

A LONG JOURNEY HOME

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS
ANNUAL REPORT 2023



THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS' LONG JOURNEY HOME

The Coalition on Homelessness was formed in 1987 by homeless leaders and front-line service providers to address the crisis of homelessness with permanent solutions. For over three decades, our organization has continued to center the voices of currently and formerly unhoused San Franciscans in pursuit of that goal. Our path of progress has been a long one, and despite many successes it is far from over. Nevertheless, we keep pressing forward with our community by our side because we know that this long journey ends at home.

From the beginning, our direction has been guided by the needs and input of homeless people themselves. We conduct weekly outreach to unhoused adults, youth, and families across the many streets, shelters, and SROs of San Francisco to identify not only the most important issues facing them but also their solutions. From there, our organizers and members collaborate to build people-powered campaigns that will achieve those solutions while empowering homeless leaders. Each of these campaigns builds on the last to get us one step closer to a world where every San Franciscan has a safe place to call home, and we won't stop moving forward until we get there.

In this year's annual report, we share with you our latest strides towards that goal. From our fight to Save the Oasis Family Shelter to our lawsuit against the City's cruel and illegal encampment sweeps to our work that has led to hundreds getting housed, we've been hard at work pushing San Francisco in the right direction. 2023 has been a difficult year, with homeless San Franciscans coming under attack like we haven't seen in years while facing an unprecedented epidemic of fatal overdoses. In times like this, it's more important than ever that we come together as a community, keep moving forward, and celebrate every step in the right direction. Together, with sure feet and steady progress, we continue our long journey home.

2023 WINS

- We saved \$60 million for family and youth housing from being cut, while finding alternate funding for the 123 new shelter beds it would have been moved to.
- We pushed the City to fund the following new or expanded programs:
 - \$8.1 million in new prevention funds that will keep 750 households from becoming homeless
 - 10 new permanent housing subsidies and 125 new five year housing subsidies for families with children using Proposition C funding
 - 54 housing subsidies for people living with AIDS, seniors, and people with disabilities.
 - Food distribution for 200 unhoused youth and behavioral health services for 75 unhoused youth.
- Emergency hotel vouchers for 260 households with pregnancies, children, and those fleeing domestic violence
- We helped save the Oasis Family Shelter for over 50 homeless families
- We brought behavioral health services into all single adult shelters using Prop. C funding
- We organized to extend safe parking for individuals living in RVs in Candlestick Park.
- We worked with SFPUC to add two new public water taps on SF streets
- We won a lawsuit to prevent towing homeless people's vehicles for unpaid parking tickets
- We fought to bring back a shelter waitlist for single adults, who can now easily ask for shelter
- We won an injunction in a lawsuit halting the City's illegal sweep practices

HOUSING JUSTICE



FUNDING PERMANENT SOLUTIONS

When the mayor began putting together her budget proposal for 2023, there was a lot to be concerned about. The City was facing a funding deficit, key programs were under threat of being cut, and the mayor was attempting to pit homeless families and youth against homeless adults by moving \$60 million in funding away from housing homeless youth and families towards shelter for homeless adults. In response, we brought those youth and families to the steps of City Hall and fought alongside them to protect against these cuts. Instead of getting drawn into a divisive battle, we fought and won both. Not only were the housing dollars protected, but we also managed to ensure the 123 tiny cabins and prevention services that funding was being moved to were protected as well.

Since our spearheading the Prop. C Homeless Gross Receipts tax in 2108, we have been working hard every year to ensure those dollars bring people home. By the end of this year, each of those fights will add up to over 4,000 people moved out of homelessness and into a home of their own. It also has led to over 1,000 people being sheltered, and serious gains in our behavioral health treatment system. Over 400 treatment beds have been added to serve people such as women with dual diagnosis, Spanish speaking people struggling with alcohol addiction, and individuals leaving the criminal justice system. In addition, intensive case management for individuals with severe mental illnesses living on the streets, and street-based work to link those surviving an overdose with medically assisted opioid treatment have brought hope to hundreds on the streets. Through homelessness prevention services, Prop. C investments also continue to prevent thousands of households from being displaced and becoming homeless every year.

