

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

From: Ad Hoc Homeless Facility Review Committee

Date: August 5, 2019

Subject: Recommendations from Ad Hoc Homeless Facility Review Committee

Summary of Report

This report represents a summary of the five work sessions held by the Ad Hoc Homeless Facility Review Committee (HFRC). As described in this document, a wide variety of issues were discussed by the group. The Committee has completed the task assigned by the City Council and hereby submits this report for Council information.

Background of Committee

On March 19, 2019, the Yakima City Council appointed six persons to participate in a committee to discuss and make recommendations about a potential facility to be located on the 2.6 acre City-owned land in the vicinity of SR 24 and South 22nd Street. Committee members include:

1. Arboretum representative: Leslie Wahl
2. Expert on programs: Lee Murdock
3. Expert on housing: Nathan Poel
4. Community members: Nathan Krebs, Lynn Thompson and Rhonda Hauff
5. County Representative: County Commissioner Mike Leita
6. City Representative: Mayor Kathy Coffey

City staff support members: Joan Davenport, Sara Watkins, Rosalinda Ibarra

This Committee is considered “Ad Hoc” since the task was to make a limited series of recommendations to the City Council. The Committee was asked to address the following three general items: (a) the nature of housing which may be appropriate and needed, (b) the services potentially available on site and (c) the physical attributes of development at this location, including site-screening and other related topics. The Committee had 5 work sessions:

<u>Date (3:30 – 5:00 PM)</u>	<u>Agenda Topic</u>
1: April 1, 2019	Overview - affordable housing & homeless context
2: April 22, 2019	Site considerations, opportunities and constraints
3: May 6, 2019	Support services – capacity and case management
4: June 3, 2019	Construction funding & Operation/Maintenance
5: June 26, 2019	Review report recommendations

Initial Assessment and Review:

Initial discussions related to this site were centered on a facility to accommodate a low barrier emergency shelter. The need for a low barrier shelter¹, open to all, is the foundation for enforcement of the City no-camping ordinance and other related policies.

The committee had robust discussions about the lack of affordable housing in Yakima especially for the very low income population. The concept of a facility that provided some shelter beds, some transitional housing and case management with direct services was discussed by the Committee. The Committee recognized that this site provides viable opportunities to be part of a broad community effort addressing affordable housing needs.

There was broad recognition that community education and dialogue at the City Council level is going to be important to implementing a successful strategy to reduce homeless populations in the community.

The Committee had discussion about the relationship of this site to Camp Hope, and whether this potential project could replace the current Camp. The modifications to resident policies at the Union Gospel Mission and its role in providing emergency shelter was also discussed. Other projects like the Veterans project at the Armory and the renovation of Roy's Market to the RDH Transitional Housing Center, Emergency Shelter for Youth and Young Adults were cited as contributing to the overall improvement in the reduction of homelessness.

