This body of articles is produced in one document under the Fair Use Clause of the Copyright Act, as an exhibit (mixed in with pieces about the concurrent attempted RV ban during 2024 election season) for the sole purpose of asking for judicial notice that a tenants' union attempted to exist at the Vehicle Triage Center (VTC). Some writing by Mayor London Breed re. the VTC is included. The articles only about VTC are #33 (from time of opening in Jan 2022 until March 3, 2025) ending with late March 2025 quotes out of a documentary called “Home Lost”, with a representative from HSH speaking re. new safe parking sites and closure of VTC.

Media coverage begins Sept 2021:

https://abc7news.com/candlestick-state-park-point-san-francisco-sf-rv/11038943/

Controversy over proposed Vehicle Triage Center in SF's Candlestick Point neighborhood

By Melanie Woodrow KGO/ Wednesday, September 22, 2021

The proposed plan would provide spaces for unhoused people living in RVs and cars in San Francisco's Candlestick Point

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- A drive along the Hunters Point Expressway perimeter of Candlestick State Park reveals hundreds of RVs. A closer look reveals trash, human waste and needles. Residents say in addition to being unsightly, much of this is a fire hazard.

"We are not being NIMBY's, 'I don't want you in my backyard,' but something has to be done," said Bayview resident Shirley Moore.

Moore is the Bayview Hill Neighborhood Association Vice President. She says she is against a proposed Vehicle Triage Center at the boat launch site of Candlestick State Park.

The proposed plan would provide spaces for unhoused people living in RVs and cars.

"We want equity. That's all we want is equity in the community, so we feel sorry for the unhoused, but we need to spread the unhoused and disenfranchised around the city," said Moore.

San Francisco Supervisor Shamann Walton says the Vehicle Triage Center, or VTC, would address residents' growing concerns.

District Attorney Chesa Boudin hosted a summit Wednesday to address health issues on San Francisco's streets and how they issues impact public safety.

"All of the concerns that they have get addressed by this, 24 hour security, restrooms, they're going to be able to receive wrap around services and of course the ultimate goal is to connect

them to long-term housing. Folks who are against this proposal are basically saying they want it to remain stagnant," said Supervisor Walton.

As for putting the VTC somewhere else, "I can't tell you what's happening in other areas in terms of why we wouldn't put this there, but I can tell you that these people who are living in vehicles now are already here," said Supervisor Walton.

Residents who are opposed to the VTC say it threatens to further marginalize a community already subject to tenuous economic conditions.

"It's clear that the city's policies are to move this problem into the Bayview," said Bayview resident Timothy Alan Simon.

"I would not be proposing this as a solution if I didn't think this was going to be successful and if we had other solutions that were going to address their needs quicker," said Supervisor Walton.

Supervisor Walton says there will be additional community meetings about the VTC, which will then go to the Board of Supervisors for a vote

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October 2021 Announcement of VTC from Mayor's office:

https://sfmayor.org/article/california-department-parks-authorizes-city-use-vehicle-triage-center-candlestick-park

California Department of Parks Authorizes City Use of Vehicle Triage Center at Candlestick Park

Thursday, October 21, 2021

New center at the Park Boat Launch parking lot will provide safe space for people experiencing vehicular homelessness to sleep and access stabilizing services

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed, Supervisor Shamann Walton, and the California Department of Parks today announced the approval of a Vehicle Triage Center (VTC) at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area's (SRA) Park Boat Launch Parking Lot. The new program will provide a secure location and services for people living in their vehicles in close proximity to Candlestick Point SRA. The authorizing resolution was approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, October 19th, and by the California State Lands Commission on Thursday, October 21st.

The Vehicle Triage Center will include up to 150 parking spaces for up to 177 people, 24/7 staffing and security, lighting, electricity, bathrooms, mobile shower facilities, potable water, and

mobile blackwater pumping services. The VTC will provide people living in their vehicles in the immediate area with a safe place to park and live and access to services designed to help stabilize their lives through health care, housing, employment, or other interventions that meet their unique needs.

“As we continue to move forward with our historic Homelessness Recovery Plan and work to get people off the streets, we must find solutions for our unhoused population living in their RVs or in their cars,” said Mayor Breed. “This Vehicle Triage Center will provide individuals with a safe place to sleep, regular access to stabilizing services, and an opportunity to move forward on their path out of homelessness.”

"This vehicle triage center will bring badly-needed security, services, and hygiene facilities to the Candlestick Point Recreation Area," said Assemblymember David Chiu (D-San Francisco). "The center will improve conditions for all Candlestick Point residents and help connect those living in their vehicles to permanent housing solutions. I was happy to work with community members and city leaders to help secure funding in our state's budget to make this project a reality."

“The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many negative impacts and the number of people who are unhoused has been exacerbated as a direct result. Many people have been forced to live in their vehicles as our shelter capacity is down and the lack of available affordable housing,” said Board of Supervisors President Shamann Walton. “The number of people living in their vehicles around the old Candlestick Park has created a situation that needs immediate and direct attention. The Vehicle Triage Center will provide a space for this population to live in dignity, while addressing concerns of the surrounding community. We cannot ignore the need for support and this compassionate response will resolve a lot of expressed concerns. I want to thank the community, California Department of Parks and City leadership for stepping up and providing a solution that benefits all.”

“Vehicular homelessness is a growing issue in our community,” said Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. “The VTC offers a real opportunity to move people out of encampments and into a safe location where they can access services and transition out of homelessness.”

San Francisco’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) will contract with a nonprofit organization to operate and provide services at the Candlestick Point VTC. HSH is in the process of selecting an operator and service provider for this project. The operator/service provider will be selected based on their expertise working with people experiencing homelessness and expertise in managing shelters and/or Vehicle Triage Centers.

The proposed VTC is intended to be temporary, and the City is negotiating a two-year lease with California State Parks.

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https://sfmayor.org/article/mayor-london-breed-announces-opening-bayview-vehicle-triage-center

Mayor London Breed Announces Opening of Bayview Vehicle Triage Center

Friday, January 21, 2022

New Center at the Candlestick State Recreation Area Boat Launch Parking Lot will deliver critical services to people living in vehicles

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) today announced the opening of the new Bayview Vehicle Triage Center (VTC) at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area's (SRA) Park Boat Launch Parking Lot. The new Center will provide a safe space to sleep and access to stabilizing services for people experiencing vehicular homelessness in close proximity to Candlestick Point SRA.

The City and County of San Francisco, together with the California State Parks and a task force of Bayview community leaders, proposed the development of a temporary VTC at the underutilized site in District 10 in March 2020. The authorizing resolution was approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and by the California State Lands Commission in October 2021.

"We must take advantage of every opportunity we get, and all do our part to ensure that our unhoused residents have a safe place to sleep and regular access to stabilizing services," said Mayor Breed. "As we continue to move forward with our Homelessness Recovery Plan, we must find solutions for people living in their RVs or their cars and provide them with a path out of homelessness. I want to thank the California State Parks for their partnership and the residents of the Bayview for their support of this critical Center."

The Bayview VTC will include up to 135 parking spaces for 203 people, 24/7 staffing and security, bathrooms, mobile shower facilities, potable water, and mobile blackwater pumping services. Additionally, the Center will provide people living in their vehicles in the immediate area with access to services designed to help stabilize their lives through health care, housing, employment, or other interventions that meet their unique needs and lead to a permanent exit from homelessness. The Bayview VTC will be funded by Proposition C, which voters passed in 2018, and newly secured state resources.

"This vehicle triage center will improve conditions in the neighborhood for all by providing badly-needed services, security, and hygiene facilities," said City Attorney David Chiu. "As an Assemblymember, I was happy to work with community groups to secure funding in the state budget for this site."

"The Candlestick area has been under-resourced, neglected, and overrun with challenges for way too long. For years, our housed neighbors living in the Candlestick area have been calling

on the City to tackle these very issues," said District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton. "All of our community members deserve to live in a neighborhood that's clean and safe and our vehicularly housed folks deserve access to basic services like restrooms, electricity, and pathways to housing. This VTC is the first step towards answering the calls of all our neighbors in the area who deserve better."

"With the Bayview VTC, we continue to develop innovative approaches to the growing issue of vehicular homelessness in our community," said Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. "The purpose of the Bayview VTC is to offer stability to individuals and families and to provide a transition from living in vehicles to housing and services that offer an end to their homelessness."

"As we continue to face tough challenges during these unprecedented times of the pandemic, State Parks is proud to partner with the City and County of San Francisco to help ease the homelessness issue in the Bayview community while providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area," said Maria Mowrey, Bay Area District Superintendent, California State Parks.

HSH will contract with nonprofits Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation to operate and provide services at the Center. Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation were selected jointly based on their success and demonstrated expertise working with people experiencing homelessness. The proposed Bayview VTC is intended to be temporary, as the City has negotiated a two-year sublease for the Center with the California State Parks.

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https://www.sfexaminer.com/archives/san-francisco-opens-service-center-for-people-living-in-cars-rvs/article_81753812-ed2a-5057-9a5c-3035eeb07161.html

San Francisco opens service center for people living in cars, RVs
Jan 24, 2022/SF Examiner

San Franciscans who live in their vehicles now have a space with access to bathrooms, showers and other services.

The long-awaited Bayview Vehicle Triage Center opened Friday at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area's boat launch parking lot. It is a joint project between The City, California State Parks and residents in Bayview-Hunters Point.

The center includes as many as 135 parking spaces for 203 people, and will have 24-hour security and staff onsite, as well as bathrooms, showers, and water access. Residents will also have access to services such as health care, assistance with housing and job placement.

“We must take advantage of every opportunity we get, and all do our part, to ensure that our unhoused residents have a safe place to sleep and regular access to stabilizing services,” Mayor London Breed said in a statement. “As we continue to move forward with our Homelessness Recovery Plan, we must find solutions for people living in their RVs or their cars and provide them with a path out of homelessness.”

A report released by the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing in June found the Bayview District is the neighborhood impacted most by vehicular homelessness, with some 677 vehicles being used for shelter in the area.

“The Candlestick area has been under-resourced, neglected and overrun with challenges for way too long. For years, our housed neighbors living in the Candlestick area have been calling on The City to tackle these very issues,” said Board of Supervisors President Shamann Walton, whose district includes the Bayview. “All of our community members deserve to live in a neighborhood that’s clean and safe and our vehicularly housed folks deserve access to basic services like restrooms, electricity and pathways to housing. This VTC is the first step towards answering the calls of all our neighbors in the area who deserve better.”

The center is being funded by November 2018’s Proposition C, a gross tax receipts initiative to pay for homelessness services.

The center will be operated by the nonprofit organizations Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation.

According to city officials, the site is temporary as the city has negotiated a two-year lease with California State Parks.

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https://sfist.com/2022/01/21/bayview-rv-lot-for-homeless-opens-but-many-resist-moving-in-for-lack-of-electricity-resources/

Bayview RV Lot for Homeless Opens, But Many Resist Moving in For Lack of Electricity Resources

21 January 2022/ Joe Kukura

The new “vehicle triage center” opened Wednesday at Candlestick Point, but those who’ve been invited to stay are balking at the idea because propane tanks and generators are prohibited.

San Francisco has only ever had one sanctioned place where people experiencing homlessness could live in RVs and vehicles, the vehicle triage center next to Balboa Park BART that opened in late 2019 and remained until March 2021. And it was a magnificent success, in

large part because the unique (very industrial) landscape of that area made it so neighborhood residents did not really even notice it was there.

And if you ever traversed the Balboa Park BART during that period, you probably walked right by it and didn't notice it either.

In an attempt to duplicate that success with a longer-term model, the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center opened Wednesday at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area's Park Boat Launch Parking Lot.

But the Chronicle reports that many people with invites are unwilling to relocate there, because it has very limited electricity hookups, and prohibits propane tanks and electricity generators.

"That pretty much makes your RV a storage unit," vehicle dweller B.A. Anderson tod the Chronicle.

"No one would say, 'I'm gonna rent this house to you, but you can't cook.' Treat people like human beings."

The site does have running water for those dwelling there, but it sounds as if the hot water is hardly reliable.

And the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHHS) is vowing to add more electrical hook-ups, they are unwilling to budge on the propane tank and generator bans, considering the fire risk those devices pose.

"There are long-term plans for power, but it's going to take a little while to be up and running, so we are working on an intermediate solution," DHHS deputy director Emily Cohen told the Chronicle.

"There's limited power capacity available currently."

There is also another matter of Bayview residents being none too happy about the lot, because they feel they already deal with the lion's share of vehicle dwelling in San Francisco.

And to that end, the Candlestick Height Community Alliance filed a lawsuit against the city on November 29, 2021 seeking to end the program.

That Bayview vehicle triage center is only slated to stay open for two years.

But concerns from people who live near there, and additional concerns from people who've been invited to live there but just don't want to, may pull the plug on this effort long before its time.

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https://londonbreed.medium.com/san-franciscos-next-steps-on-expanding-the-city-s-shelter-program-93183d3fde31

San Francisco's Next Steps on Expanding the City's Shelter Program

By Mayor London Breed Jul 20, 2022

Our recent Point in Time Count found that San Francisco saw a 15% reduction in unsheltered homelessness since 2019 and an overall reduction in homelessness. San Francisco was the only county in the Bay Area that saw this level of decrease. While this is progress, we have so much work to do.

That includes adding more housing to help people transition off the street. In July 2020, we set a goal of adding 1,500 new units of permanent supportive housing over two years. We dramatically exceeded that goal by securing 3,000 new units, which are in various stages of leasing up now.

It also includes programs that prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place like rent support and flexible financial assistance. For those who might be on the edge of homelessness and just need to get a little support these programs can be a lifeline so they don't fall into a much more difficult situation that is harder, and more expensive, to get out of.

Additionally, building more housing overall and ensuring we have stronger mental health support, services, and treatment for those struggling with addiction.

Finally, our work must include more shelter. In the next few months, we will be adding over 1,000 shelter beds to our system, either through opening new shelters or expanding our existing shelter system that was downsized during COVID. As we add new shelter, it's important that we learn the lessons from COVID about having diverse interventions that best serve our needs.

Diversifying Shelter Options: New concepts

While our traditional congregate shelters and navigation centers will always be part of our Homelessness Response System, our experience with COVID and feedback from people experiencing homelessness have informed our strategy for new shelter concepts.

For example, we are opening two new shelters, a semi congregate shelters at 711 Post and a non-congregate shelter the Baldwin Hotel, with 430 beds available for those who are living on our streets. These beds are not the traditional shelter model with congregate sleeping quarters. Instead, we are creating non-congregate situations to provide more privacy with a few people grouped together. We learned during COVID that having private and semi-private rooms can help us in bringing more people in off the streets. The units at 711 Post are a mix of singles, doubles, and quads. Doors will open to welcome guests beginning Monday, July 25, 2022.

The units at 711 Post are a mix of singles, doubles, and quads. Doors will open to welcome guests beginning Monday, July 25, 2022.

On top of this, we are also adding new shelter cabins like we have done on Gough Street, with funding in our budget for 70 new cabins in the Mission.. Again, these are good alternative options for those who want to be off the street but have struggled in the traditional shelter system.

We are also continuing to provide local funding to keep three shelter in place hotels open even as our federal funding that supported this program goes away. These shelter in place hotels are a good step towards getting people into permanent housing.

Finally, we are doing the work to add more vehicle triage centers. Vehicular homelessness is a significant driver of our unsheltered population, and these sites can serve as a location where people can move their vehicles off the street and get connected to services or access to services and stable housing.

Utilizing our Traditional Shelter System

All of this work to diversify our shelter system doesn't mean we are giving up on our traditional shelter system. Congregate shelter is an essential part of helping to get people quickly off the street so we can get them in line for housing.

During COVID, dramatically reduce our shelter capacity, but we have been adding more capacity slowly, and now we are taking significant steps to add back shelter capacity in our existing shelter system over the next few months. Our plan is to add back 592 beds to our traditional shelter system by September.

The Bayview SAFE Navigation Center opened in 2021 and currently has a maximum capacity of 116 people.

The Bayview SAFE Navigation Center opened in 2021 and currently has a maximum capacity of 116 people.

Combined with the new beds coming online at 711 Post and the Baldwin, that means over 1,000 new beds will be available by September that we don't have today for people who are unsheltered. As all of these beds come on line, our outreach teams will be able to quickly move people off the streets and into shelter, where staff can work with them on finding a permanent exit from homelessness. And across all of our shelter models, we're committed to creating environments where people have the support and tools they need to find stability.

