

Stepping Stone Task Force: Recommendations

Task Force Members:

- Chair: Michele Steeb
- 2 service providers Joan Burke and Leo McFarland
- 2 neighborhood reps: Steve Hansen* and Vanessa Dunne
- 2 business reps: Ryan Loofburrow and Greta Lacin
- 1 police rep: Dana Matthes
- 1 homeless rep: John Kraitz
- 1 HomeAid rep: Kerrin West

*joined the task force on November 16

Process:

Continuing the work of the summer task force which was focused on researching best practices, the Stepping Stone task force held it's first of twelve meetings on September 28th.

- After preliminary meetings to review the work of the previous task force and learn about new proposals, the task force scheduled the following meetings on core decision areas.
 1. 9-28 through 11-2—Review the work of the previous task force, finalize task force membership and analyze new proposals
 2. 11-16 and 11-23—Program Details including length of stay, target population and governance
 3. 11-30, 12-7 and 12-14—Security—inside and outside the neighborhood
 4. 1-12—Draft Report

Vision:

- To create a safe and sustainable community that serves as a “Stepping Stone” to permanent housing
- Stepping Stone has four key components:
 - Housing is transitional only
 - Safe and secure
 - Empowering environment
 - Professional outreach and triage support
- Stepping Stone serves as one element of an integrated strategy to end homelessness
- In three years, we want Stepping Stone to be a best practice example and will be admired for a successful track record, innovative programming, and aesthetic appeal.

Rationale for Stepping Stone:

- The nationwide shortage of affordable housing and shelter space has reached crisis proportions accelerated by the economic downturn
- Regionally, although chronic homelessness has fallen by 35%, overall homelessness has increased by 14% and hundreds of individuals and families are being turned away from overflowing shelters each night
- Locally, the need for an outdoor transitional community arose due to a great shortage of affordable housing, as well as the need for an alternative to the traditional emergency shelter system for a segment of the homeless population.
- As proposed, Stepping Stone is affordable and relatively easy to build.
- Stepping Stone will fill a gap in the existing spectrum of homelessness services by implicitly targeting homeless individuals who are not able to be served by emergency shelters or the current capacity of affordable housing.

Characteristics of Successful Communities in Other Cities

	Dignity Village (Portland)	River Haven (Ventura)	Tent City Three (Seattle)	Camp Hope (Ontario)	Pinellas Hope (St. Petersburg)
Size	Small	Small	Medium	Large	Large
Selection Criteria	No Restrictions	Self-Selection	No Restrictions	Self-Selection	No Restrictions
Governance	Self	Joint	Joint	External	External
Security	Community	None	Community	Private	Private
Staffing / Services	Extensive	Hub and Spoke	Minimal	Hub and Spoke	Hub and Spoke
Location in relation to services	Removed	Removed	Next To	Removed	Removed

Recommended Stepping Stone Model:

	Recommendation		
Size	Small (50-100)	Medium (100-200)	Large (200-400)
Selection Criteria	No Restrictions	Self-Selection	Targeted Community
Governance	Self Governance	Joint Governance	External Governance
Security	No Security	Community Security	Private Security
Staffing / Services	Minimal Services	Hub and Spoke	Extensive Support
Location	Next to Services	Close to Services	Removed from Services

Decision Areas	Recommendations
• Size	• Small (50-100)
• Selection Criteria	• Targeted Community
• Governance	• Joint Governance
• Security	• Combination of Community/Private Security
• Staffing / Services	• Hub and Spoke
• Location	• TBD

Recommendation Details:

Size

Small size communities are defined as 50-100 residents. The task force recommends that Stepping Stone has 60 residents with the flexibility to go up to 70 residents to accommodate couples.

Benefits of a small size include:

- Easier to manage
- Facilitates outreach and triage
- Fosters a sense of community and empowerment

Selection Criteria

The task force recommends recruiting and selecting a targeted community for Stepping Stone. The purpose of Stepping Stone is to serve the needs of homeless individuals who meet empowerment success criteria, but who are not being served in current shelter and housing programs.

I. Selection Criteria

1. Sacramento homeless adults without children
2. Clean and sober
3. Commitment to make continual progress on empowerment plan and to transitioning within 12 months. (Though exceptions will be made for up to 18 months for residents who are succeeding but need more time).
4. Able to socialize successfully in a community living environment.

II. Tools

1. Intake surveys to assess sobriety, commitment and ability to live in a community environment.
2. Signed empowerment plan.
3. Residency questionnaire and documentation. (Note: Ontario has been successful utilizing a residency requirement)
4. Three month benchmark check-ins
5. Random and behavior triggered sobriety tests.

Governance and Rules

The task force recommends a joint governance model. Stepping Stone would be managed, with resident input, by a non-profit organization. The non-profit organization would be selected through an RFP process managed by the funding organizations. While the Stepping Stone community would internally develop detailed rules and procedures, the task force recommends a “bedrock” set of rules and procedures as a foundation for the community. These bedrock expectations would not be subject to change by future member of a Stepping Stone community.

