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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS LAWSUIT WINS PROTECTIONS UNHOUSED PEOPLE’S PROPERTY RIGHTS

On Friday September 19, 2025, Mayor Daniel Lurie signed a settlement that requires the City to follow its bag-and-tag policy and establish strong accountability and oversight measures. This marks a significant hard fought victory for all unhoused people across San Francisco. The lawsuit was brought by the Coalition on Homelessness, its members, plaintiffs, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area.

In 2022, the Coalition on Homelessness (COH) filed suit against the City over its practice of violating its own bag and tag policy and the Fourth Amendment by destroying unhoused people’s property during encampment sweeps. This decision was prompted by members of COH experiencing and witnessing human rights violations during City-sanctioned sweeps. When COH did outreach each week, unhoused people would bring this to their attention and sometimes COH staff and volunteers witnessed it themselves. It was a devastatingly common occurrence. It happened when it was pouring rain. It happened when the owner of the property was present. It happened when an unhoused person just lost a loved one. Unfortunately these practices by the City serve only to exacerbate and lengthen episodes of homelessness and waste resources. They are also known to increase morbidity rates among unhoused people.

DOCUMENTING THE PROBLEM

One time, COH director Jennifer Friedenbach came upon San Francisco Public Works throwing a homeless woman’s suitcase in the dumpster. The woman was in a friend’s tent staying dry from the rain. She begged the Public Works employee to give it back, but he refused and taunted her. She then told her story, how she lost her long-time home during the pandemic when her grandfather died from COVID-19, and she wasn’t officially on the lease. The landlord changed the locks, leaving her out in the cold. She had leukemia and talked about how the City threw away thousands of dollars worth of leukemia medications, which she still hadn’t been able to replace. She was able to get some new clothes and essentials, and now the City tossed them. The COH found that the City had unlawfully destroyed unhoused people’s survival gear, artwork, photos, cellphones and ashes of deceased family members, in clear violation of its policy to store belongings.

These issues were brought to the City consistently. They were documented in reports. They were addressed in person during sweeps. They were on social media. They were documented by

video. They were brought up in meetings. Several protests and press conferences occurred decrying these practices – at City Hall, at the Public Works storage yard, at encampment areas. Nevertheless the City refused to follow its own policy.

In 2021, COH released a report on the activities of the Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC), the team principally responsible for responding to large encampments. This report analyzed data from the City, drawing from the Coalition’s own experience monitoring HSOC operations. Over a 37-day period from January to February 2021, the report found there were only two occasions when HSOC had enough shelter beds to offer a bed to everyone who arrived at the site needing one. On average, HSOC only had access to only 52% of the beds they would have required to provide for the need they faced. Contrary to the service-resistant narrative, when individuals were offered shelter, however, they overwhelmingly accepted that placement.

By cross-referencing HSOC’s service-connection data from the 37-day period described above, when accounting for the shelter beds that were available to HSOC during those same days, the report found that people who arrived in need of a bed accepted placements, when available, at quite high rates. Despite a 29% bed acceptance rate reported by HSOC, this deeper dive into the data found that 75% of all unhoused residents that were offered one of the limited beds available in fact accepted the offer. There often simply weren’t enough beds to offer each resident—let alone appropriate beds—resulting in many being displaced without an option, and misleading statistics about their desire for beds.

In addition, the Latino Task Force conducted a street needs assessment in 2022 that found disturbingly, nearly 60% of survey respondents said that they were displaced by the City at least one time in just the past four weeks. During this same brief period, nearly 20% of all respondents report being forced to move by the City five or more times. In addition, in administering the survey, they attempted to measure whether the City was following its own “bag and tag” policy with regard to the treatment of personal items and survival gear. Nearly a full three-quarters of respondents reported having property confiscated by the City without the appropriate practices of retaining and labeling it for a later return.

BACKGROUND OF BAG AND TAG POLICY

In 2016, COH worked with the Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights and ACLU Northern California in sending a demand letter to the City of San Francisco regarding this very

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.

ORGANIZE WITH US

HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP
TUESDAYS @ NOON
The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email mcarrera@cohsf.org to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP
WEDNESDAYS @12:30
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email lpierce@cohsf.org

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

MAYOR SIGNS SETTLEMENT WITH COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS—WINNING SIGNIFICANT PROTECTIONS FOR SAN FRANCISCO’S UNHOUSED PEOPLE’S PROPERTY RIGHTS

same subject. These organizations then worked with the City Attorney and City officials to craft a “bag and tag” policy that the City then adopted. While the policy is not perfect, it does provide some basic protection assuming that the City were to follow it. This was in a bygone era when the City Attorney’s office was reasonable, believed in good government principles, had some level of respect and trust for the unhoused community and didn’t treat lawsuits like tennis matches designed to score political points. So a reasonable policy was developed.

The years went by, and there were moments when the City actually followed the policy, because it had a system set up to do so. But mostly it didn’t. Instead, it decided that “being tough on unhoused folks” could attract more political attention.

TIME FOR A LAWSUIT

After amassing a mountain of evidence, we were finally forced to file a lawsuit. The Coalition on Homelessness was the organization plaintiff and we had several unhoused plaintiffs as well. Plaintiff Sarah Cronk, who spent many years unhoused in San Francisco, said losing her belongings—including a tent, clothing and phones—derailed her attempts to find housing. “Sometimes workers arrived early in the morning and collected our things while we slept. Other times, they swept through with minimal warning, treating our belongings—and us—as disposable. During one particularly aggressive enforcement period, City workers took our tent, clothes, phones, cookware, food, and even our art supplies, all in a matter of weeks.”