Outreach and Support

As we add all these resources, we have to be clear that people are not allowed to set up tents on our streets and sidewalks when we have places for them to go. For residents with particularly complex needs, we will use all available resources to get them the appropriate assistance and on the pathway to recovery. For people exhibiting harmful behavior or continually refusing assistance, we will use every tool we have to support their welfare, ensure the safety of our neighborhoods, and get them into care.

San Francisco launched the Healthy Streets Operations Center (HSOC) in 2018 to coordinate the City's response both to homeless encampments and to behaviors that impact quality of life in San Francisco's public spaces. Photo credit: Public Works

Our crisis response and outreach teams are out there every day encountering people in complex and challenging circumstances. There are people who clearly need and want help and it is our goal to use every available resource to get people connected to housing, or on the pathway to recovery. But there are others who are already housed or in shelter who are also setting up these tents. Here's an example: recently there was an encampment of 17 tents and three vehicles set up in and around a state-owned parking lot on Golden Gate and Franklin. Multiple city departments worked with state agencies since they own the land, to do outreach over multiple days to those living in the lot. Our team did some incredible work and got 15 people into shelter. This included a family of three with a young child and a longtime homeless couple that had not previously been in shelter for years, who now is working on applications for housing. That is the success of our services.

However, there were also two people living there who already had places in our shelter system, and a few others who refused any help and who relocated to another location. We are continuing to engage with them, but we can't let them just set up tents on our streets. We are committed to helping those in need. But we cannot continue to allow people who we have offered shelter or housing, to continue to camp on our streets. That is not acceptable for our residents, our workers, and our small businesses.

https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/01/14/exhausting-battle-groups-lawsuit-claims-sf-generating-diesel-pollution-at-triage-center/

Exhausting battle: Group's lawsuit claims SF generating diesel pollution at triage center

January 14, 2023
In "Environment"

RVs can be seen parked at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center near the South Basin in San Francisco on Jan. 10, 2023. The city has been sued for allegedly operating 16 unpermitted diesel generators to service homeless people living at the site. (Photo by Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

A citizen group has filed a lawsuit in federal court against the city of San Francisco, alleging that diesel generators at a city-run "vehicle triage center" in the Candlestick Point State Recreational Area violate the Clean Air Act. The suit asks the U.S. District Court to enjoin the city from violating the act and requests civil penalties of up to $109,000 per day for each violation.
The center sits on the San Francisco Bay in a remote parking lot at the water's edge, just across an inlet from Hunters Point. The city leases the site from the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

The city opened the center at that location in 2021 and, according to the plaintiff's complaint, intended for it to serve as a temporary shelter for unhoused individuals living in their vehicles. It was originally anticipated that up to 150 vehicles would use the center, each with a connection to electricity. According to the complaint, the city believed the location was "optimal" for the intended use, at least in part because the site had existing infrastructure, including water, sewer and electrical poles for lights.

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center at Candlestick Point in San Francisco is shown. (Google image)

The complaint alleges that notwithstanding those expectations, there is no permanent electrical service to the site and instead the city provides electricity through a cluster of 16 diesel generators that it installed and put into service without obtaining a permit under the federal Clean Air Act.

The complaint alleges that several months after the 16 generators were put into service, the city applied for permits from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to operate three large fossil fuel generators to supply power for daily needs at the center. However, the city allegedly did not disclose in its permit application that it was already serving the site with the 16 unpermitted generators.

The plaintiff believes that the city has created a dangerous and unsafe situation at the site and in the surrounding residential areas. According to the complaint, “pollution emitted from diesel generators is the number one source of cancer risks among toxic air contaminants in California.”

The complaint states that the Bayview District has a disproportionate share of San Francisco’s industrial sites, brownfields, and leaking underground fuel tanks, and points out that “these are the areas where the city’s community of color lives: 89 percent of Bayview residents are Asian-American, Black, and Hispanic, according to the most recent census data.”

The complaint recounts a history of land use decisions by the city that have allegedly burdened the Bayview area with pollutants and harmful materials, including a wastewater treatment plant, and an industrial center with multiple tenants who allegedly process concrete material, emitting harmful particulate into the atmosphere.

“The Center still lacks electricity. Children lack light, except through the illegal operation of the generators, to do homework.” Plaintiffs’ complaint
An October count found there were 47 vehicles parked at the center.

No permit for the new generators has been issued, according to the complaint, and the city continues to operate the 16 generators without a permit.

An attempt to visit the site Tuesday was unsuccessful because security guards from a company identified as Urban Alchemy, a city contractor, denied access, even though it is located on public land.

The city has not yet responded to the filing. Jen Kwart, the city attorney’s communications director responding to a request for comment, stated, “The City strives to protect our environment and enhance the quality of life for all San Franciscans. Once we are served with the lawsuit, we will review the complaint and respond appropriately.”

The lawsuit, which was filed Jan. 6, has been assigned to U.S. Magistrate Judge Sallie Kim.

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/02/15/bayview-vehicle-triage-center-woes-expose-challenge-of-alternative-shelter-approaches

GIVING SHELTER: SAN FRANCISCO'S QUEST TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS

Bayview Vehicle Triage Center woes expose challenge of alternative shelter approaches

February 15, 2023

In "Amplifying Voices"

A sign marks the entrance to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco — a temporary refuge for homeless residents from life on the streets. Now more than 13 months into a two-year pilot program, the Bayview VTC has been an expensive and problematic venture, from residents complaining about the quality or lack of basic amenities, to a lawsuit over the use of unpermitted diesel generators on the site. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

IN JANUARY 2022, when the city announced a new program in Bayview with the opaque title "vehicle triage center," it seemed a rare win-win in the world of big city homelessness strategy. The Bayview VTC would offer a "safe parking" area where people living in their cars or RVs could access electric service, showers and sanitary facilities, all in a 24/7 secure location supported by the full panoply of city-contracted "wraparound services." Residents would also have access to city workers knowledgeable about the process of securing permanent housing.

The site would be BYOV: bring your own vehicle.

The beauty of the approach was that the city would not need to build housing; all it needed was a parking lot where it could deliver services, one preferably out of the way of residential neighborhoods. But for all the promise of the approach, things have not turned out as expected. Services are not what was promised. The VTC residents have ongoing and, in some cases, serious complaints about the site. The city is facing an environmental lawsuit for violating the Clean Air Act, and the cost has far exceeded what it cost to provide the same services in a pilot program. As the project celebrates its one-year anniversary, the question is whether the Bayview VTC is just suffering growing pains or is it a complete fiasco? So far, the evidence points to the latter.

When the Board of Supervisors considered the Bayview VTC, it noted that “safe parking” programs were an alternative to traditional models for sheltering and housing residents experiencing homelessness.

Exploring alternatives made a lot of sense in light of the twin challenges of building housing in the country’s second most expensive city, according to a Consumer Reports study (using 2021 data) and trying to site shelters in neighborhoods that do not want the homeless.

Safe parking sites could be particularly useful because, according to research by the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, there were people living in 1,088 vehicles city-wide in 2021, representing a significant portion of the approximately 8,000 people experiencing homelessness.

Some of the vehicles were cars or vans. Many were RVs. Some vehicles could move under their own power; others would need a tow to make it to the next block.

They were scattered all over the city, with a particularly large concentration in the Bayview-Hunters Point area near Candlestick Point State Recreation Area (CPSRA).

CPSRA is a 270-acre park born in 1977, according to the state website, “through the efforts of San Francisco residents organizing for environmental justice in their community.”

A large vehicle encampment had grown up on Hunters Point Expressway near the park entrance. HSH’s count said that there were 154 occupied vehicles in that area.

Vehicles lined the roadway on both sides, sometimes two- and three-deep. The density was so great that at times the entrance to the park was completely blocked.

Neighbors complained of crime, noise, drugs, discharge of sewage, and the negative impact of the encampment on the enjoyment — and value — of their properties. They made repeated complaints on 311 and to their elected representatives.

There was a large parking lot in CPSRA that had once served the park’s boat launch. The boat launch had become inoperable, and the parking lot was mostly unused.

The lot was 312,000 square feet — roughly the size of six football fields — and was owned by the state and available for lease.

The site was about as remote a location as you could find in San Francisco, sitting across the South Basin from Hunters Point on a beautiful spot at the edge of the Bay, bounded by the water, the recreation area, and mostly vacant land.

The closest neighbor was an existing private RV Park — Candlestick RV Park — that had accommodations for 165 RVs and 24 tents.

What if the city leased the CPSRA parking lot and invited inhabited RVs and vehicles from Bayview to move into what they called the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center?

The proposal would help clear up the problem area on Hunters Point Expressway. Moreover, the facility would be a temporary one, just for two years, so Bayview residents would not feel that their neighborhood was being stuck with another long-term institutional use, a pervasive complaint from the neighborhood.

The Bayview VTC wouldn't just be a parking lot, the city would provide services that weren't available to an RV out on the street: water, electric, showers, free meals, and a way to dispose of "grey water" (water from showering and cooking) and "black water" (sewage) in a sanitary fashion. There would be security guards 24/7. There might even be space for a second vehicle for residents who lived in an RV but used a car to get to work or get around.

The city would provide wraparound services: support and counseling for the residents on any of the common problems experienced on the street — drug and alcohol abuse and behavioral health problems, in particular — and also help for residents to move into longer-term solutions like permanent supportive housing.

And the pièce de resistance: the city had the money to make it happen. The state would lease the city the space for $1.7 million to be paid, not in cash, but in return for "in-kind" services (increased police services, dumping mitigation by the city Department of Public Works, etc.).

The state would also kick in $5.6 million to get the site up and running. HSH would tap $4.2 million in funding for homelessness under Proposition C, a ballot measure from 2018 that imposed a gross receipts tax on businesses to support homelessness solutions.

And with a total of at least $11.5 million available to fund the project, the city was off to the races. It was a bold and exciting idea.

This was not the city's first time to the VTC rodeo. In 2019, the city piloted a Vehicle Triage Center at 2340 San Jose Avenue south of Balboa Park with spots for 29 vehicles and access to case management and other city services. Operation of the center began in November that year and continued for a year and a half until it closed in March 2021.

The first year of operation was evaluated in a report prepared jointly by the San Francisco Controller's Office and HSH. The controller frequently looks at city programs to see if they are effective and cost efficient.

The report was released on Feb. 1, 2021, and while it was not critical of the pilot program, it raised several key points around the cost.

In the first year of operation the cost (including estimates for case management services) worked out to be $1,793,003 or $61,828 for each of the 29 parking spots.

The evaluation did not compare that cost to other shelter options, but noted that site set-up costs depend on a variety of different factors, including the number and types of parking spaces, the size and layout of the site, and the level of care.

“Site set-up costs,” the report said, “cannot be uniformly predicted.” That meant it was unclear how the cost of the pilot would apply to other sites, a caveat that would prove especially meaningful at Bayview VTC.

To prepare Bayview residents for a site in their neighborhood, HSH convened a zoom meeting with neighborhood leaders on Sept. 10, 2021, to hear their input.

Emily Cohen, Deputy Director for Communications & Legislative Affairs for HSH, presented the program. She explained that the pilot in Balboa Park had been “quite successful” and HSH was “very excited to be able to take our learnings from that pilot program to a second iteration of the model.”

The Bayview VTC would have space for 155 vehicles, five times as many as the pilot. Spots within the VTC would be prioritized for people in Bayview who had been living in their vehicles. Cohen emphasized that “You can’t drive up to the site and you can’t knock on the gate and ask to come in but this will be very much invitation only. …”

She emphasized that “…this is a temporary proposal, this project is intended to be short term. This is not a permanent project. We are working towards a two-year lease with state parks.”

Cohen stated that the VTC was conceived not as an ending place but as “a launching pad for people to access either affordable housing or other social services…”

When the meeting opened to community input, HSH got an earful. Neighbors complained that they were just learning that the new triage center would be in the CPSRA and that they should have known that long beforehand. (The city disputed the point.) They said that they were sick and tired of the vehicles parked near their homes, and profoundly frustrated with the lack of city response.

Timothy Simon, who identified himself as a member of the Bayview Hills Neighborhood Association, complained that “Bayview-Hunters Point is the home for every social ill the city and county of San Francisco has.” He called out the city’s “ineptitude” and the “horrible job you’ve done in managing the current situation which is complete and total lawless disregard for the residents of this community and clearly a public health hazard.”

Another neighbor said, "…all the emphasis, all the resources, have been on the unfortunate unhoused vehicle dwellers. You have not heard one word, one character, about the well-being of the tax-paying homeowners and residents of this community. That is an insult."

One said he did not understand why "we are allowing ourselves to be the armpit of the city." Judging by those who spoke, the neighbors were against the project by a healthy margin, but not all speakers opposed the idea.

One resident complained that he suffers from hearing loud profanity and a generator running all night ("It's like a lawnmower running right outside my bedroom window"). He said there was a 20-gallon drum of raw sewage at the existing encampment just across his back fence. He would be happy if the city could use the VTC to move vehicles away from his fence.

Another speaker chided the neighbors for not focusing on how different the vehicle triage center would be from the existing situation on the street. She pointed out that there was already an RV park in the area and that didn't cause any concern. The meeting ended with city officials thanking the residents for their input and saying it was valuable.

The city decided to move forward with the project, and in January 2022, Mayor London Breed announced the opening of the site. Two Bay Area nonprofits — Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation — were selected to provide security and support services.

A problem arose right off the jump. When the supervisors approved the lease, they noted, "the Property has existing infrastructure, including water, sewer, pavement, and electrical poles for lights, that will allow the City to quickly convert the site into a Vehicle Triage Center."

However, it turned out there was a problem with hooking the site to the PG&E grid. The city had to scramble to get temporary power for the parking lot lights and it opened without "prime power," that is, electric service that could connect to RVs.

Without power for the RVs, there was no power in the vehicles for refrigeration or to charge a phone or a laptop. (The city says there is an external charging station).

The only lighting at the VTC came from the large overhead parking lot lights powered by 16 loud and foul-smelling diesel generators that the city brought on site when it turned out that connecting to PG&E's grid was not going to happen quickly.

The decision to use temporary diesel generators had other consequences: On Jan. 6, 2023, the city was sued by a neighborhood group on a variety of environmental counts, including the claim that the city was operating the diesel generators without a permit. The suit also alleged that the city had not disclosed the unpermitted generators to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District in its application for three larger generators that were supposed to provide prime power to the site pending the PG&E connection.

Shortly after the lawsuit was filed, the city started to replace the unpermitted generators with solar parking lot lights. (The city says work was under way on this project for several months before the lawsuit.) The lights are on tall poles bolted into concrete pads with a solar panel mounted high in the air. Like the diesel generators they replaced, the solar panels don't produce power for the vehicles, just enough to light the parking lot lights, and, according to one resident, only dimly at that.

The lack of electric service has been a huge sore spot. At the Balboa VTC, there was power for half of the parking spots, but that wasn't enough. The site evaluation noted that both residents and staff thought that power outlets should be arrayed all around the site to support both RVs and passenger vehicles. The availability of power had been part of HSH's pitch: "We want to and will make sure that the site has amenities like blackwater pumping, restrooms, showers, laundry, electricity, meeting space, and 24 seven security and staffing," Cohen said at the September 2021 presentation.

Damien Furey will be 50 in November. Originally from Boston, he has been living unhoused for close to 20 years. He doesn't stay in shelters — he isn't fond of group living — and he has dogs. He is currently living in a paratransit van and, since before July 4, 2022, he has been living in the Bayview VTC.

He was hesitant to move to the VTC initially, but he was sick of getting tickets for parking illegally on the street and decided to give it a try. He was told there would be electric service and food and showers. There would be a picnic area and a dog run. But even though the site has now been operating for 13 months, more than halfway into its two-year term, there is still no electric hook up for the RVs and vehicles.

And it isn't just the power problem. Furey has many colorful complaints, beginning with the food. Food service was provided by a nonprofit organization named United Council of Human Services under a subcontract with the Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation. UCHS operates Mother Brown's Dining Room and brought food to the site several times a day. Furey says he is vegetarian, and it took them months to give him food with no meat and even after still found things like casseroles with meat mixed in even though marked "vegan." He says, "The food is absolutely disgusting, vile. It's so bad. … I've bit into a piece of broccoli, and it tastes like straight mold. I said that was the most disgusting thing."

The food's presentation was no better. "When it comes to us, after it's been in their vehicles and tossed around, everything's all mixed together. You'll have, you know, slices of peaches and pears mixed in with your spaghetti and tomato sauce and all your eggs. It's like this smorgasbord of crap."

