

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

This past year has been hard, long and difficult with the pandemic continuing and unhoused people on the streets going months without respite or access to housing and shelter. It took a tremendous amount of resilience on the part of our staff and our unhoused members to garner a set of astonishing victories. You'll see in the following pages.

EVERYONE
DESERVES
HOUSING



COALITION ON
HOMELESSNESS

ABOUT OUR WORK

The Coalition on Homelessness was formed in 1987 by homeless people and front-line social service workers to address the crisis of homelessness in San Francisco. For over thirty years, we have centered the wisdom and tenacity of currently and formerly homeless San Franciscans in the fight to end homelessness.

We fight for creative, systemic solutions. We fight for permanently affordable housing. We fight for eviction prevention to keep San Franciscans housed. We fight for behavioral health treatment for those in need. We fight to uphold the fundamental human rights of those forced to live on the street.

We conduct outreach every week on the streets, in shelters and at other places homeless people congregate, and this is where our campaigns are formed. Through outreach, we regularly receive input on our work as we activate people to join our struggle. This input is brought to our weekly work groups where we fine-tune our campaigns and choose our tactics. All decisions we make follow a democratic and radically inclusive decision making process.

2021 VICTORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Rental assistance for over 1,075 households
- 1,197 units of supportive housing
- 3 new permanent drinking fountains
- Halted the towing of vehicles for unpaid tickets
- \$3 million in funding for the Compassionate Alternative Response Team
- 343 additional treatment beds
- Eviction prevention legal services and back rent for 7,000 households
- Funded over 1,000 new shelter beds

A DEEP DIVE INTO OUR WINNING CAMPAIGNS

NOTHING SOLVES HOMELESSNESS LIKE A HOME

A core part of our work is pushing for housing through action oriented community organizing. After years of campaigning—winning a few hundred exits a year for unhoused people—we took our issue to the ballot, which we wrote, gathered signatures for, and successfully won at the ballot box and later in the courts. This resulted in over \$150 million available each year for housing, and another \$150 million for prevention, treatment and shelter. The first two years the money accumulated until we won the lawsuit.

In the end, Prop C funds were released in two separate installments to support the acquisition of 1,187 units of housing that is already built - vacant new construction and converting tourist hotel rooms to studios. This funding is matched by the state through Project Homekey, which helps pay for operating for the first two years. So far 5 buildings with a combined 588 units have been purchased. On top of that, Prop C is funding 1,075 housing subsidies. Lastly, there are 840 time limited rental assistance subsidies that are rolling out, where the individuals take over the rent on their own once they are back on their feet. All together, 3,102 households will be able to exit homelessness. Our job now is to hold the city's feet to the fire to roll out these programs.

CRAFTING AN ALTERNATIVE TO A POLICE RESPONSE

Currently, the police respond to almost 70,000 911 calls related to homelessness each year. In 2020 we worked alongside public officials, academics, unhoused people and service providers to craft an alternative response that was centered in compassion. The result was a report released in 2021 that outlined the vision for CARTSF - Compassionate Alternative Response Team. The concept is a government funded, community led peer based team that is extensively trained and well paid to respond to 911 calls related to homelessness that are currently handled by the police. In 2021 we carried out a hard fought campaign and garnered \$3 million in funding for community organizations to run this program.



ACCESS TO WATER

We released a report on the lack of water access for unhoused San Franciscans entitled, “Water for All”. Unhoused San Franciscans are in desperate need of clean water, and there aren’t enough places to get it. This is a problem that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, as there has long been a shortage of restrooms, showers, and sources of potable water accessible to unhoused people. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, taking a severe human rights crisis into a deadly one. After the release of the report, we worked to get the Public Utilities Commission to add water stations in the Tenderloin - adding 3 to the existing 3 added in 2020. We also helped prevent the loss of bathrooms that were cut in the Mayor’s Budget.