The lawsuit, Coalition on Homelessness v. City and County of San Francisco, is considered a “practices” lawsuit. We did not have a monetary claim. The City already had a policy. Instead, it was about getting the City to follow its own “bag and tag” policy. But it was also about solving homelessness instead of wasting funding on exacerbating it.

“The City never should have forced us to file this lawsuit,” said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness. “They repeatedly violated their own policy, and despite years of us bringing it to their attention, they continued to trample on homeless people’s fundamental rights. Ultimately, we hope this settlement encourages the City to redirect its limited resources away from expensive and inhumane sweeps and instead invest more in extremely low-income housing and acquiring existing units.”

AN INJUNCTION IS ISSUED

Because of the mountain of evidence, and the City’s inability to counter any of it, Chief Magistrate Judge Donna Ryu issued an injunction a couple months after filing that forced the City to halt illegal activity that violated the constitutional rights of unhoused people. Still, the

City continued its illegal activities anyway, which we would have to bring to court. The City Attorney tried to get the injunction tossed, appealing it to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. London Breed, who was mayor at the time, along with several City Supervisors, including Rafael Mandelman and Matt Dorsey, and anti-homeless internet trolls staged a MAGA-style protest outside the court. It was a truly embarrassingly low moment for City officials who supported overturning the injunction. Folks carried pictures of Friedenbach in an orange jumpsuit with handcuffs, calling for her to be locked up. The group engaged in anti-judge behavior as well, slamming Judge Ryu, who was doxed online. Many weirdos of the not-so-cool kind were there, including transphobe J. Conner who doctored a picture taken at the rally making it look like Friedenbach was holding a sign reading “Fire Friedenbach.” Others, such as online harasser Adam Mesnick, demanded a debate with Friedenbach and filmed the encounter. However, the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club, staged a counter protest and stood up for homeless people’s rights and real solutions to homelessness in a much more dignified display of solidarity.

Meanwhile, inside the courthouse, Judge Bridget S. Bade stated “the City was trying to make an issue where one doesn’t exist.” The City Attorney was trying to say that the City under the injunction was not legally able to clear encampments—even though they were doing them—unless there was enough shelter for everyone who is homeless in San Francisco. Even our side disagreed with that interpretation of the injunction. On a 2–1 decision, the appeals court sided with COH. Only the Republican-appointed judge agreed with the City Attorney.

THE JOURNEY

The original lawsuit included several constitutional claims including the Eighth Amendment, charging that the City’s policy of citing and arresting homeless people who have no choice but to be homeless is cruel and unusual punishment. This was aligned with a legal principle established in the 9th Circuit ruling in *Martin v. City of Boise* that municipalities must offer shelter first before citing and arresting. Donald Trump’s Supreme Court overturned that principle in another case a little over a year ago, *Grants Pass v. Johnson*.

In that case, the City of Grants Pass had only one shelter and people camping in City parks were getting arrested. Then-Mayor London Breed and City Attorney David Chiu submitted a deeply mean-spirited and shameful amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to decide against the unhoused person. Trump’s Supreme Court cited the City’s brief 30 times regarding homeless people’s rights, leaving an ugly blemish on Chiu’s legal legacy.

As a result, municipalities are no longer obligated to offer shelter before citing and arresting homeless

people. However, they could choose to offer shelter first, as Los Angeles did, making for good government policy. But San Francisco quickly decided to remove the shelter offer requirement before citing and arresting homeless people, and then proceeded to engage in mass citations and arrests so much that the next mayor had to open a new jail. The number of citations and arrests for lodging in the year since Grants Pass was over 1,000, compared with 112 the year before the decision. As a result of Trump’s Supreme Court decision, also supported by Gov. Gavin Newsom, COH dropped the Eighth Amendment claim.

Other claims such as our Fourth Amendment claim that the City’s repeated seizure and destruction of unhoused people’s property amounts to unreasonable search and seizure, and our 14th Amendment claim that depriving homeless people of their property is unconstitutional because it is done without due process of law stayed intact until the end.

THE BIG, BAD, MEAN SF CITY ATTORNEY

The City Attorney, instead of trying to settle and just require that the City employees follow the policy, spent tons of resources on hiring investigators to dig up dirt on our witnesses in an attempt to discredit them, and filing multiple repetitive motions to dismiss. The City Attorney also attempted to villainize COH, making false statements such as us being against shelter when, in fact, we were responsible for an expansion of thousands of beds. The City made several moves instead of just following their own bag and tag policy: They included buying out our plaintiffs with cash offers, and tying up our lawyers with multiple motions that went nowhere.

The judicial branch of government has changed dramatically since Trump took office, especially with bad appointments and bad law. The ground has shifted and now there is a need to tread carefully in federal courts as to avoid more bad law results. Apparently, the City Attorney had no problem making legal moves that threatened to wipe out fundamental constitutional rights, affecting broad swaths of people in the U.S. Also, the office felt comfortable challenging the COH membership’s standing and potentially creating a legal standard that would abolish many groups’ ability to sue for social and environmental causes. Given the shift of power to monied interests at the local and at federal levels, this was terribly irresponsible.