Asked to comment on those complaints, UCHS did not respond. But a city controller's report of Nov. 17, 2022, identified numerous problems with UCHS's performance and record-keeping on other contracts with HSH. Among the controller's 24 recommendations was that HSH should "consider the termination of grant agreements with UCHS, particularly those funded through federal funds, and possible transfer of these services to another provider." According to an HSH spokesperson, UCHS was replaced at the Bayview VTC in late January 2023.

There are other problems, in Furey's opinion. There is no Wi-Fi at the site and no place to do laundry. The showers are poorly designed; they are showerheads — he calls them "dog showerheads" — on a hose. He says the water barely trickles and the showerhead must be tied to the shower curtain rod to stay up. You are only able to take a shower Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Cooking is not allowed, even in the RVs that have kitchens. You would need propane, and that isn't permitted. (HSH says the state fire marshal won't allow it, even though propane is used in the trailer park on private land next door.)

Furey says you aren't allowed to have visitors at the VTC, and the promised picnic area and dog run haven't materialized, though the city says there is a "dog circle." He also says there is a problem with rats. But Furey's biggest complaint is reserved for a smell that comes twice a day. He didn't know for sure where it comes from, possibly offsite. He says the smell is "atrocious," so foul that it "burns your eyes." In a particularly graphic metaphor, he says it is like "wearing shit on your chin."

Furey says that the VTC is not better than being in his vehicle on the street. "I gave this a chance because they talked it up so much. And the only thing that they're doing here is not letting me get tickets. That's all it is."

Ramona Mayon, 62, also lives at the Bayview VTC. By her own declaration, Mayon is "litigious," She is also highly articulate. She authors a blog and has put together a book of legal precedents that she says are relevant to the rights of the homeless living in vehicles. She has serious health issues, but she is not sitting around quietly. Like Furey, Mayon has a long list of issues with the VTC. She calls it an "internment camp."

“I feel like my last energy needs to go towards having this conversation about how this is not how this needs to go. This is not the right direction.” She documents her interactions with city officials and the contractors at the camp and posts audio and video recordings to her website. Although Mayon dislikes what she sees as a prison atmosphere, with perimeter fencing, security guards and surveillance cameras, her primary concerns are environmental. She wonders how any city official could have imagined the boat launch parking lot was appropriate for people to live for an extended period.

She has done a lot of homework on the site, and she notes that just across the South Basin there is a federal superfund site at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. She explains that radioactive waste from nuclear testing activity in the Pacific — “Operation Crossroads” — was brought back to Hunters Point after World War II on scores of Navy vessels to be decommissioned at the naval yard. Disposal of radioactive waste was poorly understood, and the way it was done was appalling by today’s standards. And radiation wasn’t the only issue; the shipyard also disposed of PCBs and other heavy metals.

While the VTC is not itself within the superfund site, the body of water between the shipyard and the shoreline where the VTC is located — so-called “Parcel F” — is itself a part of the superfund site. And the waters of Parcel F lap up to the shoreline of the CPSRA, no more than 50 yards from the boat launch parking lot.

The 8,400-ton World War II-era gantry crane still stands above the dry dock at the decommissioned Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. Directly across the water from the Bayview VTC, the shipyard was where the Navy decontaminated radioactive vessels from nuclear weapons tests conducted in the 1950s — a legacy that raises concerns among those currently living in the area. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

CEQA is the California statute that requires certain new projects to be studied for their environmental impact before breaking ground. In order to get the site in operation, the city’s Department of Public Works asked the City Planning Department if a CEQA review of the VTC would be required. The department concluded that no environmental review was necessary because of a statutory provision that allowed a “Low Barrier Navigation Center” as a “use by right.”

The city did not do any soil testing, though Cohen says that some form of air quality evaluation is currently being done in connection with the city's pending application for generators to provide prime power.

Mayon says that because the VTC is in an old parking lot, whatever contamination is in the soils should be covered by the parking lot surface; however, Mayon says that the city has dug large holes in the ground to pour concrete for the towers where the new solar panels and lights are installed. The excavated soil was piled next to the towers. Moreover, Mayon said that residents have been advised that the city will shortly begin digging a trench or trenches in the parking lot, ostensibly to lay wire to provide electric power to the RVs (apparently on the assumption that it can get the new diesel generators approved or that PG&E will finally bring power to the site.)

Poverty at a premium price

If the Bayview VTC has not been as well received as the city has hoped, it isn't for lack of spending. While the city has not yet fully responded to public records requests about its costs, a Bay City News analysis found that in the first year of operation, the city expended at least $10.6 million, or just over $215,000 per spot.

That amount of spending is more than three and half times the per-spot cost at the Balboa VTC pilot program over the same period.

LEASE	$898,045
URBAN ALCHEMY wrap-around social services at site (payment made)	$2,512,689
BAYVIEW HUNTER'S POINT FOUNDATION services at site (payment made)	$173,512
SHOWERS	$158,000
CAPITAL EXPENSES (electric power to site; diesel generator rental; solar lights; new generators)	$6,900,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$10,642,246

NUMBER OF SPOTS PER YEAR: 49

BAYVIEW VTC ANNUAL COST PER SPOT	$217,189
BALBOA VTC ANNUAL COST PER SPOT	$61,828
PRIVATE RV PARK ANNUAL COST (w/ estimates of case management and food)	$57,946

One way to put the $215,000-per-spot spending in perspective is to look at the number of people per year it supports. On Feb. 1, there were 49 vehicles and only 54 individuals living in them at Bayview VTC. The number of people changes as vehicles enter and exit, but it rarely has been more than 60 at any one time. Using 60 people as the constant population means that the cost of accommodating one person in their own vehicle in the first year at the VTC was approximately $175,000.

Another way to put the cost into perspective is to compare it to a private RV park, Candlestick RV Park, the 165-spot RV park that sits on private land across the perimeter fence from the Bayview VTC. Candlestick RV offers 30- and 50-amp electric service at each spot, along with free Wi-Fi. It has a laundry room and grocery store, and it not only allows, but sells propane. Its website touts its game room and big screen TV, along with “clean restrooms and showers” serviced by a “friendly courteous staff.” In response to a phone inquiry, the park said that a 4-week stay for an RV, regardless of size, would be $2,000, or $72 per day, including electric service. Converting the 4-week rate to an annual per-spot cost equates to $26,071, a small fraction of the $215,000 the city has spent to date for each of its 49 spots.

The numbers are not directly comparable because the private park’s per-spot cost does not include food or wraparound services, and the city has not answered public records requests for its costs for food service costs. But for purposes of comparison, if the private park paid $25 a meal for three meals a day for 365 days per year, it would add $27,375 to the per-spot cost.

With respect to case management costs, when the city controller and HSH were evaluating the Balboa VTC pilot, they estimated case management services cost $4,500 per spot per year, based on 1:25 case manager-to-bed staffing at a city Navigation Center in 2020.

Adding estimated food service and case management costs to Candlestick RV’s per-spot cost would result in a total cost of $57,946, roughly the cost of the Balboa VTC pilot, or just over a quarter of what the city has spent at Bayview to date.

Journalists are not allowed to walk onto the site unannounced, but if they arrange in advance, they can get a tour. On Jan. 18, in response to an inquiry from Bay City News, Cohen gave a tour of the site. She did her best to put a good face on the situation. In walking through the

parking lot at midday she characterized the scene: “Very peaceful. Very quiet. Million-dollar view.” She said residents generally like being at the VTC. As an example, she said that “when it was really cold in the big rains just very recently, we came through and offered everyone an opportunity to leave and to go to an indoor shelter. And we had six people take us up on that offer. The rest stayed here.” But Cohen acknowledged that “the infrastructure here has been harder than we anticipated.”

In the first year of operation, the city has only had 49 vehicles on site, largely because of the problems with electric service. Cohen said, “the infrastructure challenges have driven up the cost, and … we have been unable to expand to the full capacity, which has made it disproportionately expensive. In that way, it’s been a real challenge.”

The city has described the current limited use of the site as “phase one” with a second phase coming when the site can support more vehicles, but there are only 11 months left in the lease and the electric power issues haven’t yet been resolved. Extending the lease would seem to make sense, but HSH says it isn’t doing that, and recently gave the residents notice that they will need to leave in less than a year.

Even if the power issue is solved and the city can expand, hopes that the site would hold 155 vehicles (as told to the neighbors in September of 2021); “up to” 150 vehicles (as contemplated by the authorizing resolution); or 135 (as the mayor announced on January 21, 2022), have now faded. Cohen hopes for 120. Moreover, the expectation that the VTC would serve as “a launching pad for people to access either affordable housing or other social services” appears to be largely unfulfilled.

According to an internal Feb. 1, 2023, HSH report, of the 47 people who have exited the VTC to date and who gave an exit interview, 79 percent left for a “place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside).”

Only four people moved to transitional housing; the others went to different temporary placements (halfway houses, friends’ houses, shelters). Cohen is not deterred. She says HSH has learned that vehicle dwellers are “a very unique population to serve and somewhat different than the population we serve in our shelter and supportive housing programs. And we find that people are largely less interested in moving out of their vehicles and into housing then I think we would have hoped.”

Going forward she says, “we have a lot of work to do with the community as we design programs for the specific segment of the homeless community in terms of thinking about what they want to get out of this.”

With respect to the problems with providing power to the site, Cohen said, “This is the million dollar, multi-million dollar question. … I think everyone’s shocked and appalled that it’s taken this long.” She blames delays by PG&E and supply chain issues.

Nevertheless, she thinks that the Bayview VTC is enough of a success to duplicate elsewhere. The encampment on Hunters Point Expressway has been largely eliminated. She says the city is actively looking for another site on the west side of the city, but it is hard to find an appropriate spot.

And even though Mayon finds the city’s operation of the Bayview VTC to be abysmal, she believes that campgrounds with RVs should be a centerpiece in the city’s response to homelessness. She thinks the city ought to create a lot of RV parks, which would get people off the streets.

“Tents have to go,” she says, “Tents are a ludicrous way for people to house themselves.” In her opinion, the city should contract with private operators who specialize in campground management. “People simply need RV parks that are run by people who run RV parks.”

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/03/01/environmental-group-fights-to-block-permit-for-diesel-generators-at-vehicle-triage-center

Environmental group fights to block permit for diesel generators at vehicle triage center

March 1, 2023
In "Amplifying Voices"

Solar powered parking lot lights provide the only lighting at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco more than 14 months after the facility was opened to provide a safe parking site for homeless residents living in cars and RVs. The city is seeking a permit to install portable diesel generators that would provide "prime power" to the site, which has been unable to connect to PG&E's power grid. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News Foundation)

A community organization has challenged the issuance of a permit that would allow installation of two large portable diesel generators at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, a “safe parking” site created by the city of San Francisco for people living in their vehicles. The city sought the permit because its plan to provide “prime power” to the site by connecting to PG&E service has gone unfulfilled for nearly 14 months. The diesel generators would provide power to the vehicles at the center until PG&E connects the site to the grid.

Candlestick Heights Community Alliance, a community organization formed to address environmental issues in the Bayview-Hunters Point area, filed extensive comments Monday on the city’s permit application and urged the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the permitting body, to deny the application because of the harmful emissions of diesel generation.

In their comments, CHCA highlighted an internal email in which the district’s director of engineering remarked to a colleague that the city was planning to “energize the RV village with deadly diesel PM” (particulate matter) and asking “What is SF doing?”

The dispute is just the latest problem that has confronted the city in its year-long attempt to get occupied vehicles out of illegal vehicle encampments in Bayview and into a safe and secure location where residents will have water, electric, and sanitation services, augmented by counseling and assistance in securing permanent housing.

The plan was that the city would lease a large parking lot in Candlestick Point State Recreation Area for two years and invite people who were living in their cars or RVs in Bayview to bring their vehicles to the parking lot.

When the supervisors approved the lease, they noted, “the Property has existing infrastructure, including water, sewer, pavement, and electrical poles for lights, that will allow the City to quickly convert the site into a Vehicle Triage Center.”

However, it turned out that there was a problem with hooking the site to the PG&E grid. The city had to scramble to get temporary power for the parking lot lights, and the center opened in January 2022 without electric service that could connect to RVs.

More than a year later, there is still no power in vehicles for lighting or refrigeration or charging a phone or a laptop. Vehicle residents have also been prohibited from using propane as a power source.

The only lighting at the VTC comes from the large overhead parking lot lights initially powered by 16 small, loud, and foul-smelling diesel generators that the city brought on site when it turned out that connecting to PG&E’s power grid was not going to happen quickly.
The decision to use temporary diesel generators had other consequences: On Jan. 6, 2023, CHCA sued the city in federal court on a variety of environmental counts, including the claim that the city was operating the 16 diesel generators without a permit and had not disclosed that fact to the district.

The city has since replaced the unpermitted diesel generators with solar panels that power overhead lights, but the site remains without prime power nearly 14 months into its 2-year lease.

Because of the power issues, occupancy at the site has been limited to 49 vehicles, far fewer than the 155 initially contemplated. As a consequence, city spending over the first year of operations has been approximately $175,000 per person at the site, according to a Bay City News analysis.

By way of comparison, the city recently estimated the annual per-person cost of providing shelter to be $58,400 in a dormitory-style setting and $41,535 in scattered site permanent supportive housing. Given that the Bayview VTC model has people living in their own vehicles so the city does not have to shoulder the cost of providing housing, the annual cost at the Bayview VTC is far out of line.

Emily Cohen, spokesperson for the city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, acknowledged as much: "The infrastructure challenges have driven up the cost and relative to the number of people we can serve, we have been unable to expand to the full capacity because of the infrastructure challenges, which has made it disproportionately expensive. And in that way, it's been a real challenge."

CHCA's objections to the issuance of the permit focus on the fact that diesel generators are widely recognized to produce harmful emissions. The city's own health code states: "Diesel exhaust is linked to short- and long-term adverse health effects in humans, which include lung cancer, aggravation of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, aggravation of existing asthma, acute respiratory symptoms, and chronic bronchitis and decreased lung function."

According to CHCA's comments, the city's health code restricts the use of back-up diesel generators larger than 37.3 kilowatts by private operators to a maximum of 50 hours per year. The generators the city seeks to install are each three times that size and would be used for prime power, operating 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for up to 13 weeks a year.

Helen Kang, counsel for CHCA, notes the irony in the city trying to install generators at the site that its own health code would ban if any private party sought to do so.

CHCA's comments fill 31 single-spaced pages with more than 100 footnotes citing legal and environmental authorities. They allege that the VTC is "unlawfully sited" in Candlestick Point State Recreation Area and accuse the city of rushing to construct the project "without proper planning or environmental review."

In Kang's mind, the issue is particularly sharp because the Bayview Hunters Point area has been recognized as an "overburdened community" from an air quality perspective with high rates of asthma among its residents. The comments say that the district's director of engineering was not exaggerating when she asked "What is SF doing?" after learning of the plan to "energize the RV village w/ deadly diesel PM."

Because the area is an overburdened community, the district cannot issue a permit without a 30-day period for public comment. The district's regulations require that the notice be in writing and that the district or applicant "distribute the notice … to each address within a radius of 1,000 feet of the source."

The generators are to be placed within the VTC, very close to the vehicles parked there. Because of that proximity, residents of the VTC would arguably have the most immediate interest in air quality on the site.

Yet according to some residents living there, no notice of the comment period has been distributed to them. They say that no such notice was delivered to their vehicles or posted on the communal bulletin board, although, ironically, on or about the date the notice should have been distributed, the city posted a notice that the VTC would be closing at the end of the year and all residents would need to leave then.

The city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing did not know whether written notice had been given to VTC residents and said the Department of Public Works managed the permit application process. DPW could not be reached immediately for comment.
This is not the first time that site residents have been overlooked in the permit process.

In the city's application for the permit, it was asked to state the distance "to the property line of the nearest residence." The city responded that it was 1,575 feet (roughly a third of a mile).

While that appears to be the distance for neighbors living on other properties, it failed to consider people living in the 49 vehicles parked within a few hundred feet of the generators.

In other words, while the permit application provided distance information concerning neighbors and neighboring properties, it did not include similar information for people living in the city-operated "safe parking" center.

The public comment period closed Monday. The board has 180 days to issue a decision on the permit, though with only 10 months remaining on the lease, an earlier decision would seem likely.

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/04/03/bayview-triage-center-sees-new-delay-getting-generators-after-permit-stalls-on-technicality

Bayview triage center sees new delay getting generators after permit stalls on technicality

April 3, 2023
In "Featured News"

Pole-mounted solar panels are used to power parking lot lights at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco on Feb. 9, 2023. The city has been using the panels to provide electrical service to the site while it awaits a permit from air quality regulators to bring in portable diesel generators. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

The City of San Francisco's management of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center — a so called "Safe Parking" place for residents living in their vehicles — continues to be challenged by problems of its own making.

