

Homeless settlement in Santa Cruz leaves some citizens angry PR 12-26-95

✓ SANTA CRUZ (AP) — When recent storms washed out a tent city for the homeless, Santa Cruz offered to put the residents up at a nearby public campground.

The city pledged to pay camping fees for about 30 people to stay at nearby New Brighton Beach State Park until the end of the month. That way, the tent city residents could get their disability checks, enjoy the holidays and figure out a new place to live.

But the action outraged some people, especially those in the conservative communities surrounding the campground.

County Supervisor Walt Symons fired off a letter suggesting the homeless camp be set up in Santa Cruz Mayor Michael Rotkin's back yard.

Victor Ogrey, president of the Seacliff Park Improvement Association, a neighborhood group in nearby Aptos, said there is a fear that a homeless presence will bring

down local property values.

"It comes to a philosophical dispute with Santa Cruz," Ogrey said. "If they want to give the homeless a place to live and rights and welfare or whatever, that's fine. But they should do it within the city of Santa Cruz."

Rotkin pointed out that the city was only giving the homeless two weeks at the campground, and providing bus passes so they could come to Santa Cruz for meals.

"I think some of these people believe that Santa Cruz actually manufactures homeless people — and then we send them out to wander in other people's neighborhoods. Like 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' or something," he said.

"This campground is like a Christmas present to us," said unemployed seasonal farmworker Michael Rhodes. "The only difference between our holiday and everyone else's is that we have no homes to go to when the holiday is over."