THE SETTLEMENT

Our trial date was scheduled for the summer of 2025. We had the evidence and the moral authority. We were winning, as well. Right before the scheduled trial, we finally reached a settlement that we feel will ensure the City’s compliance with its “bag and tag policy.” It will take a lot of work monitoring,

but we will have the ability to do that. Under the terms of the settlement, including a five-year court order, San Francisco must give unhoused people an opportunity to reclaim their belongings before the City can destroy them. Also, the City also must give notice of planned sweeps to unhoused people and the COH, provide the COH with quarterly reports on property seizures and monthly access to the storage yard, train Public Works staff on proper procedures for handling personal property, and provide photo documentation of property at encampments slated for clearing. If San Francisco changes its “bag and tag” policy in the future, it must adhere to agreed upon standards to ensure that any future policy protects unhoused people’s constitutional rights. If 10 violations occur within 90 days, the City has to face the Magistrate Judge. Under the terms of the five-year court order, the Coalition on Homelessness remains committed to holding the City accountable to following its own policy and adhering to the terms of the settlement.

The settlement terms strictly allocate funds to cover legal fees, which will partially fund the monitoring of the City’s compliance with the court order. This case was never about financial gain—it was about protecting human rights and driving systemic change.

The timing of the settlement is auspicious. While the City has long used law enforcement and sweeps to decrease visible homelessness, these draconian methods have only been strengthened by the Grants Pass decision by the governor’s call to eradicate encampments, and lastly by the Trump administration’s anti-homeless rhetoric and policies. Newsom, Chiu and Breed all urged the Supreme Court to overturn Grants Pass—a lower court ruling that required municipalities to offer shelter before citing and arresting unhoused people. Most recently, Trump has threatened to deploy the National Guard to remove all homeless people from San Francisco’s streets, and our local policymakers have yet to address this call for violence and criminalization targeting vulnerable peoples. This settlement has ensured significant protections for homeless people’s property as they continue to face citations and arrests for lodging.

The Coalition on Homelessness sued San Francisco three years ago to push back against this pattern of human rights violations against homeless people. The Coalition on Homelessness maintains its mission of uplifting the voices of unhoused people and in advocating for housing justice and permanent solutions to the homelessness crisis. We will keep fighting until every San Franciscan has a safe and dignified place to call home.

STREET SPEAK INTERVIEW WITH APPLE AND JOSH

TJ JOHNSTON

We welcome Apple Cronk along with her partner, Josh Donohoe, who are co-plaintiffs in the Coalition on Homelessness’s lawsuit against the City of San Francisco for their practices in encampment sweeps and the destruction of property belonging to unsheltered residents. That case was recently resolved and signed by Mayor Daniel Lurie on Friday, September 19. Thank you, Apple and Josh, for joining us today and just let them know, Apple is also a mother, artist and activist in her community, and so how are you guys doing today?

Apple: Good. We’re good. Thank you so much for having us.

Great. OK, just to start off, overall, how do you feel about the settlement that the City has reached with you?

A: I’m very relieved that we that we got what we did when it came to the settlement, and the City is now going to follow its own “bag and tag” policy that it should have been following a long time ago. It’s been a long time coming, and it was a lot of stress going through this entire litigation process. You know what happened in Grants Pass set us back a little bit, but and we wanted more. We really wanted them to stop sweeps entirely, because all they could all they do is cause harm, create more instability, and set people back and keep them in homelessness. So we were hoping that the City would wake up and realize that what they need to do is just offer more affordable places to live and treat people with compassion and understanding what they have to do on the street, which is survive. But despite that, we’re happy that now, for five years, they’re going to be monitored, and our lawyers are going to make sure that they follow their “bag and tag” policies and that they give people notice before they handle their belongings.

OK, and and in the meantime, what changes in the City’s behavior, in their Street operations, have you observed since the lawsuit was filed?

A: Unfortunately, we didn’t see a lot of change. Since the lawsuit was filed, they were still conducting sweeps, and they were very aggressive, just as aggressive they were enforcing sit-lie laws, the preliminary injunction that happened December 2022 by Judge (Donna) Ryu, said that they couldn’t enforce the sit-lie in my laws, and that

helped a little bit. But since then, they they have been and they’ve been very, very aggressive, and we’re hoping now that the settlement is finalized, that might change a little bit. But we have not been on the street for about how long have we had housing? (Josh: About a year now.) So we haven’t really seen it firsthand. I’m constantly thinking about my people that are still out there, and I know that they’re still experiencing sweeps and property destruction.

So tell us about how your lives have changed since that time.

A: So I had, I had a child, I have a two-year old now, and we were able to get subsidized housing through a permanent housing program, which is really, really nice. Josh is a full-time sheet metal worker.

Josh: I ended up getting into a Local 104 Sheet Metal Workers Union through a construction training program offered by One Treasure Island, which is a sister program to City Build. So, yeah, that was after treatment.

A: So we both went to residential treatment, and since then, I have become an advocate for harm reduction services, because low-barrier services are really what saved my life and my child’s life, while I was on the street experiencing that kind of destruction and got me into care. I mean, I would have ran for the hills if people didn’t treat me with dignity and respect.

J: Same services and the same people who helped Apple actually, you know, they didn’t have to help me either, but they did. I’m not a woman or a child, but I am a person. But then the public health nurse, specifically, who helped and was working with Apple, actually helped me get into treatment and helped me get over the first couple of hurdles that I went through. You know, not. I was looking for every reason, like Apple said, to run for the hills, and they, you know, made it a lot easier knowing I had somebody to rely on emotionally and physically if it needed to be.

You mentioned that you were able to get treatment (and) food through City-sponsored programs, I believe.

