Bay Area Homeless Services Campus Project

Strategic Plan Conceptual Overview

Recent major plumbing maintenance concerns have accelerated our need for funding for the Men's Shelter/Office Classroom Project envisioned in our current five-year strategic plan. Unfortunately, these plumbing issues have materialized in the most structurally fragile building, our men’s shelter, the hub of our three shelter programs.

Bay Area Homeless Services purchased this building in 1985 with the intent of using it as the central shelter building for our fledgling nonprofit. With its four bedrooms and two bathrooms, the building has served more than 11,500 individuals seeking refuge from the streets. However, the shelter was built as a single-family residence in 1930 and has long outlived its viability as a modern safe, and secure shelter facility.

Our five-year strategic plan, approved by our all-volunteer Board of Directors, called for the eventual demolition of the current administration office building as a site for the men's shelter. This building, also a re-purposed single-family home built in 1930, is on the adjoining lot. Careful planning was necessitated by the fact that the shelter’s property has a special city zoning restriction that allows it to build only on its current set of lots. Further compounding this situation is that we feel the pressing need to house our homeless men on a continuing basis to meet both our mission’ requirements and the demands of the local community.

Men’s Shelter Phase 1a

To accomplish these intertwined imperatives, it was felt best from a program management perspective to continue to house the men in the current location while work was underway to build a new men's shelter on the adjacent lot. Community input, from a series of meetings in 2019, also indicated that nearby community residents did not want a commercial-looking structure to replace the shelter. Therefore, it was decided that building two home-like structures built on the adjacent lots would both improve the local environment, and, most critically, meet the needs of sheltering up to twenty homeless men each night without interruption.

Careful planning for the project indicated a critical need for a smaller structure to be constructed on the same building lot as the current shelter in order to house the four laundry appliances now placed in the current men’s shelter porch addition, as well as provide space for the cold and dry food storage and those appliances in areas lost in the transition of the Phase 1b building from its current use as an office, pantry, food storage area. This “Commons Building” will serve the laundry needs of the shelter’s 15-20 male residents and 15-20 female residents. It will also include a small kitchenette area to serve those residents who work odd hours and cannot eat at the regular mealtimes. This 450 square foot structure will have a concept cost of $55,600.
The most recent dilemma came amid the current pandemic when it was discovered that the upstairs bathroom had become unusable due to rapidly deteriorating plumbing conditions which made further repairs untenable. Years of heavy use, volunteer maintenance problems, and damage caused by a series of severe water leaks had caused the pipes within our walls and downstairs ceiling to lose the “slope” essential for sanitary water flow. Our plumbing contractor advised that temporary repair solutions will not suffice; major reconstructive efforts are required to resolve the problem, and would not be cost-effective due to the age and current condition of the structure itself.

Last year we asked a Board member to draw a sample floor plan for the men’s shelter building with a minimum of five bedrooms and two bathrooms. As drawn, this plan would accommodate up to sixteen residents and have space for leisure activities. A copy of that initial drawing is attached. In subsequent planning sessions, we envisioned a slightly larger building with five bedrooms and personal storage capacity, bringing the total square footage to 1600. As planned, this men’s shelter building will be a straightforward one-level wood frame structure on a concrete slab in keeping with other neighborhood residences. The kitchen area will not be used for cooking because all meal preparation is done at the newer Britton-Fuller Center located on the campus. We estimated the construction costs to be approximately $120 per square foot ($192,000). To determine if this solution was feasible from a construction standpoint we researched online home building plans to find a representative sample of what was envisioned. A copy of that plan is attached, with a representation of what the community can expect when approaching the shelter buildings from the street side. To expedite our timeline, we have a request for design services proposal currently circulating in the Houston-Baytown area to recruit an engineer who will revise our concepts into a workable floor plan.

We have obtained an estimate for the demolition of the office building from a local demolition contractor. This estimate is $5600 for demolition and haul-away of the material provided there is no asbestos on the property. If so, abatement might cost as much as $10,000 more. If the City of Baytown requires that the shelter building must include a Fire Suppression Sprinkler System to meet current building and safety codes, $6400 should be added to the construction cost estimate.

Total conceptual estimated cost of Phase 1a: $269,600 without furnishings (Includes costs of asbestos remediation and fire suppression system)

Administration-Classroom Phase 1b

As quickly as Phase 1a is completed, work can commence on the next phase. As initially conceived, these will be duplicate buildings to eliminate delays in unnecessary changes and to take advantage of economy of scale in materials costs. The only significant difference will be in the proposed usage of the rooms. Instead of bedrooms, the rooms will be used for office space while the living room, dining room areas will be used for small meetings for staff and residents. Speed is a necessity due to the temporary displacement of the administrative workers while Phase 1a construction is in progress. Demolition of the current men’s shelter might be 50% higher because it is a two-story building. The new building will house the administrative and case management staff who were temporarily displaced during phase 1a, and replace storage and classroom space lost during the demolition of the older building.

Total conceptual estimated cost of Phase 1b: $215,000
Total current concept costs of the Campus Project: $485,000

Conclusion:

We understand that there is a critical need to replace two severely deteriorating wood-frame structures built in the 1930s and not designed for their current use. Stopgap measures to slow the deterioration have proven effective to date, but the buildings have now reached the end of their useful life cycle and must quickly be replaced with new structures intentionally designed for the purpose they will serve, and built to serve at least another thirty years without major investments in maintenance. As planned, these structures will meet the agency's long-term facility needs, help fulfill the mission of the agency, and meet or exceed the expectation of the community for the next few decades. All efforts are being made to minimize costs for these buildings while meeting expectations regarding the continuous provision of innovative services for homeless individuals and families in buildings that meet community design guidelines.