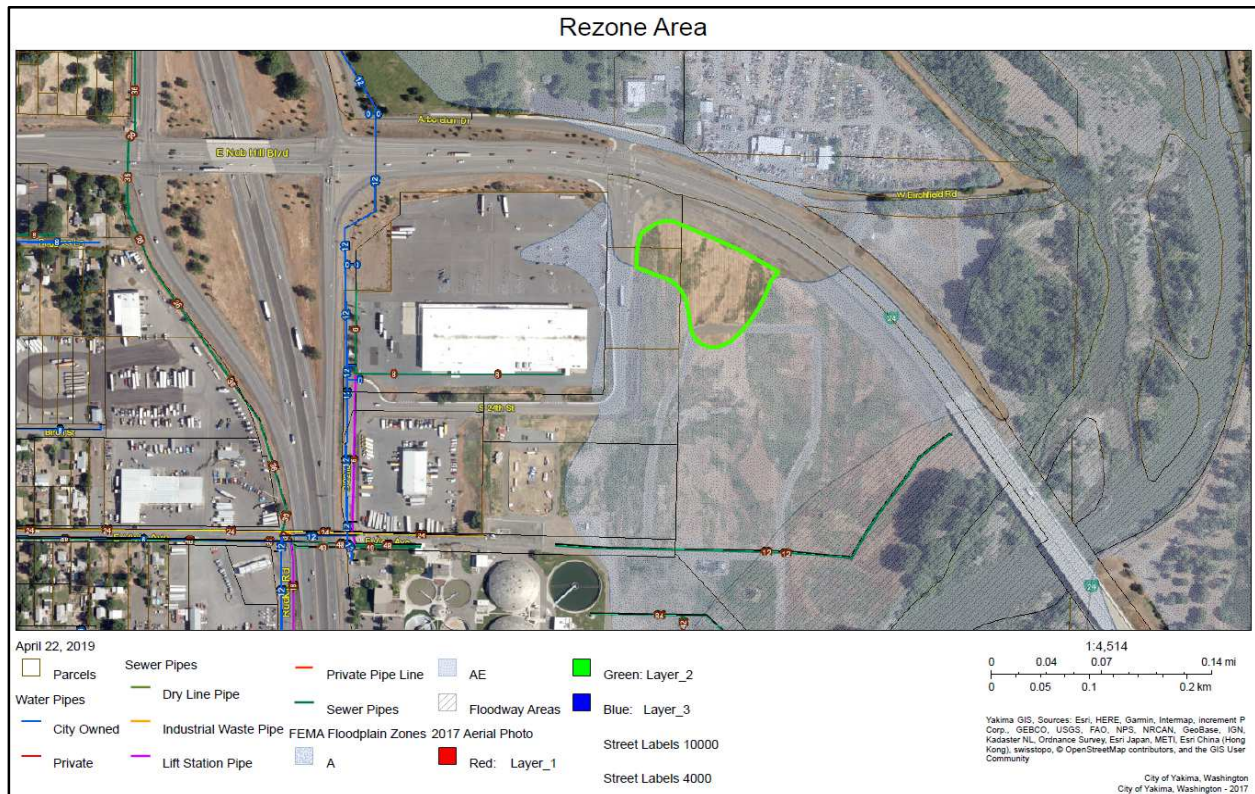
Why Here? Strengths and Weakness of the Site:

The Committee acknowledged this site may not be optimal for housing: it feels remote, there is no public transit, the location is not walkable from town or close to services. Adjacency to the Wastewater Plant may create odor or noise problems. They wrestled with why the City is offering only this site.

The property is located within the Greenway Overlay of the Zoning Ordinance. This region is identified as the "Northwest Section of the Riverside Conservation Area" (see page 18 of the 1995 Greenway Master Plan). A public hearing would be required for any development in the Overlay district. The Greenway Plan notes "Encourage future commercial development to adhere to Greenway design

¹ Low Barrier Emergency Shelter generally means sobriety not required for entry, open 24-7, harm reduction methods apply, and various other attributes. Low-barrier shelters emphasize welcoming guests in as they are, while having clear and simple behavioral expectations that apply to anyone residing in the shelter. These expectations are narrowly focused on maintaining a safe environment for all. (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness)

standards”. Landscaping along Highway 24 and along the development would likely be required as part of the development review.



An appeal from the Yakima Greenway has been filed in Superior Court to stop the rezone of this property and another appeal action has been filed at the Washington State Growth Management Hearings Board. Until these actions are resolved, the City will not pursue any plans for this site. These cases are tentatively scheduled to be reviewed in court in late 2019. The City Council will direct the time schedule for seeking a partner to design and fund a project for this site.

On-Site Services and Case Management

The crucial role of support services and tailored case management in helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness was the topic of the third Committee meeting. Preliminary data from the 2019 Point in Time (PIT) Homeless Count was provided to the Committee. Preliminary 2019 PIT data indicated 108 unsheltered individuals in Yakima County. This data is not consistent with the 2018 results which had higher homeless population numbers.

Additionally, the county’s Coordinated Entry system (the prioritization of literally homeless people in most need) currently reflected 270 people on the registry, and of those 120 chronically homeless.

Outreach and Engagement was identified as an important component of the Continuum of Care to bring individuals experiencing homelessness into services. Case management does occur by some organizations with unsheltered individuals (i.e. not everyone waits until a person is housed to provide case management services).

With respect to the proposed facility site, there was discussion of the need for a variety of services. Funding will be an issue if we decide to re-create space for multiple services and service providers. It is more prudent to maximize the space for housing (emergency and supportive housing), and coordinate access to existing community services. We need to invest in the housing.

