



April 11, 2021

Statement of Support for new Kennedy Shelter at Beacon Hill Rd and Richmond Highway

Since it was formed in the mid-1970s, the South County Task Force has supported a decent shelter for homeless people in the Richmond Highway area. We continue to see that as one of our primary goals.

The current 100-year old Kennedy Shelter is so worn out that it cannot be rehabilitated or expanded. A new facility must be constructed as soon as possible. It has been five years since a bond was approved by voters to build a new facility.

Our criteria for a new shelter is that it must be along a main transit route so residents can get to jobs and services, and that it be constructed as a modern facility recognizing the need for resident care and space, be open for services during the day, provide supportive services, and help residents through a continuum of housing including permanent supportive housing. It must also open as soon as possible.

We support building a replacement for the Kennedy Shelter at the location selected by the county at Beacon Hill Rd and Richmond Highway and co-located with the new Penn Daw Fire Station. This location is in the heart of the new high-density transit-oriented Beacon Hill community development center of EMBARK to be built around a Bus Rapid Transit station and possibly a future metro station. The area is planned for an additional 3,500 dwelling units (condos and townhouses) with heights of up to 22 stories west of Richmond Highway and 4 stories east of Richmond Highway. We think this site could support buildings even higher than 4 stories to accommodate more affordable housing.

This shelter should include at least 20 units of permanent supportive housing, medical respite beds, a kitchen, laundry, community rooms, outdoor terrace, and other essentials of a modern homeless shelter as exemplified at the Bailey's Shelter and Supportive Housing Facility. The site should also include at least 30-50 units of affordable housing units as recommended by the department of Housing and Community Development.

We encourage the county to actively engage with current neighbors to address their concerns. We advocate offering neighbors an amenity, such as use of the former fire station site for a community center or other use in exchange for accepting what they perceive as a risk. There should also be an

ongoing neighborhood advisory council as at other shelters to deal with any issues between the shelter and neighborhood.

According to the county timeline, completing the shelter-fire station would take six years. When added to the five years since the bond was approved to pay for the shelter, that means our homeless population is waiting over a decade from funding to opening—too long a time for such an urgent need. We urge the county to reassess the timelines to see if the shelter can be opened sooner, perhaps ahead of the fire station.

Approved by the South County Task Force Steering Committee April 8, 2021.

Sincerely,

Mary Paden

Mary Paden, Chair