SAVING THE OASIS FAMILY SHELTER

At the end of 2022, dozens of homeless families staying at the Oasis Family Shelter got the shocking news that they would soon be asked to leave. The shelter, the City's only low-threshold emergency shelter for families, was a sanctuary for those with no other place to turn. Our organizers quickly responded by organizing these families, helping their voices reach the owners of the hotel and the City of San Francisco. In early 2023, we were able to convince both parties to reach a deal for the City to permanently acquire the Oasis Inn with donated funds from a private party. The Oasis now continues to serve homeless families, helping them stay safe and stable while they search for permanent housing.

FIXING COORDINATED ENTRY

In 2022, we released "A New Coordinated Entry," a research report based on the input of hundreds of homeless San Franciscans, who developed a list of reforms for San Francisco's housing allotment system. Since then, we have been working collaboratively with the City to implement these reforms. All of our recommendations were adopted, and one of our organizers is serving on the City's Coordinated Entry Implementation Oversight Committee to implement the changes that our community has asked for.

HUMAN RIGHTS



STOPPING THE SWEEPS

We are suing the City of San Francisco for its practices of illegally criminalizing and confiscating the belongings of unhoused people. This lawsuit comes after decades of pushing the City to implement common-sense, evidence-based policies grounded in permanent solutions. Instead, the City has continually chosen the path of criminalization, a short-term response that only exacerbates the crises on our streets. So far, this lawsuit has led to an injunction against the City, barring them from continuing their sweep operations. It has also led to the creation of a shelter waitlist for single adults, one of our key demands. Our other demands include—but are not limited to—the permanent halt of the criminalization and property confiscation of unhoused people, filling the hundreds of vacant units of permanent supportive housing, and establishing a proactive and productive street response to homelessness. We ask that the City settles this lawsuit by meeting these demands, but until then will continue to defend the rights of unhoused people in the courts and at City Hall.

WATER FOR ALL

We continued our work expanding water access for unhoused San Franciscans by working with SFPUC to install two new water taps in the Mission and Bayview neighborhoods. We also fought to include new shower resources in this year's City budget, but were unsuccessful due to this year's budget deficit. Since 2021, we have successfully installed six new water taps across the city, bringing us steadily closer to our goal of Water For All San Franciscans.

ORGANIZING VEHICULARLY HOUSED SAN FRANCISCANS

Homeless people living in cars and RVs saw challenges and successes this year. In July, we won our lawsuit against the City's policy of poverty towing. Unhoused people will now no longer have their homes towed away because of unpaid parking tickets. We have also been organizing with adults and families who live in over 100 vehicles near Lake Merced to fight for housing and a safe parking site. This community is at risk as the City seeks to get rid of the parking spots they currently live in by adding parking meters without delivering on safe places for displaced residents to go. Finally, we worked to extend the safe parking program at Candlestick Park.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

Our long journey home continues as we work to build on this year's victories. Next year, 2024, is an election year, and homelessness is already shaping up to be one of the main issues of the election. Our organizers will be challenged to keep us on our path of progress through all the noise and attention. Here's a look at some of our key priorities for 2024:

STOP THE SWEEPS!

We'll continue to advocate for the human rights of unhoused San Franciscans in the courtroom and City Hall. We hope to pressure the City into permanently stopping its illegal sweeps practices. Together, we can create a street response rooted in meeting people's needs to get off the streets instead of sweeping them out of sight.

COORDINATED ENTRY REFORM

While the City's moves towards reforming Coordinated Entry have been promising, we still haven't seen any major reforms take place. In 2024, we will continue pressuring the City to make the changes that homeless people have demanded. As these changes are made, we will continue checking in with unhoused people seeking housing to ensure that access is improving.

