Palo Alto needs to shed its reputation as a haven for the homeless by enacting stricter laws and providing more human services, members of Palo Alto's business community and city staff said Tuesday. "It's called tough love," Sherry Bijan, executive director of the city's business improvement district, City Manager Frank Benest announced he will recommend expanding Palo Alto's "sit-lie ordinance" to apply to the entire downtown area. The ordinance prohibits anyone on University Avenue between Cowper Avenue and High streets from sitting on anything other than a city bench.

The city also is looking into hiring private security to patrol the city's downtown parking lots and garages in the early morning and entering into a contract with the Downtown Streets Team, which employs homeless people to maintain sidewalks and streets, to also clean downtown garages, where many unhoused people sleep in cold weather.

care not cash" program scheduled to roll out in June. Asking people to give money to social programs rather than directly to panhandlers will discourage the homeless from loitering outside stores,

Between the last count performed in 2005 and January 2007, Palo Alto's homeless population dropped by more than 30 percent, according to the Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey.

all of the county's 7,202 homeless people in the early morning hours of Jan. 29 and 30. In Palo Alto, volunteers counted a total of 237 unhoused people, down from 341 two years ago.

Eileen Richardson, president of the Downtown Streets Team, a Palo Alto nonprofit that employs homeless people to clean streets and sidewalks.

Mary Ann Morgan, who was homeless in Palo Alto until December, said the opening of the Opportunity Center and other permanent housing options from InnVision and Catholic Charities has helped her and many of her friends find a place to stay.

But Palo Alto accounts for only 3 percent of the county's homeless population. Nearly 60 percent of the unhoused live in San Jose, while 18 percent is split between Gilroy and Sunnyvale, according to the survey. And overall, the county's homeless population shows no significant signs of shrinking, said Margaret Gregg, homeless concerns coordinator for the county.

estimate that 18,056 people were homeless through the year.

Before they became homeless, 78 percent of those surveyed had lived in stable housing in Santa Clara County. Roughly 57 percent said they had been homeless only once in the past 12 months, citing job loss as the biggest factor pushing them onto the street.
• Lorena Collins, senior director of program services at InnVision, said one trend she has noticed is **an increasing number of transients with mental health problems** coming to the nonprofit's shelters. With previous budget cuts to mental health programs now "coming into fruition.

PALO ALTO ONLINE

• **On May 29, Mountain View** will begin enforcing an ordinance that addresses aggressive panhandling in public parking lots and median strips. **San Jose** also has a new ordinance that specifically addresses sitting or lying on downtown sidewalks by creating a "pedestrian facilitation zone" where such behavior is prohibited. That will take effect **June 7**.

• **Santa Cruz has had a sit-lie ordinance since April 1994** and in **Santa Barbara** a 13-block stretch of downtown will be protected from sitting or lying during daylight hours beginning tomorrow, **May 22**.

• **The Seattle case goes back to August 1993**, when Seattle City Attorney Mark Sidran drafted a group of proposed ordinances aimed at cracking down on panhandlers in the downtown business district. Sidran said in a memo that downtown shoppers increasingly feared patronizing shops flanked by panhandlers who also posed a safety hazard by obstructing the free flow of foot traffic.

PALO ALTO ONLINE

• "**It's the bad ones that come around here and make a bad impression on the ones trying to do a good job,**" said David "Doc" Stansfield, a homeless veteran who was once a regular fixture on the sidewalk outside Walgreen's. "They don't know how to panhandle."

• "They treat a dog better than human beings," said David Wormley, known as 'Cadillac,' a homeless man who is one of two community representatives on the executive board of Urban Ministry. "A dog can sit or lie on University Avenue, but a human being can't."

• "In Menlo Park, you can earn $15 in two hours."

PALO ALTO ONLINE

here are approximately **500,000 homeless people in the United States** at any one point in time?

. . . **one in five homeless people are employed in full- or part-time jobs**?

. . . approximately **one-third of single adult homeless people suffer from some form of mental illness**?
... at least **50 percent of homeless single adults have been diagnosed as having a drug or alcohol problem?**

... approximately **one-third of single homeless men have served in the U.S. armed forces?**

... **80 percent of homeless veterans are high school graduates?**

@credit:Source: National Coalition for the Homeless (Web site: http://nch.ari.net)

Did you know that: ... there are approximately **150 homeless people in Palo Alto?**

... there are approximately 1,700 people without shelter in Santa Clara County?

... approximately 7,500 experience a period of homelessness during a given year?

... 26 percent of homeless people in Santa Clara County are under the age of 18?

... **78 percent of homeless adults in Santa Clara County are male?**

... 53 percent of homeless people in Santa Clara County graduated from high school, 7 percent are college graduates and 2 percent have postgraduate training? ... 82 percent of Santa Clara County's homeless population state that their income is well below the county's "very low income" level of $27,000 for a four-person household?

... **41 percent of homeless people state that they earn less than $500 per month?**


---*Vicky Anning*

PALO ALTO ONLINE

Police are required to issue a warning, followed by a $100 citation for the first violation (second and third violations are $300 and $500, respectively).

The sit-lie ordinance was adopted by the City Council on March 10 on a 7-2 vote. Council member Jean McCown and Vice Mayor Ron Andersen were staunchly opposed.

**The law bans sitting or lying on University Avenue sidewalks between High and Cowper streets from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. It also prohibits sitting on milk crates or any other device that is not a fixed piece of furniture or provided by a business establishment.**