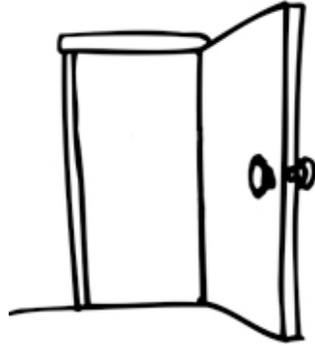


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## **Homeless Action! Calls for Immediate Help for Homeless and Displaced People**

To minimize suffering into the winter months and to assure that all homeless people in Sonoma County are cared for after the disastrous fires, Homeless Action! proposes the following Six-Point Plan:

- 1) Keep both a major shelter and other temporary safe havens available throughout the county this winter, perhaps at the county fairgrounds. Whatever the location, these should be open to both those who are fire-displaced and those who were displaced before the fire. There should not be two categories of homelessness.
- 2) Allow Safe Parking\* overnight on all city/county lots and the top level of all parking garages. Offer wholehearted support with funding and stewardship.
- 3) Set up RV lots in multiple areas of the city/county with sewage pumping and trash pick up.
- 4) Declare a permanent moratorium on the Santa Rosa Pilot Project of clearing encampments.
- 5) Ask city/county staff for a revised budget, to give the public tools to discuss any necessary shifting of funds.
- 6) Consider waiving fees and paying the cost of junior accessory units, granny units etc. as part of the rebuilding effort.

Advance planning for longer-term housing is now essential. To support those whose homelessness will exceed the capacities of the current temporary shelters, we need a transitional plan that will take into account the reduction of evacuation beds. Not only is it essential that we support our previously homeless and newly homeless equally, it is right. We must take measures to make sure current Housing First programs are not overwhelmed by new fire victims.

As the newly displaced people search for shelter and housing, practical problems have arisen, including class and race bias. Those who could, move to hotels and motels; those who can't, stayed in the evacuation centers. And despite assurances, undocumented immigrants and those who were homeless before the fire have generally felt uncomfortable using the services and have

been left outside the recovery effort. Poor people and students are being forced to leave low-income units to make room for evacuees, causing a secondary displacement.

A full range of social service agencies have worked at the Evacuation Centers and the Local Assistance Center. In addition to their usual outreach they have included the needs of the fire survivors, proving the depth of their valuable expertise. We must provide continued funding for these agencies, as many fundraising events were cancelled by the fire and some donors have been financially impacted.

We are humbled by the power of nature. The grief of those who lost family and friends, homes and neighborhoods in the fires demands a pause for reverence and respect. The outpouring of aid from neighbors, first responders and people of the bay area also demands recognition, as it demonstrates the love and compassion we have for one another, and the possibilities brought about by serious effort.

Our community is experiencing a significant challenge to its ability to handle the volume of care now needed. We believe that these extraordinary conditions will demand an even deeper commitment from our community leaders. We expect that our city and county representatives will lead us in fairness to all, including continued support for those who were homeless before the fires.

Finally, we note that, one month after the disaster in Puerto Rico, more than a third of the people have no clean water, 80% have no electricity and food shortages are massive. The disparity between the situation in Sonoma County and that in Puerto Rico is sharp in our minds and we call on governmental and other leaders to bring a stronger effort to help the humans who are dying in Puerto Rico.

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\*Safe Parking generally means a dedicated place with toilet facilities where people can sleep in their cars during the evening and night hours. It has been successful in protecting people from violence and citations in Sonoma County.