

## Council members float ideas for homeless shelters



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More than six weeks after Mayor Darrell Steinberg asked all council members to find sites for 100 homeless shelter beds in each of their districts, three members are disclosing potential locations.

\* Councilman Jeff Harris is exploring the possibility of a "Sprung structure" with up to 100 beds on a small portion of the state-owned Cal Expo property near the riverfront. Sprung structures are semi-permanent tent-like facilities that can be erected in a matter of weeks.

City officials have been in talks with Cal Expo's board of directors for months about the idea, and Harris trying is to win the support of the business community, he said.

He would like to devote some city resources toward prohibiting panhandling in the area, and other measures to mitigate the effects of homelessness, before opening the shelter, he said.

"If we can't manage these and not harm a community, nobody will let it happen," Harris said. "So we have to be realistic and allocate enough resources not only to get the shelter up and running, but to manage it and keep it clean, make sure it's not an attractive nuisance, make sure there's no ancillary crime that people can attribute to the shelter."

Harris wants to get at least 200 beds in his district, which includes East Sacramento, the riverfront and parts of north Sacramento. He's looking at several other potential sites.

The Cal Expo is a good option because it's near the riverfront, where many homeless sleep at night, and not near residential areas, he said. The state fair and all other Cal Expo events would not be affected.

\* Councilman Jay Schenirer is looking at a portion of a parking lot near the Florin light rail station owned by Sacramento Regional Transit District as a potential spot for a 100-bed Sprung tent.

Schenirer said he will inform the Sacramento Regional Transit board - which he sits on - Monday about the potential to lease the site to the city. The lease would require approval from the board as well as the City Council.

Schenirer plans to hold a public meeting early next week to gather public input on the idea, he said.

He's also looking at another site, but isn't ready to talk about it yet, he said.

"I'm looking at two sites, each of which can handle 100 individuals, and if I can work out both sites, I'm happy to do that," said Schenirer, whose district includes Oak Park and Curtis Park.

Schenirer's best case scenario is to have 200 beds in the district available by early fall, he said.

\* Councilman Larry Carr said he suggested city staff look at a paved lot near the Meadowview light rail station in his district to see if it could work for a 100-bed Sprung structure.

Carr also suggested the site near the Florin light rail station in Schenirer's district, but said that a shelter should not go on both sites, which are about a mile and a half apart.

"I don't want (the shelters) concentrated in the undeserved areas," he said.

\* Councilman Allen Warren agreed. Warren said he has several potential sites that could work for Sprung tents or tiny homes, but he will not announce them until all the other council members announce sites in their districts.

While the 100-bed Railroad Drive shelter the city opened in December 2017 is located in Harris's district, the closest residents are in Warren's, including the Woodlake neighborhood, he said.

Warren urged his colleagues to announce sites within the next two months.

"The longer this continues to drag, the less likely it is to happen," he said.

\* Councilwoman Angelique Ashby said she plans to house women who are victims of domestic abuse in single-family homes spread throughout Natomas in undisclosed locations.

"There is a really big need for women and children in the city," Ashby said. "They can't go to the (Railroad Drive) triage shelter. I'm seeking to provide an avenue for that population."

Unlike Railroad Drive, which is "low-barrier shelter," residents of the Natomas shelters would be screened for drugs and alcohol - a typical requirement for organizations that serve women and children, Ashby said.

Steinberg originally requested all shelters be low-barrier, but said this week he is supportive of Ashby's idea.

"This is not a cookie cutter operation here," Steinberg said. "I want to meld all my colleagues' passions, talents and perspectives and we want to get thousands of people off the streets."

The homes would offer the "triage" services the Railroad Drive shelter does, though, such as providing residents

with medical and mental health treatment, and help removing the barriers they face in finding permanent housing, such as getting state identification cards, Ashby said.

\* Councilman Steve Hansen is exploring several potential sites, some for a Sprung tent and some for smaller facilities where 10 to 15 people could stay at a time, he said.

"We are looking at every potential option to meet the mayor's goal," Hansen said.

Hansen has a goal to announce potential sites in March or April in his district, which includes midtown, downtown and most of Land Park.

\* Councilman Rick Jennings said he has two to three sites in in his district in retail centers and open areas, and will disclose them when it is narrowed down to one or two, he said.

"I'm hopeful what we have will bear fruit, but if it doesn't, we'll go back out and start looking again," said Jennings, who represents a section of south Sacramento, including Pocket/Greenhaven.

\* Vice Mayor Eric Guerra said it's been difficult to find shelter sites in his southeast Sacramento district, where there is no available city-owned property, but hopes to announce one by the summer and open it before winter.

"It hurts me to see people on a day like this when the wind is so harsh and it's been rainy and they're sleeping in the mud," Guerra said.

What's next

Steinberg plans to announce a proposal to fund several new shelters for several years on or before the council's Budget and Audit Committee meeting Jan. 29, he said. The council will likely approve a funding plan Feb. 12 when it adopts the mid-year budget, he said.

The mayor does not expect any of the members will have announced finalized locations by then, though, he said.

Funding several shelters for several years will take "tens of millions of dollars," using a mixture of private and public funds - from state, local and other sources, Steinberg said.

The city last week received \$5.6 million in state funds, mostly to be used for new shelters. The city won't start receiving the additional revenue from the Measure U sales tax increase until June, but currently has roughly \$15 million in current Measure U revenue in reserves that could be spent on one-time projects, Assistant City Manager Leyne Milstein told the Bee previously. City officials set that money aside in case Measure U failed at the polls in November.

The Railroad Drive shelter was originally supposed to just be open last winter, but city officials extended the lease multiple times, using city money and money donated from Sutter Health, U.C. Davis Medical Center and others.

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