A: So it started out with prenatal stabilization for me. We lost everything

we had, to a rainstorm after multiple sweeps and property destruction, and, you know, barely having anything. Then we got into a (shelter-in-place) hotel. So while I was at a SIP hotel, I made a prenatal appointment, which I didn’t show up at, but then my prenatal nurse called me, asked me what was going on. At that time, I was super sick, and I needed help. She came to me, she actually met me where I was at, took me to the hospital, and gave me the resources I needed, which was medically assisted treatment to stop using, which I was doing to survive while I was outside for so long. Through a City-sponsored subsidy program, we ended up eventually being able to get housing.

In your estimation, do you think that San Francisco has the resources to house everyone if they prioritize housing all residents over things like policing or the harassment of unhoused folks?

A: Absolutely, I think they’re putting so much money and so many resources into the wrong things, into forced treatment, into temporary shelter, things that just put people through the revolving door and back into homelessness. I think if they were to, it’s actually much, much cheaper and affordable to put resources into residential, permanent housing and things like housing subsidies than it is to fund temporary shelters for people and families.

J: I want to mention also, I was scheduled to go into treatment the day that Apple did and the day that my daughter was released from the NICU. I didn’t go because I wasn’t ready. I had a meltdown, and I spazzed, ran away, and I stayed out there for another month until I got arrested. Then during that whole situation, I had kind of like a moment of clarity, and then, and then I met with the public health nurse who helped Apple. She came to me and it was just like, “hey, if you like, you can do this, you know?” Then, of course, I had support from my family. But I say all that because my experience, and Apple’s experience, and a lot of the experiences I’ve heard, in my almost two and a half years of sobriety and clean time has been that when it’s forced, when, when somebody else expects me to do it, I don’t want to do it. I’m not going to. I’m not ready to, even when it’s for the best and, you know, even if it’s what I want, I’m not going to want it at the moment. Basic necessities needed to be given to me, even to be able to cognitively make the decision that I want to actually do something with this, and that moment of reprieve was only because I had food and water in a horrible situation, being in jail. But at least I had the ability to actually make a decision that wasn’t based on drugs at that point. And I think to (Apple’s) point, yes, I think that if housing was more focused on instead of the revolving door, then it might be a little while, but at least people having their basic necessities made and and taken care of. They’re not, as Apple saying earlier, they’re not surviving anymore. They’re actually they might actually make a decision to thrive and do something different with their life.

A: It opens opportunities.

Tell us what you think the barriers are to housing everyone and just imagine what if those barriers didn’t exist?

A: A lot of times, the what is offered to people when they’re outside on the street doesn’t match what they need. For instance, they could be offered a navigation center that doesn’t meet their disability needs, things of that sort. Also, it’s not a good place to be. There’s community out there on the street. You feel safe like when you have an established community and people that you can at least somewhat trust outside, you’re going to want to stay there, rather than go into a navigation center or a shelter where you don’t trust anybody, and everybody’s looking for an opportunity to take your shit and to use you, and people get assaulted in those places behind closed doors where there’s supposed to be people there that are making sure that stuff doesn’t happen. It’s crazy. I think that’s a huge barrier. I think for me, I stayed outside because I was institutionalized. I had been running. I was in foster care, and they were putting me in placement after placement, and it was getting more and more locked. And I just wanted freedom. I wanted my autonomy. So I stayed outside because I didn’t trust anybody. I didn’t want to be held down. Those bars are real.

J: I think also another barrier was, at least for me, was knowledge and access in the sense of, like, I knew that there was a procedure, but I didn’t know what that procedure was, and a lot of times it was too far for me to get to, you know? I mean, it would take me two days to get three blocks down the street sometimes, you know, it’s just what it was. When you’re when you’re surviving and trying to do what you need to do to make ends meet, the day goes by very quickly, and by the time you realize, “Oh, I was supposed to go down there to fill out paperwork,” or “I was supposed to go get my fourth ID of the year.” You know, it just doesn’t happen there. There are a lot of steps that need to be taken, and they’re not clearly defined. They’re in a language that is very hard to decipher. Then there’s trust issues, right? Like, I have to go in and trust that this person that I’ve never met before is working on my behalf when they’re meeting me with less than compassion, if that makes any sense, almost animosity. Like, I’m just another person, who’s going to screw this up. And so, of course, I become just another person who’s going to screw this up or not even try, because it’s just a fear of failure. You know, these are all different barriers, right?

And maybe self-inflicted, but at the same time, not because they’re systemically inflicted at the same, you know, and many at a certain level. So what would happen if those were removed? If I could trust every City official that can, by, let’s say if it was accessible, in the sense of “Hey, you can trust me, let me gain your trust,” and gave me an option versus a mandate of what I could do. and had no judgment, if I said, “you know what, not today, maybe come back next week” or “come back maybe, or just don’t come back, because I’m not



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feeling you right now,” right? It’s not something that I like. I stayed homeless because I feared judgment. And I feared a lot of things, but judgment was a big, big one. And so another person who doesn’t do the things I do, who doesn’t look the way I look, and doesn’t doesn’t live the way I live, coming and telling me how I should do and how I should live and how I should look immediately puts me into a situation where I don’t want to trust them and nor do I want to do anything that they want for me. How could you have the authority to say that I should be doing this, you know? Those are all different barriers that pop up in my head, and if they’re if they were gone, I don’t know how, exactly how you would get there, but there’s definitely a trust factor, it’s a big piece. Gaining trust, having people who have lived experience doing it, you know, and actually meeting, how we went through. We only made the leap because there were people in our corner who were meeting us, where we were not asked to jump through hoops.

This is a very speculative kind of question: What is your vision for a safe, restorative transition from homelessness to home, and this could be for yourselves or for all residents of San Francisco?

