

**From:** Emily Ballus  
**To:** CSLC Commission Meetings  
**Subject:** Written Comment: Today's agenda item 70 CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION (PARTY):  
**Date:** Friday, April 7, 2023 10:09:06 AM

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**Attention:** This email originated from outside of SLC and should be treated with extra caution.

Chair Kounalakis and State Land Commission Members,

The Stockton Shelter for the Homeless appreciates the opportunity to comment on today's agenda item 70 to share with the Commission how we along with the City of Stockton and other government agencies are currently addressing outreach to homeless encampments on state lands.

For decades, California has had one of the country's largest populations of unhoused people. In recent years, however, the challenges have severely worsened for the Golden State. The homelessness counts in California rose by 42 percent between 2014 and 2020, while the rest of the country had a 9 percent decrease. On any given night, the state has more than 160,000 homeless persons.

About 70 percent of California's homeless live outside a shelter system, sleeping in tents, public open spaces, or vehicles.

The Stockton Shelter for the Homeless has always helped those people who need to temporarily reside in our emergency shelter. Now the agency is working to help those unsheltered homeless who are reluctant to come off the streets.

The Shelter is on state-owned land and works with state partners as well as the City of Stockton and other government agencies to impact a better outcome for our growing unsheltered residents.

Traditional Homeless Population: Sheltered

Our sheltered clients include families, single men and single women, and both single men and single women with children. These people readily seek temporary shelter and are assigned case managers who work with them to sign up for social security, help find jobs, save money, and obtain permanent housing.

The Stockton Shelter for the Homeless provides housing for 37% of the sheltered homeless population (357 out of 941 people) in the county. For over 35 years the Shelter has provided emergency shelter for homeless individuals as they work to regain their self-sufficiency.

New Unsheltered Population:

The Shelter is also pivoting to include outreach to the chronically unsheltered (encamped) population. After much research, interviews with encampment residents, and many regional city and county tours, the Stockton Shelter for the Homeless settled on adding a new Navigation Center. The new Navigation Center is financed by grants from key stakeholders: our largest stakeholder is the City of Stockton, which is joined by San Joaquin County and San Joaquin County Continuum of Care

The Navigation Center is designed to get homeless individuals, who have made the decision to leave the streets and encampments, into the temporary shelter with enriched services to begin a return to stabilized housing. Part of this decision includes being open to oversight while in the program as ongoing as needs include harm reduction management – mental and/or substance abuse help.

Those who enter the Navigation Center will need more assistance than simply shelter to get them back on their feet. They need interventions and are ready to accept those services to help stabilize their everyday living.

Data collected by Yale University suggests clients in harm reduction programs are "really lonely." When they are lonely and have a history of substance use disorders, they continue or re-start to use substances.<sup>1</sup> The Navigation Center design provides a modicum of privacy without isolation to address seclusion pitfalls. 1. <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/yale-study-examines-people-housing>

Navigation Centers have shown strong signs of success in helping chronically homeless people exit homelessness as these Centers are different from traditional shelters.

Navigation Centers have few barriers to entry and provide intensive case management to connect people to the unique care and housing solutions they need. They provide community space and welcome people with partners, pets, and

possessions. Clients receive personalized support to help address housing barriers such as a lack of personal identity documents, employment opportunities, or histories of eviction.

#### No Barriers To Get Into The Shelter

- Assigned bed space that accommodates partners
- Allowed to bring in pets
- Assigned lockers to store their belongings
- Assigned bed space that is separated from others by partition
- Not exited into the streets every morning
- Able to go on and off campus freely
- Not evicted for drug or alcohol use, but guided by behavior modification
- Open 24 hours a day

The operation of the Navigation Center will be laser-focused on getting people housed. Through enhanced care management and connection to various community support resources and services, people will be helped and equipped to connect and sustain permanent and permanent supportive housing.

The Shelter will partner with area nonprofits and county services to provide intense wrap-around-services under one roof:

- Case Management Providers
- Housing Navigation and Placement Services
- Medical Care and Care Coordination
- Substance Use Disorder Services
- Mental Health Treatment
- Benefits Determination and Streamlining Access
- Documentation Assistance
- Employment Assistance
- Financial Literacy Training
- Self-Image/Coping Skills Training
- To end homelessness, a community-wide coordinated approach to delivering services, housing, and programs is a must.
- The Shelter is committed to this coordinated approach moving from our traditional collection of individual organizations' programs to a community-wide response.
- All nonprofits are invited to access the Navigation Center as a base for their services to best approach the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

The Navigation Center will have and serve a finite number of clients who are "enrolled" in the navigational services.

An abundance of data demonstrates that focusing on a finite number of clients in the Navigation Center rather than focusing on the entire homeless population or multiple shelters prevents dilution of success by maintaining the effectiveness of services.

#### Adapting to Today's Homeless Client:

Today's homeless individual is much more assistance-resistant so the Shelter is working to accommodate this new and fastest growing type of client. As Nelson Mandela stated, "There is no passion to be found in playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of leading." The Shelter is partnering with the City of Stockton and other government agencies to implement humane interventions to assist those currently leading unsheltered lifestyles to guide them back into housing and living a life they were meant to lead.

We invite diverse, and disparate, partners and agencies such as the State Land Commission to work alongside the Shelter and Stockton to collectively solve our homelessness crisis.

Thank you for your time.

Emily Ballus  
Board of Directors Member, Stockton Shelter for the Homeless