shelter removes them from their community support system and makes them harder to find by service providers -- making it more difficult for them to get back on their feet. Even when storage policies exist, residents' belongings are typically indiscriminately thrown away and promises of storage go unfulfilled.

Furthermore, criminalization and potential jail time only further destabilize people experiencing homelessness. It is well-known that having a criminal record makes getting and maintaining a job nearly impossible. Criminalizing homelessness, therefore, will have the exact opposite effect as intended – it will ensure people do not have a way to pay for housing. As written, the Proposed Ordinance allows for a new misdemeanor to be imposed every 48-72 hours, as each day of existing in an encampment constitutes a new violation. Even with available diversion programs, misdemeanors carry the possibility of jail time. Data shows that jail stays increase the risk of homelessness.³ Incarceration not only contributes to homelessness, but it also compounds the stress and trauma of those going through the system.

The stated intent of the Proposed Ordinance is to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of *all* inhabitants of San Mateo County, including those experiencing homelessness. For many individuals, congregate shelters do not increase their health, safety, or welfare. For example, shelters can be difficult for those trying to avoid substance use because substance use is common in shelters even when it is against shelter policy. Additionally, survivors of physical or sexual violence may also find shelters unsafe because they are forced to live among unfamiliar people. Seventy-two percent of houseless individuals in California are survivors of physical and/or sexual violence.⁴ Forcing people into shelters deprives individuals of autonomy. Instead, resources should be dedicated to increasing access to housing and other critical services.

The Proposed Ordinance would be expensive and divert resources that could be spent on practices that evidence has shown to reduce homelessness

The Proposed Ordinance will come at great cost to the County without furthering its goal of Zero Functional homelessness. Sweeping encampments is incredibly costly. For example, a [2021 Oakland audit](#) estimated that the hourly cost of encampment closures and cleanings to be \$1,464 per hour or \$11,712 per day.⁵ The audit could not account for the cost of an additional team which is often required for larger encampments or days with multiple closures or cleanings.⁶ With its geographic proximity and similar cost of labor, San Mateo County would likely incur similar exorbitant costs through a more aggressive approach of removing encampments.

The money and time spent clearing encampments and criminalizing houseless people money would be far better spent investing in evidence-backed practices shown to reduce homelessness. For example, providing rental assistance and increasing access to permanent supportive housing, supportive services such as physical and mental health care, support in obtaining/maintaining government benefits, and vocational training programs.

The Homeless Action Center opposes the Proposed Ordinance and urges the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to pursue a policy to prioritize services and housing rather than perpetual displacement and criminalization.

Thank you for your time in considering our perspective.

Sincerely,

Homeless Action Center

³ *Id.*, 65

⁴ *Id.*, 25.

⁵ *Performance Audit of the City of Oakland's Homeless Encampment Management Interventions & Activities: Fiscal Years 2018-19 and 2019-20.*, 5; City Auditor, Courtney Ruby, CPA, CFE;

<https://www.oaklandauditor.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210414_Performance-Audit_City-of-Oaklands-Homeless-Encampment-Management-Interventions-and-Activities.pdf>

⁶ *Id.*

Greetings,

I write to you today in opposition to the “Hopeful Horizons” Ordinance. This ordinance punishes our residents for losing their homes when we are in a housing crisis. Without the creation of permanent housing and more non-congregate shelters it would be immoral to place criminal penalties on our unhoused residents. Charging unhoused residents for losing their housing with a misdemeanor is criminalizing poverty, and will only create a new pipeline into prison.

When a person gets charged with a misdemeanor, it could lead to being placed on probation. Any violation of that probation will lead them to incarceration. This “Hopeful Horizons” ordinance is proposing that we mass incarcerate our unhoused population if they ever return to the streets, as it will be deemed a public nuisance. Even though when they are released, there is no guarantee they will receive permanent housing. There is no relief guaranteed to anyone forced to endure this treatment.

This ordinance, then, does not promise “Hopeful Horizons”; it is much more like a dead end. It only creates a costly and vicious cycle of homelessness and mass incarceration, undermining functional zero.