TRANSFORMING THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Our work is leading to the creation of 343 beds in a variety of intervention styles, from managed alcohol to traditional abstinence based programs, step down residential beds, board and care, TAY residential and co-op beds in the mixture. Funding is going to bring behavioral health services to shelters and drop ins, serving over 1,400 individuals.

SAFETY FOR UNHOUSED COMMUNITY MEMBERS DURING COVID-19

The pandemic has highlighted extreme disparities in San Francisco - the impacts of COVID, the ability to shelter in place, access to education and health care are just some examples of two very different realities for our residents. We worked hard to ensure unhoused people were able to be safe, whether that be access to testing and vaccines or to Shelter in Place (SIP) hotels. We initiated efforts to pass a resolution at the Board of Supervisors to urge the federal government to extend SIP funding, and they recently announced it will be extended through April. We were also successful in getting the city to slow down the hotel closures, delaying several which allowed for our city to take advantage of federal funding.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

A core part of our work is developing the leadership skills of unhoused San Franciscans to be able to fight for solutions to homelessness. Our work is led by unhoused people, as they are the true experts on homelessness. We had several endeavors on this front including the holding of a free school which taught media, community organizing, meeting facilitation, mediation and many other skills useful in our work. In addition, we partnered with CalMatters to teach unhoused community members journalism skills and get paid while they learn. We also started a paid internship program inside our organization that allowed us to bring in people with lived experience into six month learning endeavors.

ENSURING SAFE PARKING

We sued the city for towing vehicularly housed people for unpaid parking tickets under search and seizure laws. While the lawsuit was thrown out, we won several accommodations from the city including halting the towing of cars when it is clear a person is living in them. We also have been organizing two different vehicularly housed communities in the Bayview and near SFSU for safer parking conditions, access to hygiene and garbage service. We also fought for a new RV park in the Bayview that is close to opening up.

THE WORD ON THE STREET

This year we returned to printing the Street Sheet twice monthly, supporting the hundreds of vendors who rely on the income they earn from sales and highlighting the political visions, personal stories and artwork of unhoused San Franciscans. Our podcast Street Speak has grown, answering your burning questions about poverty and homelessness and highlighting the talents of local musicians.



SAFE AND DIGNIFIED EMERGENCY SHELTER

We worked hard to reimagine shelter from the traditional congregate settings to more dignified spaces. Prop C funded trailers, the utilization of hotels for shelter for pregnant people, families and domestic violence victims. The funding also paid for safe sleeping sites where folks sleep in tents, but have stability, staff support, bathrooms and showers. In addition, the funding allowed something we have been fighting for years to materialize - a dignified emergency shelter for families. Previously our emergency shelter for families was housed in the hall of a church, where families slept on the floor, had no showers and had to leave with all of their belongings during the day. Now the Oasis hotel is being leased where families have doors to close, a beautiful courtyard with plenty of greenery for their children to play and of course private showers and bathrooms. **All said, Prop C has already added over 1,000 shelter beds to the system.**



PROTECTING HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

While San Francisco has a lot to be proud of, there exists behind the curtains a very ugly truth in the way it treats its unhoused community members residing on the streets. We have been hard at work documenting human rights abuses. This past year, we released a damaging report on the city's Healthy Street Operation Center. The report reveals that HSOC does not have an adequate number of beds as required by law to offer those who are being forcibly displaced and they are illegally discarding the property of those in encampments.

A SNEAK PEAK AT THE STRUGGLE IN 2022

This next year will be critical in our struggle to end homelessness and ensure all San Franciscans have a safe and decent place to live, and are able to reach their best and healthiest selves. We have several critical campaigns on the horizon to bring us closer to the San Francisco we dream of.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CART

The Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) may have been funded, but the struggle is far from over. We have a long way to go to make sure the model is not only implemented but matches the carefully crafted vision.