Although not all services need be located at this site, some facility space should include areas set aside for small meeting rooms and meeting rooms large enough to accommodate groups. Professional counselors, case managers, health care and care coordinators could be located on-site. The actual service population and managing partner characteristics will dictate which on-site services would be provided, and which might be provided remotely.

Transportation from this facility site to services, clinics, training, commercial areas and other necessities should also be considered a required component of the proposed project. It was noted that since this site is inside the City Limits, public transit may be available in the future.

Design of a Mixed Use Facility

This summer, a 6-story center will open in the Portland Metropolitan area called “The Blackburn Center”. This facility will be operated by “Central City Concern” and includes 80 units of transitional low-income single room occupancy, 34 permanent housing units, 51 units of respite care emergency housing and 10 units of palliative care housing. Support services include employment training, housing placement and coordination with other systems. Project cost is estimated at \$52 Million. The Blackburn Center was discussed by the Yakima Ad Hoc committee as a model for incorporating a wide range of housing with integrated services dedicated to the mission of ending homelessness. The building is attractive and looks like an apartment complex from the street.

The Ad Hoc Homeless Facility Review Committee had a discussion of “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED). This analysis is usually reserved for review of new or existing structures. The principals of CPTED were discussed in the Committee, as they could be a requirement for any subsequent project that involves housing and homeless services in this location. Considerations should be given to careful placement of landscaping materials, fencing, campus lighting and natural surveillance opportunities. Any

development at this site should be intentional about design of public space and resident or private space.

After robust discussion, the Committee did not make a recommendation about the minimum number of beds or housing units for this site. Rather, it should be one of the outcomes of a future Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or Request for Proposals (RFP) process determines who the development partner will be, what the source of funding and the details of the project.

Funding and Timelines for Development

Site development planning and funding is a lengthy process. It is not unusual for a non-profit developer who is piecing together grant cycles and land decisions to take years from the initial conceptual plan to occupancy. The process involves a complex series of decisions, funding partners and program requirements.

Given the variety of funding programs, there is often many monitoring requirements, affordability standards and a multitude of reporting rules. Development of a project at this location will take time and will require community patience.

Timeline Estimations

1. Appeal of Rezone, status end of 2019:
 - a. Rezone status to be decided in court before end of 2019. If denied by judge, the property remains zoned Suburban Residential and residential development will not likely proceed.
 - b. If rezone is settled as approved and the site is zoned General Commercial by the end of 2019, the City can proceed with process.
2. Partner begins site development and assembling funding plan (1 to 3 years)
3. City works with Yakima County to complete utility extension from Camp Hope to the rezone site. (1 year, after rezone approved)
4. Partner agency breaks ground: 2 to 4 years after RFP awarded.
5. Maintain Camp Hope in present location as necessary. Work with UGM and others to develop low barrier emergency, short term shelter options.

The Right Project and the Right Partner

The purpose of a procurement process is for the City of Yakima to select a partner with an outside agency or business. There may be a wide spectrum of solutions offered for this site. The City may choose to begin a selection process limited to a “Letter of Intent” for interested agencies. Possible solutions may include the following elements:

1. Emergency shelter beds or units,
2. Transitional or permanent supportive housing units,
3. Case management and direct outreach/client services

4. A commitment to evidence-based practices proven effective with chronically homeless populations such as housing first, trauma informed care and harm reduction.

There is significant housing expertise in the Yakima Valley with experience in construction and management of a mixed use development. The RFP/RFQ will outline the proposed goals of the 2.6 acre site. The ideal partner will have a proven track record in building and maintaining successful projects; the ability to form service partnerships and the ability to construct a feasible funding plan.

Summary Statement from the Homeless Facility Review Committee

The meetings held by the Ad Hoc Homeless Facility Review Committee were informal. Meeting notes were kept by City staff and available. The Committee recommends to the City Council:

1. The subject site has limitations, but the City should proceed with a process to determine interest from the housing provider community in a housing project for this location.
2. Once the land use appeal has been resolved, the City may begin the procurement process within 90 days from the lawsuit settlement.
3. The potential facility may be a more than a low barrier shelter and should include some transitional housing and some support services with outreach or case management. The program specifics would be vetted in public process (RFP, RFQ, Letter of Interest, or some)
4. When selecting a future partner, the City Council is encouraged to give priority to an agency/business that has a proven track record of maintaining and operating facility plans.