

Footbridge

Services Center

A Proposal to Santa Cruz City Council, Santa Cruz County board of supervisors, and residents of Santa Cruz County.

Encampment Displacement Policy

The city has continually engaged in camp removals with limited opportunities offered to those being displaced. This exasperates the circumstances of those who must move to another location. Often, the location people move to is no better than the one they've been forced to vacate. Often, people must leave items behind because transporting belongings in a hurried manner without a vehicle is difficult. Often, people discover that their belongings have been removed by city workers without a chance to retrieve them.

Over the past several years, there has been a cyclical nature to this displacement that has become routine. Vast city resources have been spent in the clean-up process, and entire regions become either inaccessible to city residents because large encampments have eclipsed parkland, parking lots, etc. or they've been fenced off to prevent re-camping once people have been removed. Neighbors and businesses often complain that such encampments are responsible for increased theft and garbage in the region and that they don't "feel safe." Conditions of parkland have routinely become in need of re-seeding grass, and repair of irrigation and electrical fixtures.

Noting this, it would be advantageous to develop a policy that helps both the city, nearby residents, as well as the people who're forced to move again and again.

A thoughtful Encampment Displacement policy would include these items.

1. An encouragement that all those encamping adopt a list of Community Agreements.

Unmanaged Camp(s) on City Property - Community Agreements

- We understand that the city and nearby businesses and residents are our unintentional hosts and we wish to be good neighbors.
- We will not trespass on private property
- We will we not take anything from businesses or residents without their permission.
- No theft in this space
- No violence in this space
- No open use of illegal substances
- Trash will be collected in bags and moved to bins or to an area where trash pick-ups occur
- Appropriate management of urine and defecation – ideally restrooms or portable toilets will be located nearby

2. An Encampment Displacement Policy

- a. **An appropriate place (park, parking lot, open space) where people may move to** in order to continue to shelter-in-place, cluster camp, and engage in Social Distancing while they enjoy a safe and clean place to set up a tent for a few months before possibly having to move again in some cases. It should be understood that no encampment will remain indefinitely in a space without additional guidelines such as Transitional Camps or other managed camp concepts.

- b. **A way for people to move their stuff** to the next location without having to worry that their belongings will be lost, stolen or confiscated during the move. Ideally, the city would provide trucks or work with local nonprofits, churches, or residents to help move personal belongings.
 - c. **Some expectation of camp residents** about how they'll treat the each other, the new space, as well as the surrounding area. See Community Agreements above.
3. **Additionally, the city and county should create a Transitional Encampment permit/certification process** allowing local nonprofits and churches to operate encampments.
See info here: <https://www.warmingcenterprogram.com/certified-nonprofit-encampments>

Background

- Since 2013, Brent Adams has been working to develop a Transitional Encampment (Sanctuary Camp) permit process allowing nonprofits to operate a managed camp within Santa Cruz County. In March 2019, Santa Cruz City Council voted unanimously to begin a Project Charter to investigate such process. Within a week, due to neighborhood resistance, the city stopped the investigation. Since then there have been managed camps operated by both the city and the county, as well as many unmanaged encampments that have since prompted the city manager to create executive orders to have them removed.
- Warming Center Program/Footbridge Services has been a neighbor to several large encampments over the past two years, including the Ross/Gateway camp as well as the area along the San Lorenzo River's east bank, north of Hwy 1, referred to as the Felker St. Area camp(s). In early 2020, Footbridge began to take an active role in the Felker St. camps by facilitating trash removal, and encouraging community values that focused on reducing theft among campers and the surrounding neighborhood. This effort proved extremely successful with the City of Santa Cruz, Ron Perrigo and Footbridge staff all working since May, 2020 with camp residents to remove waste materials. This resulted in an improved camping space and virtually no complaints from the surround residents as well as a vast reduction in 911 calls for service.
- Since a large area of the Felker St. camp and the Tannery area camp have been closed due to river water rise, and San Lorenzo Park has been scheduled to close due to an executive order, Footbridge helped people camping in those areas in these ways:
 - Identify a city space that is more appropriate than the one being closed, in this case it was a back corner of Harvey West Park. This space was deemed to be an Agreement Camp and that all persons locating there should adopt the list of Community Agreements listed above.
 - A crew staff and volunteers helped to move people and belongings using a shuttle van and personal cars to the newly the identified camp area.
 - For those unsure of where they were moving to, Footbridge stored items in an emergency exodus storage capacity for as long as two weeks, allowing people to identify a new camping area or other alternatives.
 - People have been camping in this Agreement Camp in Harvey West for more than two months with no complaints from neighboring businesses and no 911 calls for service.

This proposal was written by Brent Adams of Warming Center Program/Footbridge Services
warmingcenterprogram@gmail.com
(831) 588-9892