PROTECTING DUE PROCESS FOR SHELTER RESIDENTS THROUGH LEGISLATION

During the pandemic, the long standing due process rights that shelter residents have enjoyed were suspended. We have drafted legislation and will be fighting for this next year, to ensure that if someone is wrongfully kicked out of shelter, their side of the story will be heard, and an independent arbitrator will decide.

WORKING TO ELIMINATE ENCAMPMENT SWEEPS

The city's practice of removing encampments exacerbates homelessness by disconnecting individuals from services, making it harder to find them when housing is available, decreases their health outcomes due to confiscated medications and loss of connection with street medicine, makes survival that much harder given the loss of survival gear and is just plain inhumane and traumatizing. We will work even harder in 2022 to halt these practices.

GATHERING INPUT FROM HOMELESS PEOPLE TO SHAPE THE PROP C INVESTMENTS

We have a long way to go to realize the promise of Prop C Our City Our Home. While the funding has become available, the city has been slow to roll out the new programs, and we need to ensure that the funding is used wisely with the best results. The experts on homelessness are homeless people themselves -- they know what works, what the barriers are, and perhaps most importantly where efforts have failed. We will be gathering input on how to spend the funds, digging into data and fighting for a homeless system that is effective and high quality.

TRANSFORMING COORDINATED ENTRY

In order to get housing in San Francisco, households must go through a process called coordinated entry. While this system is required by the federal government, there is a lot of flexibility in how it is implemented. Unfortunately, San Francisco's system is one of the worst in the country. In 2022 we will be working to transform that system and bring back the human element into a rigid computerized system. Our goal is a simple, accessible, transparent system that works for everyone.

EQUITABLE SHELTER ACCESS

One of many losses during the pandemic has been the destroying of an individual's ability to seek and secure shelter themselves. During the pandemic, the city eliminated a long hard fought for 311 system where folks could sign up for shelter and have a clear idea of when a bed might become available. In 2022 we will fight for the restoration of self referral into shelter, and ensure community organizations have access.

JOIN THE STRUGGLE

STAY INVOLVED!

BUY AND READ THE STREET SHEET:

Street Sheet, and our new podcast Street Speak are a great way to tune-in to the headlines impacting poor and homeless San Franciscans, and our stories are told primarily by folks impacted by homelessness. Our vendors keep 100% of the money they receive from your purchase. Many of our vendors now accept Venmo as a digital alternative to cash. Reach out to our editor at qwatts@cohsf.org to submit writing, poetry, artwork, or to volunteer skills such as graphic design or teaching a workshop.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS:

We have simple fact sheets on SF homelessness and best practices for supporting your homeless neighbors on our website. You can email our Human Rights Organizers, Kelley Cutler and Carlos Wadkins. Visit our website to join our mailing list, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to learn about upcoming actions!

FUNDRAISING:

Our support primarily comes from individual donors like you. There are many ways to contribute to our fundraising, which are detailed on our website. Olivia Glowacki, our Development Director, is always happy to discuss upcoming fundraising opportunities as well as ways to collaborate on fundraising with the Coalition.

JOIN THE STRUGGLE:

Our workgroups are the backbone of our organization, doing street outreach and building campaigns that uplift the political agendas of those we meet on the streets and in shelters. Our organizing meetings happen weekly on Zoom and are open to the public. Email staff to find the links!

Housing Justice meets Tuesdays at 12:00pm
Human Rights meets Wednesdays at 12:30pm

All staff contact information available at www.cohsf.org/who-we-are.

OUR STAFF:

Miguel Carrera, Kelley Cutler, Jennifer Friedenbach, Olivia Glowacki, Emmett House, TJ Johnston, Jason Law, Tracey Mixon, Tyler Kyser, Ian James, Carlos Wadkins, Yessica Hernandez, Solange Cuba, Quiver Watts

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280 TURK ST.
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WWW.COHSF.ORG
(415) 346-3740

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, SF

Hevra Kadisha created the beautiful artwork on the cover of this report. Follow the collaborators who created the piece on instagram for more inspiring and political artwork:

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