The latest stumble came this past Thursday when regional air quality regulators decided to redo public notice of the city's application for a permit to run diesel generators at the site. Prior notice of the period for public comment was apparently not was given to the people living there.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the agency that decides permit applications for uses that may affect air quality in the region, advised Thursday that the comment period "has been re-noticed and that the notice is being delivered to the VTC residents." The notice period now runs through May 1.

The setback is the just latest in the city's attempt to create a safe place where people living in their cars or RVs can park and access supportive services. The site — an old parking lot in Candlestick Point State Recreation Area — was acquired through a two-year lease from the state that expires just after the end of this year.

The agency's determination means that a decision on the permit will not happen, at the earliest, until approximately 16 months into the 24-month lease.

Despite public promises that the site would have electric service that would allow RVs to have power, the site has not yet been connected to PG&E's grid. In the meantime, the city has only been able to power the overhead lights in the parking lot.

At first that lighting was provided by 16 small diesel generators that were loud and foul smelling, according to VTC residents.

The city did not get a permit for the generators. That attracted a federal lawsuit from a neighborhood group under the Clean Air Act. After the lawsuit, the city replaced the diesel generators with more than a dozen solar-powered pole lights. It also applied for a permit to run two large diesel generators that would provide "prime power" to the entire site, including the RVs, pending a connection to the grid.

Because the Bayview area — home of many manufacturing and industrial uses — is an "overburdened community" as defined in the air quality regulations, public notice of an opportunity to comment on the permit application was required.

The regulations mandate that the notice be in writing and that the district or applicant (here the city) "distribute the notice … to each address within a radius of 1,000 feet of the source."

The generators are to be placed within the VTC, very close to the vehicles parked there. Because of that proximity, residents of the VTC would arguably have the most immediate interest in air quality on the site.

In early March, Bay City News reported that some residents living in vehicles at the VTC said no notice of the comment period had been distributed to them. Attempts at that time to find out if notice had been given to the residents were lateraled from the city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) — the agency in charge of the VTC — to the Department of Public Works — the agency managing the electric project. DPW did not respond to the question of whether the residents had been notified.

The cost of services at the site has become an issue. In part because of the delay in getting prime power to the site, the VTC has accommodated far fewer vehicles than originally anticipated. While 155 vehicles were initially planned, the site has only had 49 to date. That has driven the per person cost higher than expected, according to HSH.

A Bay City News analysis in February calculated that the per person cost for the first year of operation of the VTC was $175,000, more than triple the city's cost of providing a shelter bed to a person experiencing homelessness. The price differential is even sharper than that because the city must pay the cost of leasing or acquiring a shelter bed, whereas at the VTC, the resident stays in their own vehicle.

The cost issues at the site result to some extent from the fact that the city only has a two-year lease on the site and much of its spending has been on capital items that could theoretically serve for a longer period.

When the concept of the site was first presented to the Bayview neighbors, Emily Cohen, a spokesperson for HSH, emphasized that the site would only be in service for two years.

Cohen promised the neighbors that “this is a temporary proposal, this project is intended to be short term. This is not a permanent project. We are working towards a two-year lease with state parks.”

The Bayview neighbors were skeptical, citing a long history of city decisions to site unpopular land uses in Bayview and Hunters Point. Those neighbors proved correct. In a March 20 presentation to a community working group, the city advised that it was going to open discussions with the state about extending the two-year lease. The next day, Cohen emailed the director of the California State Park and Recreation Commission and formally requested an extension.

She reported that in the operation of the VTC, “we have been able to provide a safe, clean, and dignified place for people living in their vehicles to stay while connecting with social services and housing assistance.” The letter did not mention the cost or power issues, nor the promise to the neighbors.

Shirley Moore is vice president of the Bayview Hills Neighborhood Association. She said the association is vehemently opposed to the extension. She is angry about the initial decision to open the VTC and she challenges every aspect of its operation, especially its cost. She says that San Francisco uses the Bayview District as its dumping ground for the city’s “societal ills.”

It is particularly concerning to Moore that between this winter’s flooding and the VTC, the state park has become inaccessible to the neighbors. She believes that never would have happened in any other part of the city. She tells of taking her grandchildren to Golden Gate Park because of the condition of the nearby state park. “My grandchildren call that the ‘country club’. They like going to the country club because there is nothing out here in this area even remotely like [that],” Moore said.

She said she isn’t surprised that the city is seeking an extension of the lease. “It has always been my opinion … once they got it here, they were going to keep it here as long as they could keep it here permanently,” Moore said.

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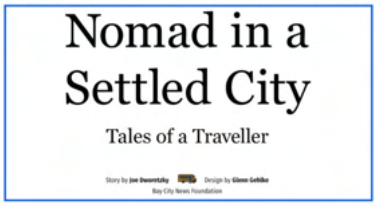
https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/05/02/nomad-in-a-settled-city-tales-of-a-traveller/

Only the parts about the conditions at the VTC are included here

Ramona Mayon sits inside her 27-foot Gulfstream RV at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco. Now 62 and battling Stage 4 breast cancer, the self-described nomad is making peace with herself while still fighting for the rights of the unhoused. (Courtesy Ramona Mayon)

https://localnewsmatters.org/2023/05/02/nomad-in-a-settled-city-tales-of-a-traveller/



One night in March while an extreme weather event exploded over San Francisco — a “bomb cyclone” as the climatologists called it — Ramona Mayon was texting with a journalist. The journalist was in a warm and comfortable home office. Mayon was not. She texted from a broken-down RV under surveillance cameras and behind security fencing in back of the former Candlestick Park. There was no electrical connection, and she was carefully watching the battery on the phone she had charged earlier in the day from a small solar panel.

Her RV — a 27-foot Gulfstream that was also 27 years old — sat in a “safe parking” site that bore a name only a career bureaucrat could have produced: the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center. The VTC was located next to a federal Superfund site on land with a rich history of accommodating the unregulated disposal of industrial chemicals. The potential health impacts of the location would be concerning for anyone, but were especially so for Mayon. She came to the site with breast cancer, and it had now reached Stage 4. She was receiving weekly hospice care, though she said the hospice wanted to drop her because she had outlived their expectations. On this night, Mayon was one of the roughly one thousand people living in their vehicles in San Francisco who were “experiencing homelessness,” as city officials called it.

She despised the VTC — she called it an internment camp — and she had been trying desperately to get her RV repaired so that she could leave — so she could *escape* — San Francisco and get someplace where she could die in peace. Yet for all the grimness of her circumstances, Mayon's texts displayed an aggressive good humor and positivity that might have been taken as cheer but which were better read as purpose. She was telling a powerful story, one that explained how she came to be living — actually dying — in that vehicle triage center — and why San Francisco, self-described as the most accepting and generous big city in the country, was something very different if you were a person who lived in your vehicle.

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Then came what she calls "The Purge." The city came to sweep the area where she was parked. Once again, she stood her ground and refused to let them tow her RV. She says a city worker swore to her (and she recorded the conversations on video) that if she agreed to have her RV towed to Bayview, far from the ocean and the seaside neighbors, the city would pay to repair her RV so she could finally leave San Francisco. There was a place there, a vehicle triage center, where she could regroup and get herself organized. It was going to be a much better situation: showers, electricity, sanitation, security and a cadre of supportive services. She didn't want to go. She didn't understand why she had to go across the city to get her RV repaired. There were plenty of mobile mechanics; it could be fixed where she was. She also did not trust the city people, they had promised repairs before and did not deliver. But in the end, frustrated, sick, and scared, she said OK. And on that day — Aug. 9, 2022 — her home was towed across the city and left inside the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center.

The Homelessness Industrial Complex

The VTC was a disaster. Despite the fancy name, the center was nothing but a parking lot in a state park with a few trailers for the agencies with city contracts to use for their paper pushing. The city couldn't get PG&E to connect the site to the grid. That meant her RV was the way she felt: powerless.

A weary Ramona Mayon sits on the bumper of her Gulfstream RV on Aug. 9, 2022, a copy of her lawsuit against the city taped to its hull, as she prepares to watch the vehicle towed from Ocean Beach to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center. (Courtesy Ramona Mayon)

Electric service for the vehicles in that location was crucial. “Providing clients with an individual power outlet to power personal devices, medical equipment, and heaters is a critical component of HSH’s program and engagement strategy,” a representative of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing explained to the Mayor’s Office in a July 18, 2022, memo. She elaborated: “Guests need access to power to keep warm, prepare food, run medical equipment, and charge personal devices.”

For a minute, the city used 16 small, loud, and foul-smelling diesel generators to power overhead pole lights. Then the city was sued for violating the federal Clean Air Act — the generators were unpermitted. The city got rid of the generators in favor of solar panels which only gave dim lighting, and made the place seem creepy and dangerous at night. Residents were forbidden to cook, and the food delivered to them was ghastly. There were rats.

The biggest issue for Mayon was the location. The city convinced the planning officials that the site was exempt from CEQA — the state law that requires cities to consider the environmental impact of projects before they get underway — so there was no soil testing to see if the old parking lot was a safe place for human beings to live. Mayon found out the site was directly across a narrow sliver of the Bay from Hunters Point, a former shipyard that had been declared a Super Fund site and not yet been cleaned up. The body of water that separated the VTC from the shipyard was part of the superfund site, and its waters lapped up to the shore within 100 feet of the parking lot.

The winter of 2023 brought punishing rains, flooding the entrance to the VTC so badly the city had to bulldoze a new way in. Concrete Jersey barriers covered with graffiti and a pile of refuse marked the new approach.

Trash and debris sit in floodwaters at the entrance to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco. The situation forced the city to bulldoze a new entrance to the facility. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News Foundation)

And while Mayon found the conditions at the VTC unconscionable, what really made her crazy was the money. Citywide, it cost San Francisco an average of $50,000-$60,000 a year to provide shelter to a homeless person, including the cost of buying or leasing the shelter. At the VTC, the cost was triple that — $170,000 per person — even though vehicle-dwellers like Ramona brought their own housing to the site and all the city did was provide a parking lot and contractors who gave them so called “wraparound” services.

San Francisco spent a lot of money wrapping social and support services around the VTC, but the one service it did not include was a car mechanic. One might think that a site called a “vehicle triage center” would do some triaging of vehicles. And that when they had done their triaging, they’d help the needy ones get on their way. But as of May 1, 2023, nearly nine months after The Purge, Mayon’s RV remains in the same condition as when it sat by the Great Highway except, she says, the city’s tow to the VTC resulted in a broken strut. (She filed an administrative claim against the city for the damage, which was denied.)

It only looks like a prison

Meanwhile the city is spending $170,000 per person to live in a parking lot without electricity. A chunk of that money was spent on a contract with a nonprofit operation that employed formerly incarcerated individuals to provide security services. At first, Mayon thought the purpose was to keep the residents safe, but after living there she began to feel that it was to keep them locked up. She couldn’t technically call the VTC a prison because she was allowed to come and go. But there were surveillance cameras overhead and fencing all around. She could not have visitors. She had to endure as many as three “wellness checks” a day from workers who at times (mostly on weekends) banged aggressively on the walls of her RV until she answered their questions, a tactic that brought back memories of police visits to her bus when it was parked in the Sunset.

She was told that the VTC will close at the end of the year and she had better apply for housing. She can’t believe that they won’t fix her RV, but that if she agrees to live in a box, the city will pay for it. Just another example of the city’s inability to understand that she isn’t homeless; she is a nomadic person with a broken vehicle. And so she sits, day after day, moldering in Bayview on land she fears is toxic. She isn’t idle. She has been researching and studying what she calls the “homelessness industrial complex.” The term is an echo from the 1960s, but it isn’t the defense industry raking in the dough from huge no-bid contracts, it is a new generation of companies at the public trough, many of these “nonprofits” or the new “public benefit corporations.” She sees how the spigot of Prop C money — some $300 million a year for homeless services in San Francisco — flows into the hands of the city but doesn’t trickle down to the people it is supposed to help.

The city agencies with their acronyms — HSH, DPW, DEM — take the first long gulps at the trough. Then come the nonprofits who manage the operation. Then the assorted vendors —contractors, the subcontractors, the sub-subcontractors — until finally it is time for the homeless to drink. And that is when they learn that if they want to drink, it can only be from the right kind of cup — if they have a blue cup it should be green; if they have one with a wide lip it should be thin — and by the time they run frantically to get the right one, whoops, the last bit of water has dribbled into the dry dirt.

Local News Matters made repeated attempts, all unsuccessful, to discuss Ramona Mayon's situation with HSH, despite Mayon's consent. According to HSH, "We cannot comment on specific clients." Similarly, repeated attempts to visit Mayon's RV at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center were unsuccessful, even though Mayon owns the RV and extended the invitation. HSH's representative stated, "The VTC, like all our shelter sites, are not open to visitors."

Endgame

The prognosis for one with Stage 4 cancer is not good. Mayon doesn't know how much time she has left, but she plans to go out fighting. She has kept track of what has happened to her. She has a YouTube channel where she has already posted roughly 125 videos documenting her experiences with the city and its contractors since the fall of 2020. She maintains a website where she blogs about her situation. She has collected much of the source material in her book, "No Services? No Peace." She keeps everything — photos, receipts, papers, notices. (When one of the residents at the site was asked whether the city had given notice of something or other, he said "ask Ramona."

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https://nypost.com/2023/10/10/san-francisco-paying-12k-month-for-homeless-rvs-while-tech-workers-sleep-in-pods/

San Francisco paying $12,000 per month for homeless RVs while tech workers sleep in $700 'pods'

By Marjorie Hernandez/ Published Oct. 10, 2023

San Francisco is pouring millions of dollars into an RV park for the homeless, while young people trying to get a break in their careers are reduced to living in 4-feet high by 3.5-feet wide "pod" spaces for $700 a month.

The city opened a "safe parking site" at Candlestick Point in January 2022, which is home to 30 RVs — each of which cost the city $12,000 a month to keep there, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.

The site, named the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, has been recommended to be opened for another two years, which will cost the city at least $12.2 million.

Despite living rent-free and having 24/7 security, some residents at the RV park don't enjoy it.

"It's like living in a prison," said Bayview resident Enrique Olivas. "I've been here for a year and it's been difficult. There are so many rules, like I can't park my truck inside. I've had to park my truck on the street. It's already been broken into three times, so sometimes I sleep in my truck instead."

Olivas, who lives in the Triage Center with his dog Suave, added: "You can't have visitors, and if you have too much stuff, they take it away from you. "They bring us food, but the food is not something I can really eat because I have no teeth. Even my dog won't even eat it."

Joyce Knighten, 85, owns the Double Rock convenience store less than a mile from the RV park. She said while she understands people there need help, they should also be required to get jobs to keep their spots. "What they should do is clean it up and make it nice for people to live. They need to make it so they need to get a job and be a participating and tax-paying citizen, like the rest of us."

Two Bay Area nonprofits — Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation — provide security and other support services for the residents and are paid thousands of dollars a month from the city's coffers. The security services wouldn't let The Post inside the park, but drone footage shows it currently houses 30 rusty RVs parked in three rows.

Meanwhile, just six miles away, young up–and-coming businesspeople are priced out of getting their own apartment are instead renting pods in shared residences.

Christian Lewis pays $700 a month alongside 27 others for his tiny pod space inside the co-ed Brownstone Shared Housing located near Union Square. The pods are less than half the size of an RV. "I actually can't afford to pay for a $3,000 apartment, but there are some people sleeping in the pods who can, but choose to live here anyway. It is about cost and quality," Lewis told The Post. Each renter gets a twin mattress, temperature-control, access to bathrooms and showers and a common lounge area with a private meeting room

Lewis said the space is "like a hacker incubator," and many of the residents are highly educated people who just need a space to crash while they are working on their various projects.

"It's living in a capsule and modeled after Japanese homes," Lewis told The Post. "There are people fighting for affordable housing in this city, but when we actually try to find something that makes it work, we get criticized." The pod-living environment has drawn some criticism on social and mainstream media, with some calling the steel and wood bunk beds "glorified coffin homes" that are not the answer to San Francisco's housing crisis.

Brownstone co-founder James Stallworth told The Post many of the renters are students, researchers and entrepreneurs who are breaking into the world of Artificial Intelligence and can't afford median rents in the city. Some people think it's great, others think we are doing something terrible … housing is such a huge barrier for people if you are trying to live in the epicenter where people can network and build their companies.

