

# Vision Santa Cruz joins panel on street people

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SANTA CRUZ — A task force which has been seeking solutions to the city's street-people problems for the past two years, will now work with members of Vision Santa Cruz.

Vision Santa Cruz had recommended that the City Council form a committee to seek creative new solutions to the problems created by street people, which, according to a Vision Santa Cruz report, represent "as a serious economic barrier to revival" of the downtown area.

The goal of the committee, the report said, "would be to produce specific recommendations for action that would lead to the reduction of anti-social and criminal behavior downtown, and a reduction in disruptive activities that undermine the general commercial and social climate of the area." According to the report, some property owners have put the issue in this perspective: "In deciding to invest major dollars, a higher rent structure must be envisioned, requiring finding tenants able

to afford these rents prior to securing reconstruction financing. As the pool of able local tenants is fixed and small, successful retailers from outside the community must be located. In the past the most significant barrier to the attraction of these retailers has been the 'street people' problem."

City Councilman John Laird on Tuesday volunteered to lead an expanded task force, one which now will include members of Vision Santa Cruz. Laird formed the original committee two years ago when he was mayor. Other members of that task force have included representatives of the Police Department, County Mental Health and alcohol and drug-rehabilitation services.

The fact that the problem has not been solved, Laird said, "is a tribute to the complexity of the problem."

But, he said, the task force had made progress. He said the group was working to stop the flow of mental patients from other counties and, on the eve of the October earthquake, was preparing to try to end the placement of parolees in downtown hotels.