

Dear Council Members,

Sebastopol has a disproportionately high number of unhoused people compared to other cities, which impacts our budget, especially our public works budget and police budget.

See chart below:

	2022 population estimate	2023 Homeless Count	Population supporting 1 homeless person	% population homeless
Sebastopol	7,338	87	84	1.2%
Cotati	7,453	15	497	0.2%
Cloverdale	8,809	9	979	0.1%
Sonoma	10,466	40	262	0.4%
Healdsburg	11,709	33	355	0.3%
Windsor	25,789	26	992	0.1%
Rhonert Park	44,326	210	211	0.5%
Petaluma	58,652	245	239	0.4%
Unincorporated	130,927	429	305	0.3%
Santa Rosa	177,181	1160	153	0.7%
County Total	482,650	2254	214	0.5%

Adapted From the 2023 Homeless census attached to the agenda item 18 – combined with Census data

The chart shows that Cotati, which is similar in size and revenue to Sebastopol, only has 15 homeless people. Sebastopol has almost 6 times (!) as many as Cotati. Cloverdale has more people than Sebastopol and only has 9 homeless people.

I have asked many times for a breakdown of costs associated with the homeless population. Through casual conversation, I am informed that Public Works spends at minimum 30% of their time cleaning up after homeless people. I would like to know how much time the Police Department spends on issues relating to homeless people.

I know hundreds of hours of staff and Council time has been spent addressing homeless issues.

It is a huge drain on our resources and budget.

Council Members and Staff need to review practices and policies that might be drawing more unhoused people into Sebastopol than Sebastopol can support.

Religious organizations and other nonprofits provide a lot of services for the homeless. Our homeless outreach coordinator advertises the free meals, showers, laundry to the Countywide homeless population. This comes from good intentions but a meal only lasts an hour and then homeless people are left with no place to go.

I would suggest that anyone offering a free service should also be required to offer a place where homeless people can go afterward or a ride to a shelter. Or if a homeless person receives a free service, they have an obligation to do some community service for 2-4 hours and receive a ride to a shelter.

As we face more and more cost cuts and most likely a reduction in staffing, we need to also reduce the number of the unhoused in our community as they are a high needs population that require a lot of public resources.

I ask that Council review current policies and also speak with other cities about their policies and programs for the unhoused. It appears that places that do not offer any homeless services have the least amount of homeless people.

As the City faces its financial challenges, it also needs to think about the broader economic impact the extraordinary amount of unhoused people has on our community and its finances.

Best,
Kate Haug