"People criticize anyone who is doing something about this issue, and that's fine. All that matters is the residents are having a good experience and they are getting what we set out to provide," he said.

Meanwhile Olivas said some of his friends don't want to park their trailers at Bayview because of its rules. That's why he's trying to get the city to find him somewhere else to live, either in his own apartment or one of the city's Single-Resident Occupancy rooms.

"They try to get you housing, but even that takes a long time," Olivas said. "Everything they have promised, we haven't seen and it has been so frustrating. We need help."

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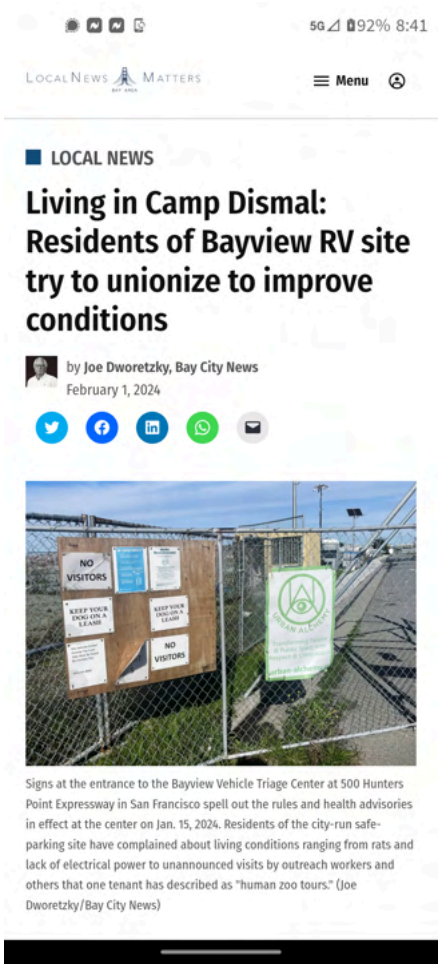
https://localnewsmatters.org/2024/02/01/living-in-camp-dismal-residents-of-bayview-rv-site-try-to-unionize-to-improve-conditions/



LOCAL NEWS

Living in Camp Dismal: Residents of Bayview RV site try to unionize to improve conditions

by Joe Dworetzky, Bay City News
February 1, 2024

Signs at the entrance to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center at 500 Hunters Point Expressway in San Francisco spell out the rules and health advisories in effect at the center on Jan. 15, 2024. Residents of the city-run safe-parking site have complained about living conditions ranging from rats and lack of electrical power to unannounced visits by outreach workers and others that one tenant has described as "human zoo tours." (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

A group of residents at a “safe parking” site set up by the city of San Francisco near the former Candlestick Park have launched a petition to form a tenants’ union called the “Candlestick 35,” a reference to the number of vehicles the city says are parked at the site.

The petition begins with the statement that 23 residents of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, representing a majority of the units currently at the site, have formed the union “to confront” the city Department of Homelessness and Supportive Services (HSH) about the “shameful” quality of life at the site. HSH created the site and hired the nonprofit contractors that run it.

Ramona Mayon, a resident of the VTC since Aug. 9, 2022, drafted the petition.

Mayon said that the Candlestick 35 qualify as a tenants’ union or association for purposes of San Francisco City Code 49A, which commands the landlord and the tenant association to “confer with each other in good faith on housing services and conditions, community life,” and “other issues of common interest or concern.” The section also protects against interference in organizing activities.

Mayon sees the union as a way that the VTC residents can get to the table for a good faith discussion with HSH about the organization and management of the troubled facility.

Mayon also filed a pro se lawsuit in San Francisco Superior Court on Jan. 26 asking the court to issue an order confirming that “persons living at navigation centers in the State of California” are “tenants” under the state Welfare and Institutions Code.

Emily Cohen, a spokesperson for HSH, said Monday that she had not seen or heard of the Candlestick 35 petition, but commented that during “new client intake, VTC guests sign a Participant Agreement which explicitly states that the VTC is a temporary shelter program and that clients are not tenants and do not have tenants’ rights.”

Cohen added, “We are happy to work closely with guests on any concerns that they might have.”

Camp Dismal

In the petition, the group presented a list of 19 issues that it seeks to address with HSH and the two nonprofit subcontractors — Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation — that HSH retained to administer the site.

Many of the issues are found and documented on a website created by Mayon.

The landing page of the website greets a visitor with the salutation: “Welcome to Camp Dismal.” The issues begin with alleged environmental contamination at the site (“Bleak, Toxic Location”) and move to the rat infestation (“rats everywhere … absolutely inadequate pest control. They are eating our vehicle wires.”) and then on to the now two-year delay in providing promised power at the site.

The list continues, raising issues with “inedible food served at unsafe temperatures,” alleged Americans with Disabilities Act violations, flooding, and alleged unauthorized seizure of residents’ property.

A group of community outreach workers rides through the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center distributing "cold hot dogs" while another person (not shown) takes pictures in a framegrab from a Dec. 19, 2023, video. VTC tenant Ramona Mayon refers to such walkthroughs as "human zoo tours." (Ramona Mayon/YouTube)

One section calls out "human zoo tours" conducted without notice through which officials, the media, religious groups and community outreach workers are escorted through the site to show off the facility. The website's narrative offers Mayon's perspective on the tours: "The first time it happened to me, I was livid. To have people walk through, without notice … and for them to stop and observe, take pictures even. I immediately understood that Urban Alchemy, who holds the main contract, is able to use this place as a sort of demo to sell their services to other cities."

The next issue is the VTC's prohibition on the residents of the site inviting guests to visit. ("We can't have visitors, thus social isolation by policy. Even prisons have to allow visitors.")

Attached to the petition are 22 signature pages, each with information about a particular individual joining the union. On many of the pages, the individual signatories identify the key issues they want the tenants' union to accomplish. Many name the lack of power and issues with water, toilets, and showers. Others want better food and access for visitors. Several seek respect from Urban Alchemy. One says, "Stop this communist regime that violates our BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS."

The list of issues is followed by 31 specific "demands." Most of the demands are concrete and practical, for example, that the staff wear nametags so they can be identified, and that the VTC provide Wi-Fi and arrange an address where they can receive mail. Others are more far-reaching ("Stop digging and any industrial level disturbance of the air in this toxic location.")

Mayon said that she hoped that the organizing efforts will make the city understand that conditions of the site must be improved, and that the residents of the VTC will be recognized as having at least the same rights that other tenants are given under California law.

Most of all, she hoped that the union will have a seat at the table when policies and decisions are being debated for the site. She noted that for the last two years, the city has been

convening a monthly working group of neighbors and interested parties to discuss the VTC, but the residents have never been invited to participate. She pointed out that when the city gave notice of an application for a permit that would allow diesel-powered generators at the site, the city sent the notice to the neighbors in the area because of the potential impacts of polluting diesel emissions 1,000 feet from their properties. However, the city did not give notice to the VTC residents, even though they were living within a coin toss of the generators.

Mayon said, “We weren’t seen as people living here; they didn’t even consider we needed a notice.” After a news article about the issue, notice was ultimately provided to the residents.

Mayon has lived in a vehicle for most of her adult life and raised five children in a school bus parked at various locations around San Francisco. She has authored and self-published a number of books about living a nomadic life.

She frequently writes about the law as it applies to vehicle dwellers, including “The Vehicle Dweller’s Legal Primer.” She readily says she is a “wordsmith” not a lawyer, and while she would reject the description, it seems she is the safe parking site’s equivalent of a jailhouse lawyer.

Mayon is well aware that tenants are typically thought of as people who pay rent to live in a particular place under the terms of a lease. VTC residents don’t pay rent. Nevertheless, in this context, she argues that the residents of the VTC qualify as tenants for purposes of the city ordinance.

Mayon provides an intricate, lawyerly argument to support her position that the VTC residents are “tenants.” She points out that to site the VTC at its current location — a vacant parking lot near the boat launch in Candlestick Point State Recreation Area — the city represented to the city Planning Department that the facility was a “low barrier navigation center.”

That was a crucial representation because the Planning Department relied on it to conclude that the city did not have to undertake a comprehensive environmental assessment of the site under the California Environmental Quality Act, commonly called CEQA.

In Mayon’s view, a CEQA review would have revealed that the site was in an area heavily polluted by toxic heavy metals and contaminants. Moreover, the city would have been forced to analyze and disclose the risks from the site’s location 300 feet from “Parcel F” at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, a federal “Superfund” site slated for cleanup between 2024 and 2028.

The petition works through interlinking statutory provisions and showcases the fact that the California Code refers to the people at such a shelter as “tenants” more than a dozen times.

She makes the further point that once the city represented that the facility was a low-barrier navigation center for purposes of avoiding CEQA review, it cannot dispute that the residents are indeed tenants.

Whether or not she succeeds in that interpretation of the law, some, perhaps many, of the issues the union wishes to negotiate are also covered by the standards of care that apply to all shelters in San Francisco. In Section 20.404 of the Administrative Code, the city requires “all City-funded shelter operators to meet minimum standards of care in the shelter system,” including that all shelter clients “be treated with dignity and respect and … provided with a clean, healthy, and safe shelter stay.”

The Bayview VTC — “Camp Dismal” — is a city initiative to address the large population of “vehicularly housed” residents.

The city’s July 2023 “Tent, Structure and Vehicle Count” found there were 1,058 inhabited vehicles in the city. In other words, almost a quarter of the city’s unsheltered homeless population live in vehicles. (People sleeping in vehicles are considered unsheltered.)

The VTC was conceived of as a place where vehicles could safely park and residents would be able to access services, including an electric connection, showers, and greywater and blackwater pump-out. The site would also provide security and an opportunity for residents to connect to opportunities for housing.

It seemed like a tremendous idea because it addressed the Bayview District neighbors’ dissatisfaction with people living in cars and RVs — often without pump-out services — on their streets, as well as the needs of vehicle dwellers who wanted to avoid the risk of being towed for accumulated parking tickets and also to get an electric hook-up and other services.

Given the enormous demand and the fact that the city had already run what it considered a successful pilot program in Balboa Park, there was every reason to think that the VTC would be a huge feather in HSH’s cap.

Not so.

The center opened with fanfare in January 2022 and almost immediately encountered problems.

Despite HSH’s assurances to neighbors and potential residents that the site could easily be connected to electric service, it turned out that the process to connect to the grid was complicated and time-consuming. At the start, the city could not even power overhead lighting in the parking area where the RVs were parked.

One fumble followed another.

The city brought in 16 diesel-powered generators to power the overhead lighting, but the loud and noxious generators did not provide enough power for the RVs, meaning that residents did not have lighting or heat in their vehicles.

A large portable battery unit — one of three the city of San Francisco rented from Moxion Power — provides temporary power to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center on Jan. 15, 2024. The VTC originally opened in January 2022 with 16 diesel-powered generators, but they proved too loud and did not provide enough power for the RVs. (Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

Moreover, the city did not apply for a permit for the generators, attracting a federal lawsuit from neighbors who argued that they were already in one of the most environmentally "overburdened" communities in the city, and the diesel emissions allegedly harmed their health and safety.

The city punched back with the argument that because each individual generator was (just) below the threshold that required a permit, they did not have to get a permit for the site. The neighbors countered with the proposition that the 16 generators were part of a common enterprise and should be considered in the aggregate, which would be far in excess of the permitting threshold. While the city's position has prevailed to date, the issue remains in litigation.

Under continued pressure from fed-up neighbors and adverse publicity, the city replaced the 16 diesel generators with solar-powered outdoor lighting.

That solution lit the parking lot, though dimly, but didn't generate enough juice to power the RVs. For that the city applied to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District — the Clean Air Act permitting authority — for a permit to run two large diesel generators until a long-term connection to the grid could be secured.

When BAAQMD posted notice of the permit application, it received many objections. For months, the permit applications remained in limbo. Meanwhile, residents lived at the site without heat or lighting in the vehicles.

Not only was the lack of power a challenge for the residents, but without a long-term power source, the city was not able to expand the site beyond 49 vehicles, far short of the 155 originally envisioned. Meanwhile the cost of the project ballooned. HSH gave large no-bid contracts to the two nonprofits that contracted to provide services at the site. The Bayview Hunters Point Foundation got a contract for $3,401,682 (Contract Number 1000024673). Urban Alchemy's contract was $5,210,141 (Contract number 1000024025).

A February 2023 analysis by Bay City News found that in the first year of operations, the city spent $170,000 per resident at the site, a staggering amount given that the city was not providing housing — residents lived in their own vehicles — and the location was basically an empty parking lot in a state park.

Much of the city spending was for capital improvements to accommodate lighting services, but as time passed that seemed an increasingly questionable use of funds, given that the neighbors were promised the site would only be in place for two years. Nevertheless, the city persisted.

The second year of operations did not resolve the problems. Permanent power was not secured. Occupancy was not expanded; it declined to 35 vehicles, and the city had only modest success in placing residents in long-term housing.

Then, despite its assurances to the neighbors, the city decided to seek a two-year lease extension from the state. The neighbors protested and argued, among things, that CEQA review was required. The Planning Department — again relying on the idea the site was a lower barrier navigation center — issued a memorandum dated Sept. 30, 2023 saying CEQA did not apply.

With the memorandum in hand, HSH was successful in convincing the Board of Supervisors to approve the extension, notwithstanding a skeptical Sept. 25, 2023 report by the office of the city Budget and Legislative Analyst.

While the BLA's report recommended approval because of the city's prior commitment to operating a vehicle triage center, it noted that estimated operating costs (capital costs not included) for the new two-year term would be approximately $11.6 million and the city was currently limited to just 35 vehicles.

The analyst observed dryly that because "PG&E often has long lead times for power connection projects, it is possible that site capacity may not expand during the two-year term of the proposed sublease."

Were that to be the case, the analyst said, "the cost per vehicle is approximately $140,000 per year, which is by far the [city's] most expensive homeless response intervention."

The Board of Supervisors approved the new lease on Oct. 5, 2023, and on Dec. 5, the State Lands Commission approved the two-year extension over objections by the neighbors and further litigation, now focused on the city's failure to obtain CEQA review for the renewal.

As the initial term of the lease ended on Jan. 12, 2024, the site was not even fully using its diminished capacity of 35 vehicles.

A January count by Paul R, a long time VTC resident who asked that his full name not be used for fear of retaliation, found there were 24 motorhomes, four trailers (only two occupied), an old

U-Haul truck and a “shed on wheels.” There was also one person living in an SUV. Moreover, according to Paul, only four of the motorhomes were actually able to run.

With the beginning of the new lease term came the 2024 rainy season and as had happened in 2023, there was extensive flooding on Hunters Point Expressway. The standing water on a section of road the length of three football fields was so deep that people seeking to access Candlestick Point State Recreation Area or the VTC had to use a relocated access route created after the 2023 floods.

However, there was some good news. The city found what it believed was at least a temporary solution to the power issue. On Dec. 19, 2023, the city entered into an agreement to rent three large mobile batteries to power the residents’ RVs and otherwise electrify the site. As the batteries are used up, they will be hot-swapped with recharged batteries trailered in by the vendor. The city anticipates that the batteries will allow power for the residents eight hours a day. Rachel Gordon, a spokesperson for the Department of Public Works — the department that handled the procurement — said the batteries are emission-free.

When asked if it was new technology and, if not, why it wasn’t used sooner, Gordon said, “The vendors available to us did not have this technology as an option in spring/summer of 2022 when we were researching sources for temporary power.”

The batteries will be used until a connection to the grid is up and running. Emily Cohen, a spokesperson for HSH, estimated that will take another five months, though that depends on PG&E, and given the prior delays, Cohen was not willing to go to the bank on that estimate.

Gordon gave a different response. She said it would be, “Potentially six to seven months.” Unfortunately, according to Cohen, the city will not be allowed to add more capacity at the site until it is connected to the grid, and so for the next five (or six or seven) months or more, only 35 vehicles will be supported at the site, even though it was initially supposed to accommodate 155. If tenants at the Bayview VTC consume the amount of energy estimated in a purchase order for portable batteries at the site, it would amount to a monthly charge of $1,955 for each of the 35 vehicles.

The overall cost of the temporary fix is not yet known but it will be substantial. According to Gordon, the battery rental will cost the city $137,000 for six months, not including the charge for swapping batteries when they are exhausted.

The final cost of swapping the batteries as they are expended will depend on actual usage, but the city’s purchase order and rental contract with Richmond-based Moxion Power estimates a total of $273,000 in swap charges, depending on usage. With tax and delivery charges, the estimated all-in cost for the six month period is $410,602.

