

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Proposed Housing Development Aimed at Reducing Local Chronic Homelessness

A new permanent supportive housing project would provide housing inventory for some of Santa Cruz County's most vulnerable residents

Housing Matters (formerly known as Homeless Services Center) and New Way Homes, an organization funding new approaches to developing affordable housing, today announced that they are submitting a proposal for approval by the City of Santa Cruz to build up to 121 units of permanent supportive housing within the Housing Matters campus.

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is a type of housing that combines affordable housing with support services to people who need support in order to maintain their housing. PSH residents often struggle with physical disabilities or issues of behavioral health that affect their ability to live independently. PSH is not shelter; it is permanent, stable housing.

The project proposes to build a new, five-story building along Highway 1 near River Street within Housing Matters' Coral Street campus. It would include one floor dedicated to supportive services, where residents would have access to on-site case management, behavioral health services, peer support programs, and more, designed to complement what is already available on the two-acre campus. The other four floors would consist of small studio units, to be rented as permanent supportive housing. The project is modeled after successful similar developments from Seattle to Los Angeles, including one under development now in San Francisco.

"We succeed in helping hundreds of individuals and families out of homelessness into housing each year. But there is no housing in Santa Cruz County with the level and breadth of services needed by some of those who have experienced chronic homelessness," said Housing Matters Executive Director Phil Kramer. "Single-site housing is the best practice for this population and will make a significant difference to homelessness in Santa Cruz."

Chronic homelessness is defined as having experienced homelessness many times, or at least for a year; chronically homeless individuals, by definition, also struggle with a disabling condition that affects their ability to get or retain housing. While this demographic is a minority among all people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County, they are the most vulnerable individuals and often the most visible.

Since 2012, Housing Matters has been the lead agency for the 180/2020 Initiative, a county-wide collaboration to address chronic and veteran homelessness. In that time, the initiative has helped over 900 of the most vulnerable individuals in our community into permanent housing.

“I got involved in helping start the 180/2020 Initiative after learning that simply providing housing and supportive services costs the community far less than having long-time local residents live on our streets for many years,” said New Way Homes President Sibley Simon. “I’m thrilled that our community can take the steps now being taken by cities across California and build this critical type of housing. It’s a part of what is required to solve chronic homelessness, and it is currently missing from our community.”

Funding for the planning stages of the project has been provided by the Central California Alliance for Health and the New Way Homes Fund.

As a first step in public engagement for this proposed project, New Way Homes and Housing Matters will be hosting online webinars about the project for all those interested in learning more, asking questions, and giving initial input. Webinars are scheduled for Thursday, April 2, at both 9am and 6pm. Anyone interested can sign up at www.housingmatterssc.org/psh-webinars. The organizations hope to have a first in-person public meeting once the COVID-19-related public health guidance against large events in the County is lifted.

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ABOUT HOUSING MATTERS

Housing Matters, formerly known as Homeless Services Center, partners with individuals and families to create pathways out of their homelessness into permanent housing. Housing Matters offers residential, case management, and day services to people experiencing homelessness. Housing Matters runs four shelter programs on its campus, including a family shelter, which collectively provide beds for nearly 200 people at any given time. This represents nearly half of all shelter beds in Santa Cruz County. Other services provided by Housing Matters include housing programs, employment training programs, and basic day services such as hot showers and a mailroom. Learn more at www.housingmatterssc.org or on Facebook.

ABOUT NEW WAY HOMES

New Way Homes is a 501c3 nonprofit started in Santa Cruz to fund affordable housing that would not otherwise be built. NWH operates an impact investment fund – foundations, individuals, and businesses lend NWH capital that is then used to initiate new housing projects.

Projects receiving funding from NWH range from all permanent supportive housing projects to mixed-income rental housing. NWH is currently funding projects in the Monterey Bay Region and in Oakland, CA, and specializes in partnering with churches, non-profits, and other mission-driven land owners. Learn more at www.newwayhomes.org.

ABOUT CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH

Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance) is a **regional Medi-Cal managed care health plan**, established in **1996** to improve access to health care for over 330,000 members in Santa Cruz, Monterey and Merced counties. Using the state's County Organized Health System (COHS) model, the Alliance delivers innovative community-based health care services by connecting members with providers that deliver timely services and care, focused on prevention, early detection and effective treatment. As an award-winning managed care health plan, The Alliance remains focused on efforts to improve access to quality health care for its members. Through the Alliance's Medi-Cal Capacity Grant Program, grants are awarded to local organizations that support efforts to increase health care and supportive services availability, quality and access for Medi-Cal members in the three counties we serve. For more information, visit www.ccah-alliance.org.