I. Board Membership

- Non profit management entity
- Resident (Stepping Stone community resident)
- Neighbor community member (member of neighborhood or community where Stepping Stone is located)
- Governmental representative: County or municipality
- Representative from a mental health, medical provider, or other service provider
- Representative from SafeGround Sacramento
- At Large Member

II. Bedrock Rules

- Behavior must follow the rule of law.
- Stepping Stone will always operate on the principle of non-violence.
- Harassment and retaliation are prohibited
- The behavior of residents must not disrupt the peace, security, safety and order of Stepping Stone
- The behavior of residents must not disrupt the peace, security, safety and order of the community surrounding Stepping Stone
- Residents must be clean and sober.
- Residents are responsible for the behavior of their guests
- Visitors must follow all campus rules
- Visitors allowed only with prior permission; the number of approved visitors will not exceed 10 people.
- No alcohol is allowed on campus

Security

The task force had three meetings solely focused on security. Our final recommendation is split into two parts. The first part indicates areas of consensus. The second part includes a majority recommendation and a minority dissent.

I. Areas of Consensus

- a. Gated/Fenced community
- b. Security cameras
- c. Joint resident/neighborhood patrols
- d. Consistent enforcement of standards and expectations
- e. Security at entrance
- f. Governing council to administer consequences and prevent issues
- g. Strategy to discourage street handouts/street feedings—the strategy could include the use of 211 or a website that addresses how to best provide such services.

II. Private Security

- a. Majority Recommendation: Six task force members strongly recommended private security during the night hours. The consensus of the majority was that it was necessary and beneficial to establish the Stepping Stone community with eight hours of private night time security.
 - i. Staff members of the Sacramento Police Department contacted Police Departments jurisdictions of the communities studied and found two trends:
 1. Due to lack of calls for service, police did not have significant security concerns with the communities.
 2. Most communities have some form of security, (community or combined community and private); two of the five camps have private security.
 - ii. Purpose of Security: The night time security guard is meant to secure the property from potential intruders, loitering around the property, vandalism, and uphold the rules established by the Stepping Stone Council. The security guard will inhibit and report illegal activity or general disruption in the area around Stepping Stone. The security contract should be a complement to the structure, integrity, and quality of life established at the camp.
 - iii. Type and duration of security: based on the experiences of Downtown Partnership and St. John's Shelter, the task force recommends that the non-profit management entity contract with a private security firm and request an experienced officer who would work an eight hour shift. The task force recommends that the initial security hours be from 8 pm to 4 am daily.
 - iv. Potential Reduction/Cessation of Security: One of the reasons that the task force recommended contracting private security was to alleviate concerns about a new and unproven program. As time goes on, the neighborhood and community will have actual data to evaluate. The task force anticipates that the community and neighborhood may work together with the governing board to reduce private security over time.
- b. Minority Opinion: Two members of the task force felt strongly that recommending private security placed an unfair financial burden on the Stepping Stone community without adequate justification, especially since all residents are required to be drug and alcohol free.

- c. Legal Issues: The task force held several discussions about legal issues and in particular about the implications of several laws, including, Government Code Section § 65589.5, the Housing Accountability Act, d Government Code § 65008 and SB 2. During the discussion, two assertions were made:
 - i. Assertion 1: California law prohibits a jurisdiction from requiring more of affordable housing projects than of market-rate housing projects without establishing clear evidence of the need for additional requirements.
 - ii. Assertion 2: SB2 allows exceptions to this provision for standards like security during hours of operation as well as other standards.

The task force agreed that we might need additional legal guidance on this point.

Services/Staffing

The task force recommends a hub and spoke model. In this model, one on-site case manager coordinates and monitors each resident's individual empowerment plan. Residents will be linked to outside services—from one stop career centers to health care in order for them to meet empowerment plan goals. Transportation support will be provided as determined by the non profit management organization.

Length of Residency

Residents will be able to stay at Stepping Stone for up to one year. On a case by case basis, residents may receive a one time six month extension to complete their empowerment plan. Extensions would only be granted to residents who are making a full and dedicated effort to meet their empowerment plan goals.

Funding

The task force discussed the need to consider start-up and on-going funding required for the Stepping Stone community. In this section, there are four types of analysis.