A: Well, I think that’s pretty broad. Everybody’s path is very different. Everybody’s situation is very different. And the reasons that they stay on the street, either they don’t want to or they can’t get back inside, are different. Like, people who live in RVs, for instance, a lot of some, you know, some of them don’t want to be there, but other people like living in an RV, that’s the best thing they’ve had in a long time for some of them, and it’s a home. Just because it’s got wheels and you can move it around, doesn’t mean it’s not a home. So, like, it starts out with defying what being unhoused versus being housed is and what the expectations are. I don’t think anybody should be expected to live in a certain environment, especially if they’re not comfortable with it. Some people just don’t feel comfortable being indoors, you know? And I think that’s OK, but I think everybody’s path is different, and they need to be treated with dignity and respect and understanding. It doesn’t happen overnight. People don’t get off the street overnight.

But they need to be tolerated and treated with respect as human beings and have a right to property and have a right to their basic needs being met. You know, we’re all San Francisco residents, and we shouldn’t just be treated like we’re a burden or we’re getting in the way of the people who you know—the other people who live in the City and business owners and stuff look down upon the people that are outside, and they don’t want them around, and they don’t want them, you know, sitting in front of their doors and stuff like that. But if you want an equitable San Francisco, you have to own that you have to have respect for the other people that are out there.

J: So what worked for me, like it’s been mentioned before, being met where I was at, that compassion piece and if there’s room for people to move into,

some kind of shelter that is not just stuffing them into a corner in an old, dusty building. It’s actually like there’s a community there of people who have been through what they’re going through. I think also, there tends to be this hiccup or a hindrance when it comes to people’s stuff being taken into the new place, or into their home, you know they’re only, you’re only given two trash bags or something like that. Right now, if I look around in our apartment, we have, I mean, a sofa that doesn’t fit in a trash bag, right? I mean, how my work stuff doesn’t fit in one trash bag. I feel like that concept should be broadened, and if people were given, like, a storage unit, on top of having housing or something like it, I think that would make it easier. But to go back to your question, obviously, there needs to be barriers, right? People need to be safe, and there’s, like, you know, certain things that need to be upheld. But my experience has been, the more willing somebody is to accommodate me, the less of a burden I want to be, then the more willing I am to work with that person.

In the lawsuit that was filed, Josh details a specific incident where a City worker had threatened to break his jaw during a sweep over at 13th and Folsom streets, and that was just one example. Have such incidents happened to you before or since? And also, would you say this is a common hazard that your fellow unhoused folk face in San Francisco?

J: Most definitely. Since that incident, it has happened a couple of times where a City worker would get aggressive with me, because I would defend other people’s tents and defend their property. I’ve had it become a racial thing, which is very unsettling and upsetting, like being called a “white boy,” like literally being told, “what are you going to do, white boy” kind of thing, and it’s like four or five guys against me. I’m standing my ground there. And this is like in the middle of the day, not even hush on the night of it. It’s definitely something that I have seen other people who are unhoused experience. I have jumped in the middle of aggressive behavior, because it was not just my dignity that was taxed or called into question, but just my basic human rights, my right to exist somewhere, was called into question. I would get into arguments all the time just because if you ask me something that’s impossible to do, like “pick up every little thing I have in 10 minutes, or I’m going to start, you know, spraying you with chemicals”. It’s like, “You got to give me some more time.”

This is a partial transcript and has been edited for brevity and clarity. Listen to this Street Speak episode in its entirety at streetsheet.org/street-speak-podcast

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS LAW CENTER CONDEMNS VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT RHETORIC TARGETING HOMELESS PEOPLE

Everybody needs a safe place to live. But instead of lowering rents and fixing our broken housing system, politicians are setting the stage for violence by cutting funding for vital programs, passing laws that make it a crime to sleep outside, and continually demonizing and vilifying homeless people. Their actions have devastating and fatal consequences.

Three separate incidents within the last week highlight this horrific trend.

- Over the weekend, Fox News host Brian Kilmeade, on national television, called for the mass murder of homeless people.
- Second, on September 15, homeless people in Minneapolis were the victims of a mass shooting. Instead of responding with housing for the victims, the government responded with bulldozers. Those who were impacted, including people who were shot, had their tents and belongings thrown away, including an urn containing the ashes of one unhoused person’s child. Residents are racing to secure a new place to live before winter starts. To support them, [click here to donate](#).
- And third, also on September 15th, a homeless man named Corey Zukatis was found dead, hanging from a tree in Mississippi. The same day, a Black man named Demartravion “Trey” Reed was found dead, also hanging from a tree, also in Mississippi. These deaths harken back to the racial terror that is endemic to this country. Let’s be clear: this too is political violence.

The constant dehumanization of homeless people is part of Trump’s authoritarian agenda.

Trump and his cronies are intentionally targeting communities that our society views as disposable, including homeless people, to see how we respond. However, we know that what starts with homeless folks will spread to anyone who those in power don’t like or don’t want to see. We must stand up now and say “no” to anti-homeless laws, no to detention camps, no to dehumanization, and no to Trump’s fascist takeover.

Take action and fight back.

Below are three things you can do right now to protect the rights of our homeless neighbors:

- Demand that Congress pass the Housing Not Handcuffs Act
- Join the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign
- Donate to those impacted by the Minneapolis shooting

Violence against unhoused people is not new.

Still, none of this is new. Violence against homeless people happens daily and hardly makes any news. We remember Cornelius Taylor, a man who was killed by a government vehicle that destroyed his shelter in Atlanta. We remember James Edward Oakley, who was similarly killed in California. We remember August Buck, who froze to death after Florida threw away this tent to comply with a cookie-cutter anti-homeless law peddled by the billionaire-backed Cicero Institute. And we remember Samantha Crabtree, who was given a ticket for sleeping outside while in active labor in Kentucky, during the enforcement of yet another Cicero law.