That means that if the usage is what is estimated in the purchase order, the city will pay a monthly charge of $1,955 for each of the 35 vehicles at the site.

Even if the usage is half of what was estimated in the purchase order, the usage would work out to $1,302 per vehicle per month, still a whopping electric bill, particularly since the city has limited electric usage to eight hours a day.

The batteries have been put into service and last Wednesday two RVs were connected. More were expected to be connected this week. Residents were advised that power would be available from 5 p.m. Until 1 a.m.

As the new lease term began, the city was also addressing another problem at the site: the rat infestation.

The Camp Dismal website has a whole section on the “Rat Problem,” replete with pictures of crows feasting on a dead rat and a cleanup worker shoveling up a very large carcass.

The website also has a transcript of what is reported to be a community meeting on Dec. 12, 2023, where residents report that rats were eating the wiring on the underside of their RVs. (“we’re just sitting here getting eaten alive.”)

Then a person identified as a staff member for Urban Alchemy reports to the residents that according to the exterminators they consulted, getting rid of the rats is “kind of like you jump in the water and say we’re going to get rid of all the fish.”

In a Dec. 12 email, Mayon proposed a solution to BVHP, “for the size of the rat problem, y’all just need to bring in a gang of cats. It would also be cheerful for everyone. Mess of cats would do a world of good.”

She explained, “it’s making people crazy out here because it’s super unhealthy to have the [rat] feces in your house or around pets. Also folks feel hopeless, it’s scary battling the bastards without light. Not to be repetitive about our biggest problem, but I mean, think about it. Rats love the dark and we have no electricity.”

A BHPF representative responded right away. He lateraled the issue to Urban Alchemy with the comment, “also appreciate your cat idea and hope we will explore it. (I’ve had some great mousers in residential facilities, but those were more outdoor locations.). It may not be feasible at the nav center because of city restrictions or issues like guests with dogs.”

He followed that with a second message the next day, “Apologies for my confusing message. I thought you were staying at the nav[igation] center and just realized you are at the VTC. I’m sure that [our staff] will reach out to the folks from Urban Alchemy to see what can be done there. I still like the cat idea!” According to Mayon, after the proposal was lateraled to them, Urban Alchemy did not reply.

However, thereafter they began to use high-pressure hoses to clear the area of rat feces and debris which, she says, blew clouds of toxic and unhealthy particles all around the lot. They also began to do “rodent proofing” work underneath the RVs to keep rats and mice from chewing the wires on the undercarriage of the RVs.

Mayon is particularly attentive to environmental issues at the site. She was diagnosed with breast cancer before her motorhome was towed to the VTC and was receiving hospice care from February 2022 to June 2023, when it ended because, she said, “insurance for hospice care ran out because I didn’t die in the allowed timeframe.”

There was irony in the timing of the formation of the tenants’ union and the filing of the lawsuit to be recognized as tenants.

Mayon’s RV was scheduled to be connected to battery power any day, and after 18 months of living on the dollops of power she got from her 100W solar panel and deep cell battery, she will have power provided by the city.

But even more importantly, the city’s mechanic began to make repairs on her vehicle through the Vehicle Repair Fund. The mechanic installed a new starter and made a few more fixes. Her RV had not been run in at least 18 months, and Mayon did not know what to expect. But when the mechanic fired it up on Jan. 24, it started. Mayon was ecstatic. She said, “It purred. Ran it 20 minutes. Did not backfire when he turned it off.” There are still things to be fixed before it is roadworthy — she said she has an “inverted leaf spring” caused by the city’s towing — but she said, “This is a good day. The RV started. I don’t care what else has to be done on it. I will leave here in it.”

Asked if getting power and her vehicle repaired made the tenants’ union irrelevant, Mayon said, “For me, because I have cancer, my outcome is only one thing … the reason it’s important right now is literally these people have rights that they’ve been denied for the last two years, and they’ve been treated abysmally.”

She went on, “I think these people deserve to tell their stories.”

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2024/02/01/a-vehicle-for-improvement-sfs-experimental-repair-fund-putting-rv-dwellers-back-on-road/

LOCAL NEWS

A vehicle for improvement: SF's experimental repair fund putting RV dwellers back on road

by Joe Dworetzky, Bay City News
February 1, 2024

Ramona Mayon's 27-foot Gulfstream recreational vehicle sits in its space at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco in an undated image. The RV was inoperable when it was towed to the VTC in August 2022. But in January, a mobile mechanic arrived to make repairs to her home on wheels, part of an experimental city-run vehicle repair program aimed at getting RV dwellers like Mayon back on the road so that they don't become homeless. (Courtesy Ramona Mayon)

ONE CITY INITIATIVE at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center has offered some hope to the residents, though its rollout has not been free from hiccups.

Many of the residents agreed to have their vehicles towed to the VTC because they were promised that they would be able to get repairs there. (After all, it was called a “vehicle triage center;” presumably some vehicle triage would be done.)

Over the first two years there was much discussion of repairs, but not much happened.

However, a pilot program approved in the city’s 2023-24 budget called for the creation of a “Vehicle Repair Fund” that was at least conceptually earmarked for essential repairs to inhabited vehicles that had become inoperable. The fund was also to help with unpaid fees for registration and licenses.

The program was spearheaded by a former city employee named Anne Stuhldreher who worked in the city’s Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector as head of the Financial Justice Project. The FJP had set up a successful program that helped thousands of low-income residents get abatement on parking tickets and/or recover cars impounded for unpaid tickets.

From FJP's work on that project, Stuhldreher and her colleagues found that vehicle dwellers were at particular risk when their vehicles broke down or when their registration or drivers' license expired.

In an October 2023 interview with Bay City News, Stuhldreher said, "If someone loses their car, sometimes they're losing their home. They might end up kind of on the streets or in our overburdened shelter system. It's a bigger kind of challenge to help that person. It can become a more expensive challenge as well."

As a so-called "harm reduction" effort, she proposed a fund that would provide repair money and help with fees for vehicle registration and driver's license fees. The animating idea was that if vehicle dwellers lost their cars to impoundment or couldn't stay in them safely, they would swell the population sleeping in tents on the city streets and the city would ultimately have to help them with shelter.

She wanted to test whether paying a modest amount for repairs could get a vehicle dweller up and running and into an RV park outside of the city or reunited with family elsewhere. Her hypothesis was that a few thousand dollars would save the city shelter costs of $60,000 or $70,000 a year.

Taking the program for a test drive

The program was set up as a pilot to test the idea. A philanthropic source provided $100,000 which the city transferred to the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Services (HSH) and in turn to Bayview Hunters Point Foundation (BHPF) to manage the expenditures.

According to Stuhldreher, "we're trying to really learn how to use this philanthropic money to test this out. And if it works consider having a more permanent, larger, publicly funded program."

Starting up a new program like this was a complicated task. For months, representatives of FJP met biweekly with Urban Alchemy, BHPF and HSH to thrash out program eligibility and the rules of the road.

The parties decided that the pilot would focus on the vehicles at the VTC. In many ways, it was a perfect cohort for a controlled experiment. The vehicles were all in one place, and residents were already receiving city services. Moreover, the city was spending a lot of money on the site; if repairs could help a resident leave the VTC in a working vehicle with a proper registration and license, another person could be served. With more than 1,000 inhabited vehicles in the city, according to the July 2023 count, there was plenty of demand.

According to Stuhldreher, because the program was a pilot, they did not initially have fixed standards for how to spend the $100,000 or how to measure the success of the program, though she said, "we are going to have very detailed records of how we spend this money and what the return and what the outcomes are."

They did surveys of the residents to determine how much repairs would cost. In October 2023, Stuhldreher said, “Honest, I was kind of pleasantly surprised about the estimates for repairs that that we’ve been getting.”

Stuhldreher wanted to judge the success of the program by answering the question of whether “this money helps someone get to, you know, a safe place, whether it’s with family, whether that’s another RV park, etc.? You know, does this help people eventually … not get tickets.”

Vehicle repairs begin

At the VTC, a caseworker from BHPF created a queue for repairs. First up was Paul R., a long-term VTC resident who asked that his full name not be used for fear of retaliation.

Paul believes he was an attractive candidate because his 1995 32-foot RV was generally in good shape and he said that he was willing to relocate to New Mexico where he had family. He needed help with registration and relatively modest repairs.

According to Paul, the mobile mechanic who came “was not an actual mechanic. He works on motor homes but the interior, you know, the lighting, the fixtures, the gas, the furnace, the microwave, whatever in the motor home. But he’s not a mechanic, so he don’t touch engines.”

A big issue for Paul was the tires on his RV. He says they are 20 years old, have gashes on them and are unfit for a 1,100-mile drive to New Mexico. He said he told his caseworker that he needed better tires to be safe to drive. At first it was a no, and then looked like a yes, but then his caseworker said that “my request for tires was denied because tires are not on the list of approved items to be fixed.” Paul has appealed to the head of BHPF.

He thinks he has a good case because he signed an agreement about the arrangement and it said “each vehicle/RV Funding Plan is tailored to the individual.” But in conversations with his caseworker, he has been told that the money in the fund is tight because of all the weatherization and rodent-proofing, and has to be limited.

He doesn’t understand why the rodent work is charged to the fund for vehicle repairs. He believes that the shelter operator should have kept the site free of rodents and precious repair dollars shouldn’t have to bear that expense.

Amanda Fried is chief of policy and communications in the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector and worked closely with Stuhldreher on the Vehicle Repair Fund project. In a Jan. 24, 2024, interview, she said that from her vantage point, the program is going well.

She said that of the 30 vehicles at the site, 26 have been weatherized and 16 “rodent-proofed.” A number of others have had repairs, but that is more complicated. She says that $62,250 of the $100,000 has been spent to date.

She said she was not aware that some residents were concerned that the fund was being used on rodent proofing. However, after looking into the issue, she reported that “the funds from this pilot are only going to semi-permanent improvements of the RV’s — things like using sheet metal to block entryways for rodents. These are made to improve quality of life regardless of the location of the RV.”

Fried said the pilot money has been spent as follows: $22,000 on weatherization, $30,000 on rodent proofing, $3,750 on a fee to BHPF. The remainder — $6,500 — has been spent on “vehicle assessments and repairs by mechanic.”

She said she “absolutely” feels that the remaining funds will be sufficient to finish the work needed for the vehicles at the VTC. She reports that the project working group “collectively set a guideline of $3,000 per person for repairs to vehicles to get them road ready — anything exceeding $3,000 is subject to additional review.”

She said the vehicle repair fund was still very much a pilot program and they had learned some things along the way that they had not expected, key among them was how challenging it was to identify mechanics who would work on the vehicles.

“We have a limited amount of mechanics that are interested in working with this population. You know, this isn’t like you drop your BMW off at the dealership … I do think that we underestimated the complexity and the mission alignment that we need with mechanics to be willing to go to the site.”

She added, “They have to work with people that are facing a tremendous amount of challenges and stress. And for whom these vehicles are their home. It’s just a really difficult thing. [It’s] not like a typical car mechanic.”She doesn’t think anything has gone wrong with the pilot program, but says it has taken “some twists and turns.”

Ramona Mayon’s repair story

Mayon’s RV was in line for repair after Paul. The saga of her attempt to get help with repairs for her vehicle began long before she came to the VTC. Her RV had broken down in an RV park in the Delta during the COVID-19 pandemic and was towed to Ocean Beach in San Francisco where she was living in her SUV.

The RV was her home, and she spent more than a year trying to get it running while facing increasing pressure from neighbors and the city to move the vehicle. There were continually threats that it would be towed if she didn’t move it.

Ramona Mayon stands beside her inoperable RV on Aug. 9, 2022, the day it was towed from Ocean Beach in San Francisco across town to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center. Nearly a year and a half later, Mayon's RV is receiving repairs as part of the city's Vehicle Repair Fund. (Courtesy Ramona Mayon)

Ramona Mayon stands beside her inoperable RV on Aug. 9, 2022, the day it was towed from Ocean Beach in San Francisco across town to the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center. Nearly a year and a half later, Mayon's RV is receiving repairs as part of the city's Vehicle Repair Fund.

She had serious health issues and was mourning the death of her husband, but was determined not to let the RV be impounded. She had numerous interactions with the city's representatives about the possibility of getting a few thousands of dollars of assistance to fix the vehicle so she could exit the city to an RV park. The extended story of this unsuccessful endeavor is laid out in her self-published book "No Services? No Peace."

Ultimately, she accepted the city's proposal to tow the vehicle to the VTC, where she says she was told that she would get repairs. She arrived at the VTC on Aug. 9, 2022, and immediately began to advocate for the promised repairs.

Long before the Vehicle Repair Fund, Mayon was telling the city and social workers that for a few thousand dollars they could avoid the cost of providing services for her as a homeless person. She had a cancer diagnosis and told them that she just wanted to get to a clean, safe and quiet RV park far from the city where she could live her remaining days in peace.

When the city mechanic began working on her RV, Mayon felt that finally there was progress, and on Jan. 24 when her vehicle started and ran for 20 minutes in the parking lot, she had a moment of joy.

She savored the moment, and then turned back to drafting the documents she would file with the court in the hope that the residents at the VTC would be recognized as a tenants' union, so they could continue to evaluate the implementation of the Vehicle Repair Fund and negotiate with HSH over the many other things she believes need to happen at the site.

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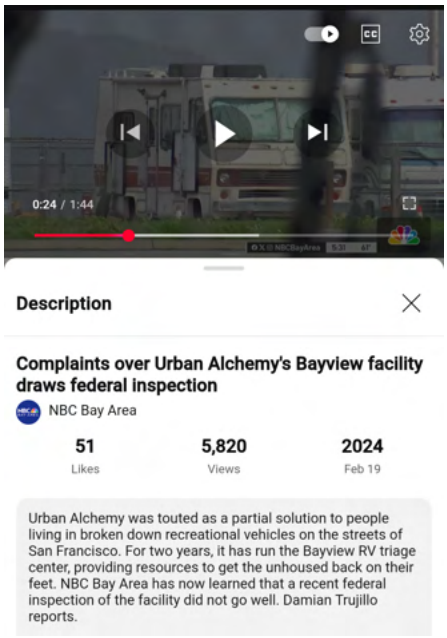
https://youtu.be/lrYDCD8O8SU?si=j5ArEsl4UMNlyH8Z (Post-HUD TV piece)
CBS report on Feb 16, 2024 inspection of VTC



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https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/city-homelessness-agency-found-to-violate-19437981.php

City Homelessness Agency Found To Violate Sunshine Ordinance

Bay City News Service/ May 3, 2024
By Joe Dworetzky

The department in charge of homelessness in San Francisco was called out Wednesday night for failing to make complete and timely disclosure of public records requested by Bay City News.

The city's Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, the body charged with enforcing the rules about disclosure of public records, voted unanimously that the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) had violated the city's "Sunshine Ordinance."

The dispute began in May of 2023 when BCN lodged public records requests with HSH for information related to a "vehicle triage center" in the city's Bayview District and a trailer encampment called "Site F" on property of the Port of San Francisco.

BCN reporter Joe Dworetzky had been covering HSH for months and had written a number of stories as part of a series called "Giving Shelter" which focused, among other things, on HSH's spending on homelessness in the city.

The records requests were filed about a month before the Board of Supervisors was scheduled to hold hearings on HSH's budget. At that time HSH was seeking to increase its budget, even though many other departments were facing budget cuts. (The supervisors ultimately approved a $40 million increase to $713 million.)

BCN wanted the requested information promptly so it would have time to write about what it discovered before HSH's budget hearings -- typically a time when supervisors can ask agencies hard questions about their spending and operations.

Under the ordinance, HSH was required to produce the requested documents in 10 days, at least in the absence of a claim that they were exempt from disclosure. HSH made no such claim and on the 10th day it produced a number of documents, but said that it was continuing to search for more and would produce them on a "rolling basis," if, as, and when they became available.

Thereafter, HSH produced more documents on an irregular pace and did not make final production until two months after the original request. By that time, the budget hearings had come and gone.

Some of the documents produced after the budget hearings had information that was potentially damaging to HSH. For example, information that HSH was exploring giving the trailers that housed the homeless at Site F to another city -- despite the thousands of unsheltered people on San Francisco's streets.

BCN challenged HSH's compliance with the ordinance and alleged that HSH had intentionally used "rolling production" as a strategy to evade the ordinance's requirement of open, full, and timely disclosure.

In a series of filings with the task force, BCN asserted that HSH improperly delayed disclosure of inconvenient or damaging information until it was no longer actionable, as happened in the specific situation which was the basis of the hearing.

