

HOMELESS

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Shelter plan will go before council

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SANTA CRUZ — As business owners continue to organize opposition to a shelter planned for the Potrero Street commercial district, City Council members Tuesday will attempt to untangle a ball of political string that wraps around the shelter proposal.

Pulling for the shelter are street people, county shelter providers and Citizens Committee for the Homeless, a non-profit organization governed by a board of civic and church leaders.

Tugging against the shelter are owners and employees at businesses near the proposed shelter, planned at the site of a former book warehouse, and members of a new group called "People for Better Shelter."

This group ran a series of newspaper advertisements during the weekend, urging council members to conduct a feasibility study, but not to approve the proposed shelter.

Leland Zeidler, owner of the Sash Mill commercial center located across the street from the shelter site, said he paid for the advertisements.

The ads provide readers with a clip-out coupon to send to City Council members. The political message on the coupon urges council members "to conduct a thorough study on the issue of mass shelter for the homeless before making an arbitrary decision about its location, its operation and its funding."

The city has already spent more than \$5,000 on a 1984 study called "Streetpeople and Straightpeople in Santa Cruz."

The ads state a shelter for the homeless is "needed, but not in downtown Santa Cruz."

Shelter opponents have called a meeting for 5:30 p.m. today at the Sash Mill Cinema Cafe to organize opposition in time for Tuesday's council meeting.

If enough money and political votes are forthcoming to make the Potrero shelter a reality, it will be the second shelter to locate in the neighborhood.

The St. Francis Catholic Soup Kitchen, located across the street from the warehouse, already has a temporary permit to run a 25-bed shelter at the Soup Kitchen.

Soup Kitchen operators hope to

turn the temporary permit into a permanent one and have requested Zoning Board approval for a permanent permit.

The Zoning Board will consider the request at a meeting April 24.

City Council members are faced with a proposal from shelter supporters who are seeking quick approval of a shelter to replace a temporary facility on Cedar Street that shut down last week. That shelter was run by the William James Association, a non-profit philanthropic group whose members hope to establish a permanent facility with support from the city, county, churches and private donations.

Philanthropists Jack and Elena Baskin have offered \$25,000 to the citizens committee on the condition the group secure matching private funds for the Potrero shelter and that the city participate.

Two weeks ago, council members indicated their intentions to finance the \$110,000 down payment for the shelter purchase from federal housing grants, but did not vote to commit any specific funds to the project.

Instead, they voted to "express their intentions" to buy a shelter and ordered from their staff a report on

financing options in time for Tuesday's meeting.

In the report to the council, City Manager Richard Wilson says shelter supporters have yet to make a formal proposal to the city.

If the city is going to participate, said Wilson, "it should be in terms of assuming an ownership position in the property." The city would then lease the building to the shelter providers to operate the facility.

Also Wilson recommends city approval of funding be tied to the obtaining of a use permit to operate the shelter.

The shelter operators must show the capability of meeting financial obligations before the council would release any money, Wilson recommends.

Council members will take up the issue at a meeting from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday in council chambers at City Hall.

In other matters Tuesday, council members will:

- Consider a proposal to declare the city a sanctuary for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees.
- Consider an audit report for the county Convention and Visitors Bureau.