The violence doesn’t stop there. Laws that kill homeless people, especially those who are Black, brown, and indigenous, trans, or disabled, are now official White House Policy.

Government inaction and failure to solve homelessness is also violence. People living outside die 15-20 years sooner than people who live in stable housing. A system that can find money to send the National Guard to take over D.C., but refuses to fund housing, is violent. Gutting healthcare is violent. Kidnapping migrants is violent. Poverty wages are violent.

Another world is possible.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Everyone —regardless of what they look like, where they are from, or who they love —should have a life of safety, dignity, and belonging. We know that the safest communities are not those with the military patrolling the streets; they are the ones where everybody has their needs, like housing, met.

The solution to homelessness is housing and support, not handcuffs and dehumanization. In a country as prosperous as ours, we have more than enough money to ensure that everybody has a safe place to live, food to eat, and the care they need. We need our politicians to use their power to ensure that everybody has a safe place to call home.

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About the National Homelessness Law Center

The National Homelessness Law Center is committed to protecting the rights of unhoused people across the United States and to advocating for policies that prevent and end homelessness, ensuring that all people have access to safe and adequate housing.

TRUMP THREATENS TO DEPLOY NATIONAL GUARD TO SF—WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

LUPE VELEZ

The Trump Administration, during its short time in power, has waged strategic attacks on nearly every marginalized group in the country. It has slashed funds for health care, education, environmental protections and more. President Trump’s direct attack on the homeless population began in August of 2025, when he deployed the National Guard to clear homeless encampments in Washington, D.C. This followed his executive order on July 24, when he outlined his plan in a press conference to increase sweeps, defund harm reduction and forcibly institutionalize people struggling with substance use disorders and mental health issues, depicting D.C.’s streets as overrun with “bloodthirsty criminals” and “drugged out maniacs.” In an interview with NPR, Jesse Rabinowitz of the National Homelessness Law Center reported “an incredibly aggressive show of force” as FBI, Homeland Security, Border Patrol, Secret Service, and local police descended onto homeless encampments in Washington D.C.

While law enforcement and sweeps have long been employed as a means to criminalize unhoused people, the Trump administration’s actions signify a stronger, unified and

strategic push towards stripping away their rights at the local, state and federal levels. Last year’s Supreme Court Grants Pass v. Johnson decision was instrumental in this process: It ruled that arresting homeless people for camping outside did not violate their Eighth Amendment constitutional protection from cruel and unusual punishment.

In San Francisco, encampment sweeps have been a tried and failed tactic in addressing the homelessness crisis. Former Mayor London Breed and mayors before her employed this tactic, and now Mayor Daniel Lurie is too. One of the many concerns with sweeps has been the unlawful disposal of unhoused people’s property. Just recently, the City of San Francisco finalized a settlement with the Coalition on Homelessness to a lawsuit the Coalition filed in 2022 challenging the City’s practice of throwing away unhoused people’s property during encampment sweeps. The settlement obligates the City to comply with its own “bag and tag” policy.

Trump has threatened to subject San Francisco’s unhoused population to suffer the same fate as faced in

Washington, D.C. He said of San Francisco, “Now you look at what the Democrats have done to San Francisco, they’ve destroyed it. We could clean that one up too, we’ll clean that one up, too.” How likely is this to happen?

Trump is navigating shaky legal ground in sending troops to cities outside of Washington, D.C, where he is granted special authority. He had previously deployed the National Guard to Los Angeles in response to an outbreak of protests due to increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, and a judge found the administration’s actions to be in violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the military deployment to address civilian law.

Other than to issue isolated threats at troop deployment, Trump has hardly mentioned San Francisco while in office. In an interview with the New York Times, former supervisor Aaron Peskin suggested this is due to San Francisco’s right-wing billionaire takeover that has kept the City from becoming a target for the Trump administration. Perhaps because of the limited commentary, Lurie has not directly

addressed Trump, but has stated “My administration has made safe and clean streets our top priority, and the results are clear: Crime is at its lowest point in decades, visitors are coming back, and San Francisco is on the rise.” It remains to be seen how Trump’s threats will unfold: cities like Chicago and Baltimore have faced a stronger barrage of threats from Trump, but have also countered his remarks more firmly than Lurie.

The outcome matters: San Francisco’s unhoused residents are facing increased sweeps, an RV ban, congested shelters, an increase in family homelessness and tirades against harm reduction. Lurie’s tenure in the mayor’s office has shown that his administration favors criminalization over permanent housing solutions. Deployment of the National Guard would only exacerbate the existing humanitarian crisis on the streets. Will Lurie stand up to Trump, or will he remain silent in hopes of the City’s growing right-leaning politics keeping him out of his crosshairs? That’s hard to say: A tyrant’s heart is fickle and the future remains unpredictable.

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PSH EVICTIONS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

JORDAN WASILEWSKI

On September 2, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) sent its report on evictions from Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), as required by City law. For background, the ordinance requiring annual reports was pushed by then-Supervisor Mark Farrell in 2015 with little stakeholder engagement.

The report indicates the number of written notices (notifications of a landlord’s intent to initiate eviction process), unlawful detainers (the process of eviction in court), and actual eviction (tenants removed from their units), for reasons of non-payment, lease violations, or a combination. Yet, the report doesn’t count what I refer to as “backdoor evictions”—voluntary removing oneself from the property by a certain date after making a deal with management or during the eviction process to avoid an eviction on record, as revealed in a 2022 investigative report in the San Francisco Chronicle.