At the hearing Wednesday night, BCN presented the case that HSH's disclosure improperly evaded the deadlines in the ordinance and urged the task force to address HSH's conduct, both as it applied the specific situation and what he characterized as a regular "tactic" that HSH uses to control the flow of damaging information.

The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force has an interesting origin story. The task force is an 11-member body appointed by the Board of Supervisors that, among other things, hears disclosure disputes. The ordinance specifies that the seats on the Task Force are to be filled by journalists, citizens interested in public access, and a consumer advocate.

California -- like many states -- has a public records law that sets the baseline rules on disclosure of public records for most public bodies in the state. However, California's law specifically says that local jurisdictions that want to adopt their own laws to enhance disclosure are allowed to do so as those laws require more and/or faster disclosure.

In 1999, the citizens of San Francisco took the state up on that invitation. By a vote of 95,616 to 68,399, the voters approved Proposition Q that amended and gave teeth to the city's existing disclosure law.

The resulting "sunshine ordinance" added broad categories of records to the list of what must be disclosed upon request. The ordinance also set strict deadlines applicable to city agencies when producing requested documents, allowing the public and the media to get information at a time when it could be acted on.

The ordinance reads as a paean to the importance of open and transparent government and curtailing secret deals and hidden operations.

The ordinance recognized that public records requests were a fundamental tool to be used so that the public could get to the primary source materials for determining whether government spending and management was in the interest of the public.

The ordinance begins with a manifesto: "Elected officials, commissions, boards, councils and other agencies of the City and County exist to conduct the people's business. The people do not cede to these entities the right to decide what the people should know about the operations of local government."

The ordinance makes its expectations explicit: "Public officials who attempt to conduct the public's business in secret should be held accountable for their actions."

Dylan Schneider, HSH's manager of legislative affairs, appeared at the hearing to defend the department's conduct. She said that she supervised the official who actually handled the production at issue. Steinberg justified HSH's production schedule because she said that BCN's reporter made numerous record requests, sometimes seeking voluminous documents, and that in some cases the department responded quickly.

She contended that "HSH takes our responsibility to comply with public records requests under the Sunshine Ordinance very seriously," and asserted that the department must carefully review and redact records to make sure they do not identify their "clients'" personal information.

However, when questioned, she said that she was unable to provide specifics about the issues arising in the production because the official who was involved retired.

She said the official retired the day after a committee of the task force held a preliminary hearing on the issues in September 2023. After the hearing, the committee recommended that the full task force hear the BCN petition and find a violation of the ordinance.

After the parties' presentations, the members of the task force had little trouble in concluding that HSH had violated the ordinance by not making full and timely production, but disagreed among themselves about where the limitations are on rolling production. They asked the deputy city attorney who attended the meeting to give them further advice.

Statements in support of BCN's position came from a number of interested observers, including Curtis Sparrer, the president of San Francisco Press Club, Jay Harris, a former publisher of Mother Jones, and Jay Hamilton, head of Stanford University's journalism program and the author of "Democracy's Detectives," an award-winning book on investigative journalism.

Other letters came from law professors and practicing lawyers, some of whom recounted their own experiences with HSH's violations of the ordinance.

Hamilton's letter said that in researching his book, he found that one of the hurdles that investigative reporters face in reporting investigative stories is "government officials who try to block access to the records they should be willing to release."

He observed that "if justice delayed can be justice denied, the same reasoning applies to the timely release of documents."

While the task force ruled in favor of the reporter, there was an element of irony. Because of the task force's workload and meeting schedule, its decision came almost a year after the records requests were first made.

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2024/05/23/bayview-vtc-resident-faces-possible-eviction-over-unauthorized-recordings-of-shelter-staff/

LOCAL NEWS

Bayview VTC resident faces possible eviction over unauthorized recordings of shelter staff

by Joe Dworetzky and Jay Harris, Bay City News
May 23, 2024

A sign taped to the side of Ramona Mayon's motorhome inside the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco warns official visitors to the site that they are subject to being videotaped. It is for this reason that she has run afoul of city policy that prohibits recording people on the site without prior permission, and the penalty for doing so could result in her being suspended from the shelter site for 30 days. (Ramona Mayon via Bay City News)

THE “SAFE PARKING” site established by San Francisco’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing for people living in their vehicles has generated intense controversy since its opening in January 2022, and drama at the site continues unabated.

The latest episode came Tuesday when Urban Alchemy, the controversial nonprofit that operates the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center under contract with HSH, convened a hearing to “deny service” for 30 days to a resident who was written-up for making audio and video recordings of staff without their consent.

The resident, Ramona Mayon, has lived at the VTC for the last 21 months in her 27-foot 1996 Gulfstream RV. She is a writer and blogger and has written extensively — usually critically — about conditions at the site.

She was given a total of six warnings between May 8 and 17 that said she violated site Rule 2e that forbids “Use of photography, video or audio recording on site that includes other clients or staff without their permission.” The penalty was that she would have to leave the site for 30 days, though how that would work given that her RV is not operable, was not explained.

She requested a hearing under the city's shelter grievance policy so she could explain that she has been gathering evidence that Urban Alchemy and the others involved with the site have violated federal, state, and city laws. She intended to present her argument that the First Amendment overrides Rule 2e and allows her to record staff members as a way to gather evidence of their wrongdoing at the site.

As provided in the grievance policy, Mayon requested the assistance of a "Shelter Advocate," a city-provided independent who can speak for a shelter resident who is being denied service. Because denials of service "may result in an unhoused individual losing the individual's place in the shelter, often exiting back to the street," the grievance policy looks to remedy a violation in a way that that will allow a resident to remain at the site.

The hearing was to be held at the VTC but when the time came to begin, staff members of Urban Alchemy refused to let the shelter advocate into the site and insisted that the hearing had to be held outside of the shelter entrance gates.

A gull perches atop a cluster of surveillance cameras at Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in San Francisco on Feb. 9, 2023. The city provides 24/7 security and wraparound services at the "safe sleeping" site that accommodates 49 vehicles. While the residents are monitored by video around the clock, city policy prevents them from doing the same with the site's workers. (JoeDworetzky/Bay City News)

Meanwhile Mayon waited in the main part of the site near a picnic table in the sun with her principal witness, Kelly Hughs, and a number of site residents who were there to observe the hearing. Both Mayon, 63, and Hughs, 54, are disabled. Hughs uses a wheelchair for mobility. Mayon has cancer and was on hospice care for a year.

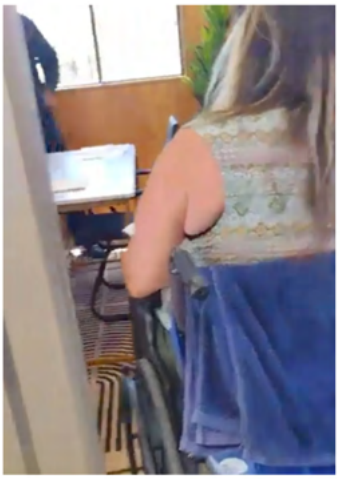
Urban Alchemy staff proposed to drive Mayon and Hughs in the staff golf cart to the other side of the entrance gate where they would conduct the hearing in the asphalt driveway in the sun, presumably with Mayon and Hughs sitting in the golf cart.

Mayon insisted that the hearing be held on the site. She was worried that if she and Hughs left the facility, they would be locked out and could not get back to their RVs. For more than 30 minutes, Urban Alchemy personnel conferred at the front gate with the advocate. Finally, Urban Alchemy said the hearing could be on site but insisted it had to be in a tiny trailer space that could only accommodate Mayon, Hughs and the advocate.

Mayon did not want to go into the trailer where the other residents could not observe the hearing. She wanted witnesses and she had previously been advised that media could not attend. (Bay City News unsuccessfully requested access to the site to observe.)

Urban Alchemy staff told Mayon that if she did not agree to the trailer, they would list her as a "no-show," which would mean that the denial of service would be resolved against her and she would have no right to appeal. She relented.

The trailer had a small conference table that accommodated 4 people. Mayon and the advocate sat on one side of the table.



In an image from video, Bayview Vehicle Triage Center residents Kelly Hughs and Ramona Mayon head into a small conference room for their grievance hearing with representatives of Urban Alchemy. Hughs could not fit her wheelchair inside, so she stayed in the doorway. (Framegrab via Ramona Mayon/YouTube)

Two people from Urban Academy sat at the table. One identified himself as Dwight and said he was a "director" from 711 Post. He introduced Danielle as a "co-director" at 711 Post. 711 Post is another shelter operated by Urban Alchemy under contract with HSH. The grievance policy requires "impartial hearing officer."

Hughs could not get all the way into the room in her wheelchair, so she stayed in the doorway.

The hearing lasted less than 10 minutes. According to Mayon, she began to make a statement about how the conditions of the site violate the law and city policy. After she spoke for a few minutes the Urban Alchemy staff cut her off and rose to leave the room to make their decision. Hughs asked if she could speak. They said she could only discuss the issue of recording on site. Hughs began to speak. “I went on to tell (them) about why she’s filming, why we don’t feel safe here. And then they said, oh, it has nothing to do with that. And they just walked out so they wouldn’t even hear my side or hear anything that had to do with their reasoning for (the filming).”

The Urban Alchemy people left the trailer and returned in a few minutes to say that they would uphold the denial of service. Mayon then requested an arbitration proceeding as provided in the grievance policy.

Mayon hopes that a neutral arbitrator — not an employee of the people she believes to be violating the law — will recognize that she has a constitutional right to gather evidence. She also plans to show that the denial of service is in retaliation for her advocacy for improved conditions at the site. She says that she is protected by the city’s anti-retaliation laws.

Mayon has lived in a vehicle — either a school bus or RV — for most of her adult life. Her RV is her home and she loves it with a passion.

She is the author of several books on the nomadic lifestyle. Her life as a vehicle dweller and writer was profiled in May 2023 in Local News Matters.

Ramona Mayon awaits a hearing on May 15, 2024, as to whether she violated the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center’s rule not to videotape site staff without permission. (JayHarris/ Bay City News)

She is not a lawyer, but reads the law and she is the author of The Vehicle Dwellers’ Legal Primer. If the VTC were a jail, she would be a jailhouse lawyer.

While San Francisco considers living in a vehicle to be “unsheltered homelessness,” Mayon never considered herself homeless during the many years that she lived in her RV. However, when her RV broke and she could not afford the repairs, everything changed.

In August 2022, her immobile RV was out at Ocean Beach. During a city “sweep” of an encampment, city workers said that if she would agree to let them tow her RV to the VTC, the city would repair her vehicle and get her back on the road.

She did not trust the officials but she was fearful that if she said no, the city would impound her RV (in other words, take away her home and all her belongings) and she would never be able to get it back. She ultimately agreed to be towed, but vowed she would document whether the city followed through on their promises.

Mayon would say that even though she is a rabble-rouser, she is a reluctant rabble-rouser. Her default mode is calm, friendly and logical. But when she is provoked, she has a sharp tongue. And if her tongue is sharp, her pen is sharper. Her favorite quote is from the French philosopher Voltaire, “To hold a pen is to be at war.”

She started to write about the site conditions. She created a website that greets the visitor with the words “Welcome to Camp Dismal.” The website documents the city’s failures and mismanagement in 17 separate sections including, “Bleak, Toxic Location” (describing proximity to a superfund site and violations of Maher Ordinance), “No Electricity” (covering the city’s 2-year failure to arrange promised electric service), and “Rat Problem” (documenting rat infestation throughout the site).

Mayon considers herself to be a documentarian, and the website is chock-a-block with photos, official documents, maps, screen shots, and videos that illustrate her points. But in January 2024 — 16 months after being towed to the VTC — Mayon’s exasperation with the city’s management of the site and its ongoing failure to fulfill its promises (especially the promise to repair her vehicle), boiled over. She decided to organize the VTC residents into forming a union to negotiate with the city over site conditions.

She obtained signatures from a majority of VTC residents and prepared a petition for the group to be recognized as a tenants’ union or association under a provision in the San Francisco Code. Anticipating that the city would not accept the union’s legitimacy, she filed a lawsuit on Jan. 26 in the San Francisco Superior Court requesting the court declare residents had the rights of tenants under the state Welfare and Institutions Code.

In the petition, the group — called the “Candlestick 35” in reference to the number of approved slots for parking at the site — presented a list of 19 issues that it sought to address followed by 31 specific “demands.” Most of the demands were concrete and practical, for example, that the staff wear nametags so they could be identified, and that the VTC provide Wi-Fi and arrange an address where they can receive mail. Others are more far-reaching (“Stop digging and any industrial level disturbance of the air in this toxic location.”)

Mayon said that she hoped the organizing efforts would make the city understand residents of the VTC have the same rights that other tenants are given under California law.

HSH quickly brushed off the organizing activity saying that the residents of the VTC were not tenants and did not have any housing rights. The city's lawyers moved to dismiss her lawsuit. (The matter is pending.) But the formation of a union empowered residents who had not spoken up before to become advocates for change.

Kelly Hughs, a disabled resident of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, has filed an ADA compliance complaint against the site with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs. She claims the site lacks proper electricity and heat and that she did not feel safe there. (Kelly Hughs via Bay City News)

While Mayon was blogging about the site conditions, Hughs was also challenging the way the site was being operated. Hughs was in a car accident a few years ago and broke her leg. Surgery wasn't fully successful, and she cannot walk or stand for extended periods. She needs to use a wheelchair for mobility.

Like Mayon, Hughs never considered herself homeless. She had given up her apartment and was living in her RV in San Francisco while finishing the medical treatments she needed for her leg. She viewed herself lucky to get into the VTC where she would not have to worry about getting towed or getting tickets. Once she arrived she found the conditions abysmal. The showers she had been told would be at the site were not ADA compliant so she could not use them. There was no electricity and no heat. She did not feel safe. There was an Urban Alchemy staff member who she said was "verbally abusing people, physically abusing people."
She filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs and, according to Hughs, in January a HUD investigator began to evaluate the site. Hughs says the ongoing investigation is focused on ADA issues.

Between the union organizing and the HUD investigation, it seemed to Mayon and Hughs as if progress was being made.

The city rented large portable batteries that provided power for 8 hours a day. A pilot program was initiated at the VTC to provide repairs to people living in their vehicles and give assistance with delinquent registration and unpaid tickets. (Both of these things had been underway for months, but their arrival seemed to create positive momentum.)

The city pumped out the floodwaters that closed Hunters Point Expressway and cleaned the accumulated trash at the entrance to the facility.

A long promised “dog park” was opened.

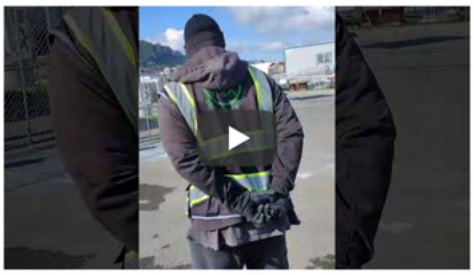
Notwithstanding the improvements, Mayon, Hughs, and other residents continued to advocate for better site conditions. They challenged the slow pace and inconsistency of the rolling out of the vehicle repair pilot. They raised ADA violations. They called out the rat infestation.

What caused the blizzard of warning notices that staff gave Mayon between May 8th and 17th is not clear.

According to Ramona, it was an incorrect statement made at a community meeting at the site on May 8 by an HHS representative. The meeting was held in an area of the VTC that was not accessible to a person in a wheelchair. Mayon told the representative that Hughs could not attend because she couldn’t get over the curb and she did not want to be carried. Mayon said that the ADA required the site be accessible. The representative allegedly said that the ADA does not apply because the VTC is not on federal land. Mayon recorded the statement and, according to Mayon, the recording ultimately made its way to the HUD inspector.

Thereafter, Mayon began to be written-up.

The fact that she was making tapes before that point was no secret. She taped an interaction on Feb. 9, 2024, with an Urban Alchemy staff member where she explicitly explained that she was making recordings of public official visiting the site and was entitled to do so.



Bayview Vehicle Triage Center resident Ramona Mayon explains why she has a right to film public officials visiting the site. (Greg and Ramona Mayon/YouTube)

Mayon has not yet received the written denial of service but she is committed to pressing her case forward in arbitration. Under the grievance policy she is entitled to remain at the site while the case moves ahead.

She notes that a number of federal appeals courts have recognized that both reporters and members of the public have the right to video public officials performing their duties on public property. She points out that citizens routinely use their phones to record police and other officials interacting with the public.

She argues that contractors like Urban Alchemy work on behalf of the city and are subject to the same rules as would apply to HSH if it performed the services itself. Her recording was on public property and outdoors.