- I. Initial Capital Costs (Start-up)
- II. Projected Yearly Operating Budget
- III. Comparison of Stepping Stone Costs to Alternatives
- IV. Projected Funding Sources

Projected Capital Costs (Start-Up)		
Use	Cost	Notes
Shelter Structures	\$180,000	60 structures at \$3,000/structure
Land Improvement and Central Structures	\$100,000	Bathrooms, Laundry, Outdoor Meeting/Dining Pavilion, Cottages for Provision of Medical/Social Services
Land Purchase or Lease	Minimal	Work with city or county to negotiate
TOTAL	\$280,000	

Projected Yearly Operating Budget

Use	Cost	Notes
Case Management	\$54,000	One full-time onsite social worker/case manager
Private Security @ \$25/hr	\$54,000	Daily eight hour evening shifts of private security
Insurance	\$10,000	Estimate for ~\$1M in liability coverage
Utilities, Food, Transportation	\$30,000	Water, sewage, phones, internet, food, transport
Maintenance and Repairs	\$4,000	Fences, equipment
Administration and Oversight	\$20,000	Administration and oversight fee
TOTAL	172,000	

Comparison of Stepping Stone Costs/Person/Night

Type of Shelter	Cost / Resident / Night	Notes
Dignity Village (Portland)	\$3.90	60 residents; no external security
STEPPING STONE	\$7.85	60 residents with evening private security (this figure is exclusive of the initial capital costs)
Camp Hope (Ontario, CA)	\$8.63	Heavy spending on security, limited services, large population.
Habitat on Wheels (Austin)	\$16.84	Heavy focus on onsite services
River Haven (Ventura, CA)	\$17.45	No rent; not operating at capacity
VOA Winter Shelter, A St, (Sacramento)	\$22.26	24/7 shelter including 3 meals
Bannon Street Shelter (Sacramento)	\$26.51	24/7 shelter including 3 meals
St. John's Shelter	\$32.00	24/7 shelter including 3 meals and comprehensive services for families
Sister Nora's Place	\$33.71	Open 16 hours, 1 meal provided
Shared Housing	\$27.40	Lowest cost permanent housing
Permanent Supportive Housing	\$49.00	Includes housing and associated services
Without Permanent Shelter	\$115.27	Shelter, medical, correctional services

Funding Sources (Year One)

Source	Amount	Committed	Notes
Home Aid	\$50,000	x	Start Up/Land Improvement
Catholic Heath Care West	\$25,000	x	Initial Capital Costs
Sutter	\$50,000	x	On-Going Expenses
Private Donations	\$150,000		Capital Costs—Sleeping Cottages
Non-Profit Sponsors	\$25,000		On-Going Expenses
Foundation Support	\$75,000		Capital Costs
Resident Contribution	\$60,000		On-Going Expenses
Public Contribution	\$20,000		On-Going Expenses
TOTAL	\$455,000		

Next Steps

1. Site Selection and Good Neighbor Policy

The task force is waiting to receive a list of eligible locations from Sacramento city staff. In the location selection process, the following factors will be evaluated:

- Amount of land
- Distance to public transportation
- Meeting with neighborhood stakeholders
- ~~Commitment to work with neighbors and develop a good neighbor policy (note: these policies should be formalized in the contract with the managing non-profit.~~
- Land use requirements and building codes
- Site suitability/cost

2. Evaluations

The Policy Board accountability committee, non-profit management organization, Stepping Stone board and community members need to determine performance outcomes and impact benchmarks, standards, goals and next steps.

3. Full Funding Plan

The proponents of Stepping Stone need to develop a full funding plan to cover start-up and on-going costs.

Timeline:

Note: The task force recommended an aggressive timeline with an opening date of April-May 2010. Based on conversations with specialists after the task force, the following timeline reflects an opening date of September 2010. The commitment of the taskforce—to move forward with a sense of urgency--remains. The timeline below reflects an effort to be responsive to the critical need and realistic about deliverable dates. Any timeline may be impacted by the site location and conditions.

Projected Timeline

Key Date	Action Item
January 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present recommendation
January- March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to stakeholders • Identify private sector and non-profit supporters • Finalize funding plan • Identify and secure site • Address any site specific land use or zoning issues
April- May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present detailed plan to City Council and County Board of Supervisors
May 2010 – August 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete construction of central building and site improvements.
September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Stepping Stone • Monitor results and make small changes to the community as necessary • Begin tracking outcomes: applications, attrition, evictions, placement in permanent housing, etc.
September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an annual formal evaluation of Stepping Stone on performance outcomes and impacts. • Report on performance outcomes and impacts to governing municipality (city council or county).

Summary:

- Stepping Stone provides a solution that is aligned with our broader strategy on homelessness
- Stepping Stone targets those individuals who have previously slipped through the cracks, bringing them into a network of services, to identify their needs and to link them to the appropriate resources and ultimately, to permanent housing.
- Stepping Stone is a necessary component that will complement the overall goal of moving from providing services to the homeless to empowering them to become self-sufficient
- Stepping Stone results in a cost savings to our community of \$38,946 per person annually if we were to ignore the problem and allow these people to remain on the streets. It results in a cost savings of \$14,757 per person annually over moving people into permanent housing, which is not even possible do to the lack of permanent supportive housing currently available.
- To complete the Stepping Stone model, next steps include:
 - Site Location
 - Evaluation Criteria and Process
 - Full Funding Plan