This year’s report is in a much more reader-friendly format than the eviction report from fiscal year 2019-20, which was when I started diving into data back when I was making the case that lowering rents to 30% of income would mean fewer evictions for non-payment. Still at the time of this writing, I had to print out the report, find ways to deal with the small-print format, and it involved an excessive amount of marginalia.

The good news is that compared to

before the #30RightNow campaign to limit rents to 30% of tenants’ incomes, both unlawful detainers and evictions for non-payment have decreased. Between FY2019-20 and FY2024-25, unlawful detainers in PSH went down from 122 to 79, as did actual non-payment evictions, from 65 to 26. This is a testament to the effectiveness of lowering rents, plus guidance from HSH that was released in 2023 dealing with non-payment issues .

And of course, we should always consider that this data may be incomplete. While there was a correlation between sites where tenants were rent-burdened and numbers of eviction notices in FY 2019-20, that didn’t always track to actual evictions—however, this was prior to “backdoor evictions” being exposed.

In addition, a majority of PSH sites (89 of the 156 counted) have had no evictions in FY 2024-25. In terms of total numbers of evictions, 35 sites have had one eviction each, 11 sites have had two evictions each, 6 sites have had three evictions each, 4 sites have had four evictions each, 5 sites have had five evictions each, 2 sites have had six evictions each, and 4 sites have had seven evictions each. Among those sites that have had three or more evictions, the sites with the highest eviction rates are the Allen Hotel (10%), the Ambassador Hotel (9.5%), the Camelot Hotel (8.6%), the National Hotel (6.8%), and the Royan Hotel (5.4%). With one exception (the Mission Hotel), all sites that had

three or more evictions had an eviction rate that exceeded 2%, HSH’s goal limit for PSH eviction rates.

Now, onto the bad. We are still seeing a high level of evictions for lease violations. In FY 2019-20, there were 86 evictions for lease violations, which increased to 100 in FY 2024-25. Since last year, the percentage of evictions out of all PSH households has increased from 1.2% to 1.8%. Out of the 21 sites where there have been more than three evictions, seven are managed by the Tenderloin Housing Clinic, four are managed by Conard, three are managed by Episcopal Community Services (ECS), and three are managed by Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation. While I was initially eyeballing the data, I noted that the ECS buildings had a higher number of eviction notices. I also noticed that many of the sites with higher eviction rates were more likely to be older, more spartan, and crowded SROs.

Through all this, the legislation has not been updated to potentially detect backdoor evictions. We also don’t have enough context about evictions for lease violations, which could be based on serious issues such as assault or fire setting, or smaller issues, such as minor violations of the visitor policy or a manager acting like a drill sergeant.

Where things get ugly is the number of legal evictions exceeding unlawful detainers, considering that, logically, evictions must only be followed

by detainers. This might be due to “behave and stay” agreements, in which the provider/landlord agrees to not go through the eviction with a tenant if they sign stipulated agreements that often sets up people to fail. An example from the 2022 Chronicle investigation included a tenant who was kicked out for cursing off a desk staff while under a behave and stay. These situations might account for unlawful detainers being filed in one fiscal year, then leading to an eviction in the following year, which complicates data collection.

While there is a lot to examine in this report, we need to focus on current and future solutions for evictions in permanent supportive housing. Data collection can play a role: City law should be amended to require that backdoor evictions be reported. Also, the data should be aggregated by agency, so we can see trends. Furthermore, if there is an unlawful detainer that is still pending at the end of a fiscal year, it should also be counted in the next fiscal year.

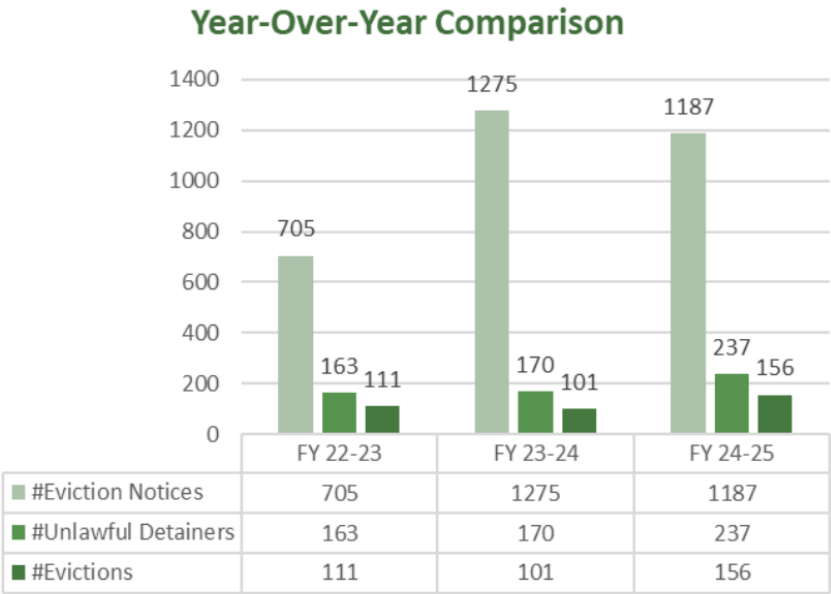
In terms of solutions for nonpayment evictions, HSH guidance on nonpayment should be codified as a binding policy providing concessions to both tenants (by allowing them to pay rent by check or remotely) and to providers (by allowing them to require tenants who are habitually in arrears to enroll in third party payee programs to pay off the arrears).

