

S.C. ranks as one of the meanest cities, say two homeless-advocate groups

Homeless - 2020 1-16-02

SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

Two homeless advocacy groups claim Santa Cruz is among 12 U.S. cities that treat homeless people the worst, in a report released Tuesday.

City leaders said Tuesday night they had not seen the report, which includes figures from 80 communities.

"We do what we can (and) we can certainly do more, but why are they saying this?" Councilman Keith Sugar asked. "What makes us particularly mean? It is hard for me to respond without seeing the report."

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and the National Coalition on Homelessness also label California the state meanest to homeless people.

Most City Council members have argued the city works hard for the homeless and rarely gets credit for its good work.

They point to services including a community center that provides breakfast and dinner, and various emergency shelters in town.

Paul Boden of the San Francisco chapter of the Coalition on Homelessness said Santa Cruz is unfriendly to the homeless because of restrictions on panhandling too close to businesses, and the camping ban, which makes it illegal to sleep overnight in vehicles or outside.

The report said the Santa Cruz ranks among cities like San Francisco, New York and Atlanta as places that mistreat the poor.

Santa Cruz shows up seventh on the list but Boden said the 12 cities were not in any particular order of meanness.