In fact, the UCSF Benioff Homeless and Housing Initiative (BHII) made [nine key policy recommendations](#) to end homelessness across the state, including the recommendation to “address the criminal justice system to homelessness pipeline” by reducing carceral responses to homelessness. The County’s concerns regarding the health and safety of encampments, such as substance use or fire hazards, are already criminalized. The possibility of unlawful conduct does not allow the County to make unhoused status unlawful.

The first response to houseless residents should be made by unarmed peer-support specialists and other trained, civilian responders, not the police, in order to foster an environment of trust and support. The board should be directing resources towards creating affordable housing, social housing, rental assistance, mental health services and substance abuse treatment. At the very least, a vote by the board should be delayed until there has been time to study the impacts of this ordinance in other localities and fully analyze best practices.

Please make the right decision and do not pass this ordinance as it is today.

Sincerely,
Lissette Espinoza-Garnica
Vice Mayor of Redwood City



Board Members January 22, 2024

KAREN CAMACHO **Subject: Opposition to Proposed Encampment Ordinance**

SHEILA CHUNG HAGEN
Secretary Dear Honorable Supervisors of San Mateo County,

MARIA DOMINGUEZ Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Encampment ordinance. My name is Amanda Chang, a staff member at Urban Habitat, and I was born and raised in District 1 of San Mateo County. Everyone deserves affordable and secure housing, but I hope you do not further criminalize homelessness in the pursuit of that goal. This is why I ask that you vote no on the ordinance and direct the County Executive not to bring this ordinance to a hearing, but instead consider an ordinance that would stabilize affordability and keep people housed.

MARIA NOEL
FERNANDEZ

CHRIS LEPE

SAABIR LOCKETT From a young age, my parents emphasized the importance of community care and compassion, which is why I started volunteering at Shelter Network, now known as LifeMoves, in middle and high school at First Step for Families. For many I worked with, it was merely one unforeseen circumstance that caused them to lose their housing: a lay-off, an accident, or a new landlord. In weeks, people are forced to make tough decisions, which could entail either staying in a congregate shelter without privacy or safety, or enduring harsh conditions in an encampment to preserve their agency and privacy. Criminalizing one of those options will not make this decision any easier for our most vulnerable populations.

DANIELLE MAHONES

VU-BANG NGUYEN

RAVI PATEL

ROBERT PHILLIPS
Chair There is no silver bullet to end homelessness, but it will never be solved through untested measures that criminalize homelessness. This ordinance is trying to find a loophole in *Martin v. Boise* but has no concrete accountability measures for its enforcement, the proper storage and maintenance of personal property, language access, or tracking the availability of a shelter location. An ordinance this vague will open up the county to legal consequences. Furthermore, this ordinance goes directly against the findings of [the most recent and comprehensive UCSF homelessness study in California](#), which states we must “address the criminal justice system to homelessness pipeline” by reducing carceral responses to homelessness. Instead, we must address the root cause of homelessness: the lack of affordable housing and robust tenant protections.

NONI SESSION

SUSAN SHAW
Treasurer

MIYA YOSHITANI

CARL ANTHONY
Emeritus

The county has considered stronger tenant protections, rental assistance, and increasing legal resources for tenants facing eviction. Instead of sabotaging these initiatives, the county should consider further supporting them and follow the lead of groups like Puente and Faith in Action by engaging the community through interviews or a town hall with individuals who lost their housing in San Mateo County to understand what might have prevented it. The county could also regulate the housing and rental market to slow the increased cost of housing, or strengthen enforcement measures of existing state tenant protection law AB 1482 and SB 567.

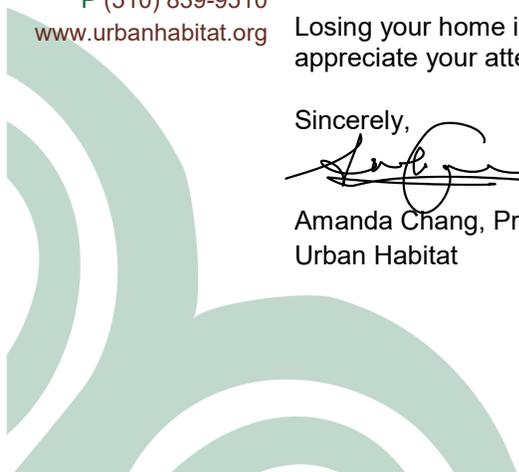
Losing your home is not a crime; it's a tragedy that reflects a failing of our community. I appreciate your attention to this matter and your commitment to serving our county.