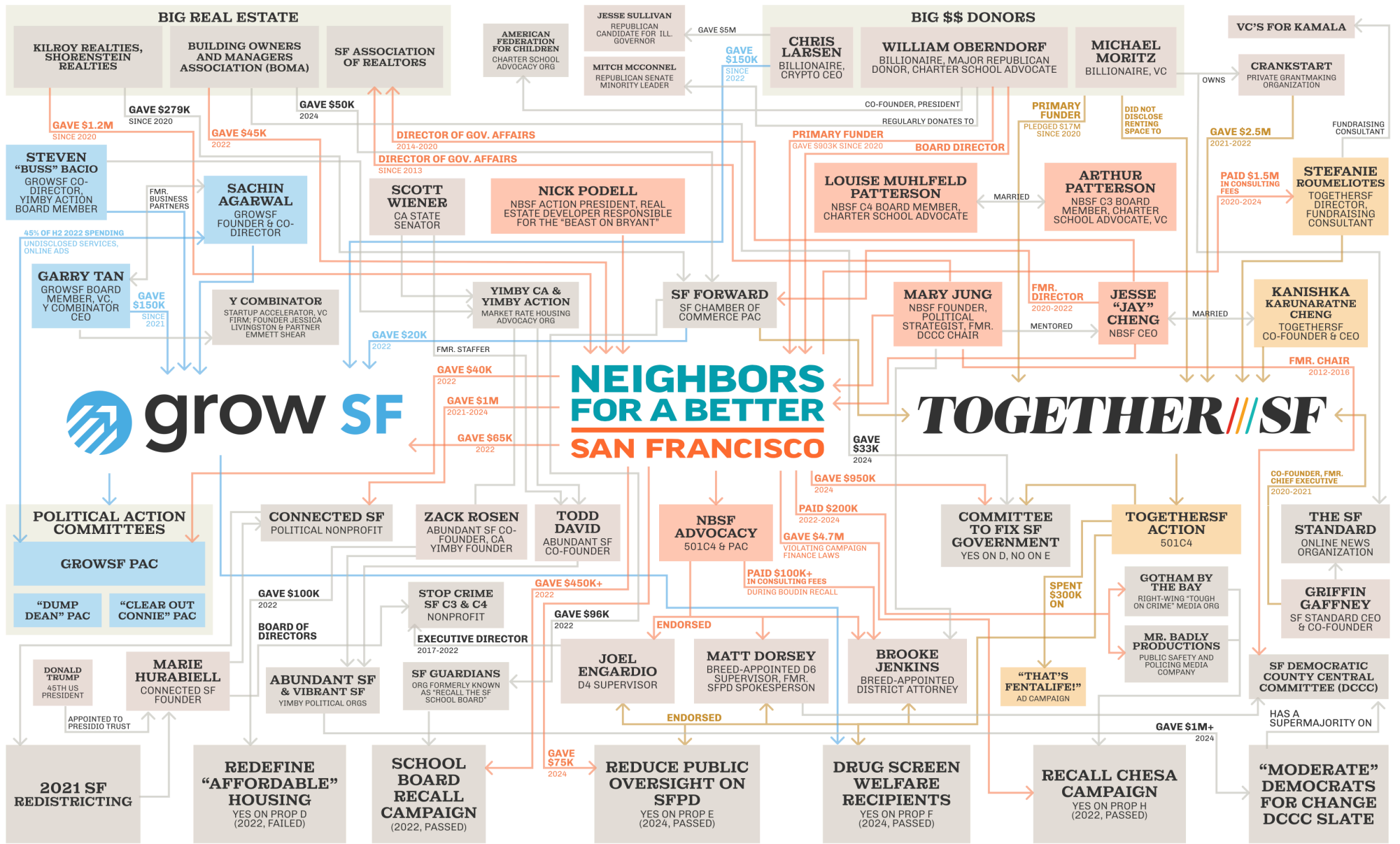
In terms of lease violation evictions, HSH doesn’t even have non-binding guidelines, including what level where eviction is necessary, or limitations on “behave and stay” agreements.

I know that things have been tough with Daniel Lurie and the six moderate Supervisors playing more conservative tunes, but we must not give up hope. Supervisor Chyanne Chen is pushing legislation around demolition evictions, and Jackie Fielder stands to continue the work that Dean Preston started.

If any politician truly cares about the state of our streets and downtown recovery, they should invest in keeping the most vulnerable housed. Our success as permanent supportive housing tenants counts on it.

Total PSH sites	House-holds	Households issued written notices of eviction	Households issued unlawful detainer filings	Households evicted	% of households evicted
155	8,537 ¹	1,187	237	156	1.8%



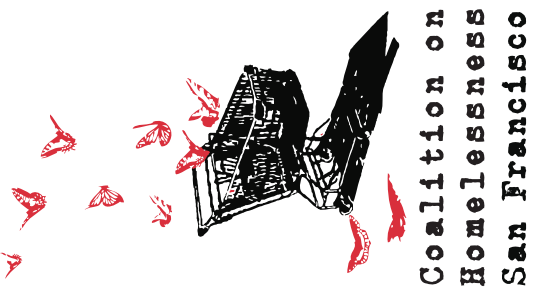


The **SAN FRANCISCO ASTROTURF NETWORK MAP** represents the interconnected corporate real estate, tech and right-wing billionaires that have backed dark money-funded political pressure groups to push for specific gentrification, privatization, and big business-friendly ends.

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To sign up, visit our office at 280 Turk St from 10AM-4PM on Monday-Thursday and 10AM-NOON on Friday