SHOWERS FOR ALL

Our Water For All campaign has greatly increased access to drinking water for unhoused San Franciscans over the last three years. However, shower access still falls far below the need on our streets. We will push for next year's budget to fund new shower resources for unhoused San Franciscans, getting us one step closer to our goal of meeting every San Franciscan's water access needs.

HOUSING, HOUSING, HOUSING

As with every year, our primary goal for San Francisco's 2024-2025 budget will be to expand the City's housing portfolio with new units of permanent supportive housing, long-term housing subsidies, and rapid rehousing. We will also continue to advocate for the expansion of homelessness prevention programs to keep at-risk households in their homes, and shelter beds to provide respite for those without housing. San Francisco is still a long way from adequately investing in these desperately needed resources, but every year we make progress by fighting for budget priorities that help more unhoused San Franciscans find home.

OUR STAFF

Across our many years of struggle we've been lucky enough to have several generations of incredible organizers carry our work forward. In 2023, we welcomed several new staff members who have contributed to all of the incredible work we've accomplished this year, while keeping on veterans to help keep them on course. As we look forward at the long journey ahead, we'd like to formally introduce you to all of the faces at the Coalition on Homelessness helping us get there.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



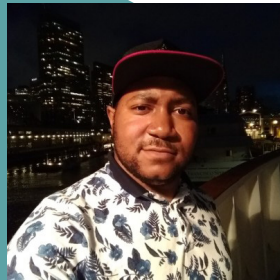
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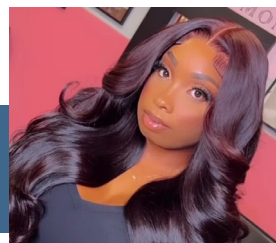
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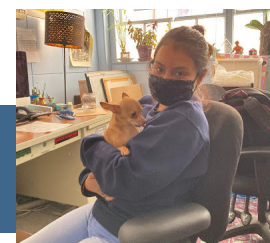
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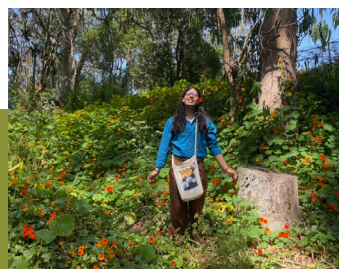
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ADVANCING JUSTICE IN 2024

AND BEYOND...



JOIN THE STRUGGLE

None of the work we do is possible without the support of all of our incredible volunteers, allies, and supporters. To keep advancing justice next year, we need your help! Here's how you can stay involved:

READ STREET SHEET

Street Sheet is the only newspaper in San Francisco made by and for people impacted by homelessness! Buying and reading Street Sheet is the best way for you to stay up to date on what's new with San Francisco homelessness, and the money from your purchase goes directly to one of our vendors. Reach out to our editor at tjohnston@cohsf.org to become a vendor, or to submit writing, poetry or artwork, or to volunteer skills such as graphic design or teaching a workshop..

JOIN A WORKGROUP

Our weekly workgroups are where all the magic happens! Our staff and members work together to coordinate outreach, develop campaigns, and carry out the actions that advance our cause week by week. Reach out to our organizing staff at www.cohsf.org/who-we-are to get information on how to join a meeting!

BECOME A SUSTAINER

As a grassroots organization, we pride ourselves in receiving most of our funding from individual donors like you! We don't take government funding of any kind, nor any other funding sources which would compromise our fight for justice. The easiest way for you to give us a boost is by visiting our website at cohsf.org and becoming a one-time donor or a monthly sustainer. Otherwise, reach out to our Development Director Carlos Wadkins at cwadkins@cohsf.org to discuss all things fundraising.



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Whitney Humphreys designed the beautiful cover art for this report. Visit her website and instagram to see her other amazing work:
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