Sincerely,

Amanda Chang, Program Manager of Equitable Development
Urban Habitat

Ellen Wu, MPH
Executive Director

2000 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94612
P (510) 839-9510
www.urbanhabitat.org





January 22, 2024

The Honorable Warren Slocum
President, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

The Honorable David Pine
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

RE: Hopeful Horizons - SUPPORT

Dear Board President Slocum and Supervisor Pine,

On behalf of the Bay Area Council, thank you for introducing the Hopeful Horizons: Empowering Lives Initiative.

Unsheltered homelessness has been linked to drastically increased rates of chronic and infectious diseases like diabetes, coronary artery disease, typhus, and hepatitis A.¹ A study in Los Angeles found that homeless Los Angelenos, 73% of whom are unsheltered, were 26 times more likely to die from alcohol and drug abuse, 11 times more likely to die from transportation-related injuries, 10 times more likely to be murdered, and five times more likely to die from suicide than their housed counterparts.² About 20 percent of the roughly 7,000 annual homeless deaths in California are from risk factors greatly increased by life without shelter, including homicide, car accidents, falling trees, and hypothermia.

Under this ordinance, the county may remove illegal encampments if an offer of shelter or housing has been made, twice, and rejected. Given the devastating impacts unsheltered homelessness has on personal health and safety, compassion requires governments work together to hold themselves accountable for bringing people indoors and saving lives.

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2773065422000414>

² Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Recent trends in mortality rates and causes of death among people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Center for Health Impact Evaluation. October 2019. http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chie/reports/HomelessMortality_CHIEBrief_Final.pdf

Thank you for your leadership, and for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrian Covert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Adrian Covert
Senior Vice President, Public Policy
Bay Area Council

CC: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Written Public
Comment(s) for Item No. 6

Erica Adams

From: Fred Herring <flh1741@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 3:27 PM
To: Erica Adams
Cc: Francoise Monet; Philippe Branchu
Subject: Reply to concerns set out in Mr.Cox letter of earlier today--

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Erica--

Thanks for sending me Mr.Cox's 11th hour letter regarding his Appeal of our 570 Live Oak Lane project.

In response to Concerns set out in Mr. Cox letter of 22 Jan. I ask that you note:

RE: Concern A--

The location of the existing utility pole is not in conflict with proposed roadway improvements shown on project Civil Engineering Plans. Those plans became the basis for the Fire Marshall's approval of the AM&M Application for 570 Live Oak Lane. Mr. Cox photo illustration mis-identifies the location of the upslope boundary of the right-of-way.

RE: Concerns B and C--

Only the owners of the 570 Live Oak property will be required to maintain the improvements whose construction is required by the AM&M. "Owners" in this context means the two people who own the 570 Live Oak property.

RE: Concern D--

The width of public right-of-way is 20'. The section of Live Oak in front of 570 Live Oak is not a public "turnaround". Paving placed in the past on the 570 property (by neighboring property owners without the permission of the then owners of the 570 lot?) does not redraw the lot line and obligate the current owners to provide turning space for vehicles other than those of the Fire Department in the area designated on the plans and approved by the Planning Commission and the Fire Marshall.

RE: Concern E--

The location of the existing Sanitary Sewer Main (both above and below grade) is clearly depicted on project plans. That sewer main is well separated from proposed construction activities and "protected" by the steep topography (which effectively precludes heavy equipment from access to the above ground section of the main).

RE: Concern F--

As with all Building Permit Applications County Building and Public Works will require a Construction Management Plan for this project. In this case that Plan already addresses Mr. Cox concern about the regarding the staging of material deliveries to minimize the inconveniences this project will inevitably visit on neighboring property owners.

Please append this response to Mr. Cox's newest concerns when you provide information regarding this project to the Supervisors.

Thanks for your attention to these last minute matters.

Regards, Fred

Fred L. Herring
Herring & Worley INC.
Tel: (650) 591-1441
www.herringandworley.com