Mayon notes that overhead "video surveillance cameras" are trained on the VTC. She says that the surveillance cameras show there is no expectation of privacy in the outdoor areas where she has taped.

She has done research on Urban Alchemy and the large contracts it has obtained in San Francisco and elsewhere. She collects information about complaints against its operation of other sites. She has posted a large sign on her RV that warns staff she is recording. She thinks recording is "what breaks the chain … of how they put this abuse on top of people."

"If people like me … can film, they will have to change this."

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https://sfstandard.com/opinion/2024/08/17/london-breed-ultimatum/

London Breed: No more excuses, no more apologies. SF won't tolerate encampments any longer

Defending her "aggressive" crackdown on encampments, the mayor argues that homeless people have only one choice left: accept help or get out.

By **London Breed** Mayor of San Francisco/ Published Aug. 17, 2024 • 6:02am

This month, via a collaboration of multiple city departments, my administration began stepping up efforts to get the last homeless tents and encampments off our streets. We have already cut the number of tents in half since July of last year. Now, following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in City of Grants Pass v. Johnson, we have more tools to help people out of tents and indoors.

And I am using them.

Our homeless encampment teams have been going out for years, bringing thousands of people from the street into shelter. I have ridden along with these teams, seen the work they do and the challenges they face. I've seen them connect people with family back home. But I've also seen them told "no," again and again, by people who return to the same spot, again and again.

The truth is there is a small subset of people in our city — often living in tents, often suffering from compounding issues of drug addiction and/or mental illness — who are much more difficult to help.

Take the site behind the DMV on Fell Street, near the Panhandle, for example. When I went out with encampment teams two weeks ago, our city workers had already been there over 15 times this year, offering people shelter and cleaning the area. But a small group of individuals kept returning to the area and setting up encampments.

What is the city to do in this situation?

Some want us to do nothing, to let people remain in tents until they make the personal decision to come in out of the cold. Advocates for these people have even filed lawsuits trying to force us to do nothing. These are some of the same advocates who hand out tents and tried to block our reforms to state conservatorship laws for those with severe mental illness.

But we cannot, and I will not, just let people remain in tents.

I do not accept their approach. Tents and tent encampments are not safe or healthy. The city is not a campground. Someone's doorstep or storefront is not a campsite. Encampments often harbor illegal activity, including drug dealing and human trafficking. We've seen a doubling of fires that start near encampments, endangering life and property. This is not humane, and it's not acceptable.

San Francisco will always lead with compassion, and my administration always offers help first and foremost. But we cannot, and I will not, just let people remain in tents. We are making it clear that this is no longer a city where you can stay on the street.

In 2023, 65% of people offered shelter by our workers rejected those offers. This year, that number has risen to 75%. Out of 617 engagements by our teams over the last two weeks, only 77 people accepted shelter. That means 88% of the people we encountered refused to accept a roof over their heads. This is unacceptable.

When we meet people who reject help over and over, such as those camping at the DMV site, we must take a firmer hand — and the Supreme Court's Grants Pass decision has affirmed our ability to do so.

Source: Nick Otto for The Standard

Our goal with enforcement is not to punish people; it's to make clear that when we offer help — whether by our encampment teams in the moment or by another outreach worker making their daily rounds — that these offers are not an option. They are *the* option.

Since 2018, we've expanded shelter slots by over 60% and housing slots by more than 50%. We have more housing for the formerly homeless than any county in the Bay Area, including counties with larger homeless populations. Per capita, we have more homes for the formerly homeless than any city in the country, other than Washington, D.C. We've helped over 15,000 people exit homelessness since I took office. And another 10,000 have received rental assistance or other support to prevent them from falling into homelessness.

We've increased support for family homelessness in my most recent budget. Just this week, we've worked to get families living in Zoo Road into housing, connecting them with new vouchers for leases at Park Merced.

We've expanded drug treatment outreach, including sending people out at night to do telehealth appointments on the street to help get people into treatment. We are investing in recovery and treatment.

And we need to build more housing. I'm not just talking about permanent supportive housing — we need more homes across our entire city so people don't fall into homelessness. We cannot address homelessness without building homes — tens of thousands of them — to make this city more affordable and accessible. Until the Bay Area and California begin building much, much more housing, we will still struggle. (And the demise this week of the regional housing bond is a frustrating setback.)

To those who criticize our city workers who are doing encampment sweeps: These are hardworking public servants who go out day after day to try to help people and keep our city clean. Let's appreciate the work they do in very difficult situations.

There is no excuse for inaction. Our homeless encampment teams will continue to go out. Our police officers will enforce our laws. We will bring a new reality to our streets, built on both compassion and the clear directive that San Francisco is not a place where anything goes.

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https://www.sf.gov/news--mayor-london-breed-proposes-new-city-policy-address-oversized-vehicle-parking-across-san

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>Mayor's office press release<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<

Mayor London Breed Proposes New City Policy to Address Oversized Vehicle Parking Across San Francisco

New legislation will allow for an oversized vehicle like an RV to be towed if an offer of shelter or housing is rejected with a goal of getting people to accept services being offered

September 20, 2024

San Francisco, CA - Today, Mayor London N. Breed announced a proposed City law that will give homeless outreach workers a new tool to get people to accept shelter, housing, and services being offered to those living in oversized vehicles, including recreational vehicles (RVs) on all San Francisco streets. The legislation will ensure City streets are used for the purpose for which they were designed—transportation—rather than serving as unofficial parcels for inhabited oversized vehicles.

Supervisors Joel Engardio, Catherine Stefani, Rafael Mandelman, and Matt Dorsey are in support of the proposed legislation.

Under the San Francisco Transportation Code, current regulation exists prohibiting overnight parking by oversized vehicles on certain streets but not all. The proposed legislation will make overnight parking by inhabited RVs a towable offense between midnight and 6 a.m., but only if an offer of shelter, housing, and/or services are rejected. Current overnight parking restrictions will continue to exist on already approved streets.

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) and City agencies regularly offer RV dwellers services and referrals to alternative housing, including offers of shelter, housing, public benefits, and health services. Services are offered on a case-by-case basis based on need, but include:

Paying for the repair and relocation of RVs, including paying for the rent and fees at an RV park of their choice

Access to shelter

Rapid rehousing vouchers, permanent supportive housing, and hotel vouchers

Relocation services, including utilizing the Journey Home program

As an example of this work, since June, HSH has helped 50 households move from vehicles on Winston Road and Zoo Road and into long-term housing, in addition to conducting outreach to RV dwellers across San Francisco. However, despite several efforts to connect some households to services, offers by homeless outreach workers have been continuously turned down. Given the pending towing, households on Zoo Road were more inclined to accept offers. Today's legislation will apply that same approach citywide.

"San Francisco is a compassionate City that will always lead with offers for housing and shelter, and other supportive services, but we must enforce our laws to ensure that our streets are safe, livable, and accessible to everyone," said Mayor Breed. "Since the Grants Pass decision granted us the authority to resume enforcing local laws on our streets, our message has been clear: accepting our help is not just an option, it is the option. If someone is offered housing, shelter, and support but turns us down, they cannot remain on the streets. Today's legislation will allow us to apply the same principle to people living in RVs."

“Large RVs cannot be allowed to permanently take up multiple parking spaces, because the lack of parking turnover denies access to residents and visitors. A functioning city needs streets that function. Residents are frustrated because they pay tickets if their car is a few inches over a line, while the RV in front of their house gets to stay indefinitely. Some of the RV dwellers near the ocean have dumped piles of debris in the street while engaging in antisocial and illegal behavior that makes residents afraid to walk in their neighborhood,” said Supervisor Joel Engardio who represents the Sunset neighborhoods on the Westside. “It is reasonable to tow an RV if an offer of shelter is refused. We cannot accept RVs as a long-term solution to our housing crisis. I support building more affordable housing in my district for formerly unhoused people — including those who currently live in RVs. We can provide shelter and permanent homes for people without accepting an anything goes approach on our streets.”

“As we work to keep our streets safe and accessible for everyone, this legislation strikes the right balance between compassion and accountability,” said Supervisor Catherine Stefani. “San Francisco will continue to provide housing and services to those in need, while mitigating health and safety risks on our streets. By giving City agencies this necessary tool, we can protect our neighborhoods while ensuring support for our most vulnerable residents.”

“I strongly support Mayor Breed’s proposal. San Francisco should be doing everything we reasonably can to help unhoused households resolve their homelessness, but it is not reasonable or fair to impacted neighborhoods to allow our public spaces to be converted into campgrounds,” said Supervisor Rafael Mandelman. “That is true of encampments on our sidewalks and in our parks, and it is true of RVs on our streets. We can and should offer shelter and services to unhoused households, but we simply cannot allow people to live in RVs on our streets indefinitely.”

“Allowing RVs and other oversized vehicles to serve as makeshift housing is creating too many safety concerns and public nuisances,” said Supervisor Matt Dorsey. “Mayor Breed’s proposal strikes the right balance by ensuring that those living in vehicles are offered shelter or housing options, while disallowing a practice that needs to end. Our goal should be to connect unhoused residents to appropriate services while maintaining safe and clean streets. I think the Mayor’s approach will accomplish that.”

San Francisco has long faced challenges with on-street parking of RVs such as trailers, motorhomes, and campers. Existing policy makes it illegal to live in a vehicle on City streets. RVs parked on streets can present public safety and public health hazards, including impaired sight lines for road users and illegal dumping of garbage and waste matter on sidewalks and streets. In some districts, limited available on-street parking is decreased further due to oversize vehicles being stored on streets.

The legislation, which the SFMTA Board of Directors will take up on Tuesday October 1, would be implemented and enforced by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) in collaboration with the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD).

“City workers are out on the streets every day offering shelter and housing to people living in recreational vehicles. This legislation will allow for parking enforcement if and when all of those offers have been refused,” said Jeff Tumlin, SFMTA Director of Transportation. “The number of RVs on City streets is causing a variety of problems. We're hearing from small businesses in industrial parts of the City that they're struggling to get their deliveries because all the parking spaces are taken up with RVs. And residents in some neighborhoods are finding the sidewalks in front of their homes blocked by garbage and human waste. We have to do better.”

Mayor Breed’s Homelessness Response

Since taking office in 2018, Mayor Breed has significantly expanded and improved San Francisco’s homelessness response system, leading to the number of people living on the streets to reach the lowest level in at least 10 years. Under her leadership, San Francisco has expanded shelter beds by over 70%, increased housing slots for formerly homeless individuals by over 50%, and added 400 behavioral health treatment beds.

In the last year, San Francisco has helped over 5,200 people exit homelessness, provided shelter to nearly 10,000 people, and over 8,200 people have accessed prevention support like rental assistance to keep them from falling into homelessness in the first place.

“The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing is committed to continuing to provide outreach to people struggling with homelessness and living in their vehicles”, said Shireen McSpadden executive director of HSH. “We will use the shelter, housing and financial assistance available to us to move people out of vehicles and into a safe and dignified housing options.”

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https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/breed-homeless-people-living-in-rvs-in-s-f-tow-19779772.php

Breed: Homeless people living in RVs in S.F. who refuse shelter will face towing

By Maggie Angst/ Sep 20, 2024

Mayor London Breed confirmed Friday that San Francisco is planning aggressive restrictions on overnight parking of recreational vehicles to tackle the surge of people living in them amid neighborhood resistance.

Breed said people living out of RVs parked on San Francisco streets could soon see their vehicles towed if they turn down offers of shelter. The Chronicle reported on the overnight parking ban proposal last week based on planning documents after the media outlet El Tecolote first broke the news, but the mayor’s office didn’t confirm the plan until Friday.

Under a new law proposed by Breed, oversize vehicles parked overnight — between midnight and 6 a.m. — on city streets could be towed if those living in them have previously rejected an offer of shelter, housing or other services.

The law would apply only to large vehicles, such as mobile homes, trailers and campers, that are inhabited.

“San Francisco is a compassionate City that will always lead with housing and shelter, and other supportive services, but we must enforce our laws to ensure that our streets are safe, livable, and accessible to everyone,” Breed said in a statement. “If someone is offered housing, shelter, and support but turns us down, they cannot remain on the streets.”

Friday’s announcement comes as Breed has rolled out sweeping policies in recent weeks to tackle the city’s unrelenting homelessness crisis. Breed, who is in the middle of a heated reelection campaign, is particularly focused on cracking down on a portion of the city’s homeless population that officials say are “service-resistant.” The mayor has instructed law enforcement to increase citations and arrests of unhoused people who illegally set up tents and refuse shelter and directed all city employees to offer homeless people bus tickets out of town before shelter or housing.

Critics have argued that the mayor is criminalizing homelessness and making it more difficult for service providers to build trust and help move people into more stable housing.

City officials have also taken various measures to crack down on people living in their vehicles, including reviving an old parking ban on Bernal Hill, reconfiguring parking spots on the Lower Great Highway and implementing new parking restrictions near Stonestown shopping center, which forced dozens of families living in RVs in the area to flee.

The mayor’s office said the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing helped 50 households move from vehicles near the shopping center into long-term housing, but homeless advocates criticized officials for bringing in police officers and SFMTA before all the families and people living in the area had received offers.

Gabriel Medina, executive director of La Raza Community Resource Center, called on city officials at a recent news conference to open more safe parking sites rather than “constantly harass” people living in RVs.

San Francisco leaders for years said they would open a safe parking site for RVs on the west side of the city, but they have failed to do so. The city’s only safe parking site, which opened in 2022 at Candlestick Point, serves just 33 vehicles. It was intended to hold up to 155 vehicles, but the city has been hampered by a lack of electricity, accessibility issues and polluting diesel generators.

“We cannot chase people around the city if they’re all spread out. People are not going to want to be served,” Medina said. “SFMTA, your job is parking. Your job is not criminalizing people living in RVs.”

The proposed RV restrictions must be approved by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency’s Board of Directors, which is expected to vote on the legislation on Oct. 1. Pending approval, the legislation would be enforced by the SFMTA and the San Francisco Police Department.

Jeffrey Tumlin, SFMTA director of transportation, said RVs are causing problems for small businesses and residents, and “we have to do better.”

The city’s current policies prohibit overnight parking of large vehicles only on a small portion of city roads where signs are posted. Vehicles cannot be towed solely for violating those overnight parking restrictions, though officials can tow them for other reasons such as expired registration and blocking access to sidewalks and driveways.

Supervisor Joel Engardio, who represents the city’s Sunset District, said he constantly receives complaints from constituents who are frustrated by oversize vehicles that take up multiple parking spaces. Those complaints range from parking problems to illegal dumping to dangerous and concerning behavior by RV dwellers, including one person running a puppy mill out of his vehicle and another seen outside his vehicle with a machete, Engardio said.

The city recently reconfigured parking spots on the Lower Great Highway to deter RV parking there, but Engardio said the problems persist.

“We need to support and create the construction of new housing and shelter for people, but we just can’t let people park on the street indefinitely and create problems for the residents,” he said in an interview.

The number of unhoused people sleeping in vehicles in San Francisco spiked 37% — from 1,049 to 1,442 — over the past two years, according to the city’s latest point-in-time count. The city estimates that includes about 130 families living out of vehicles.

San Francisco does not have enough shelter and housing for the thousands of people living without a home in the city. About 530 families are currently on the city’s shelter wait list, according to the Coalition on Homelessness.

“This city has failed to make its promises to vehicularly housed people,” Lukas Illa, human rights organizer for the Coalition on Homelessness, said at a news conference this week. “It’s threatening to put people who already have shelter onto the street and making sure that the people who desperately need shelter are kept waiting longer.”

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https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/s-f-adopts-new-rv-parking-rules-for-homeless-19807849.php

S.F. adopts new RV parking restrictions to deal with homeless people. Critics call it 'inhumane'

By Maggie Angst
Oct 1, 2024

San Franciscans living out of large recreational vehicles could face towing if they don't accept shelter, the latest move by Mayor London Breed to address homelessness. Beginning Nov. 1, large RVs and trailers parked from midnight to 6 a.m. on city streets where signage is posted could be towed after a 6-1 vote Tuesday by the board of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. In instances where someone is living inside the vehicle, city officials must offer shelter to the occupants before towing the vehicle.

"It really is truly a service-first approach," SFMTA Director of Streets Viktoriya Wise said Tuesday evening during the board meeting. "But what my colleagues found is that until there's very clear and meaningful enforcement, such as having a vehicle towed, people don't always want to accept shelter or services."

When Breed last month confirmed plans of new RV parking restrictions, she said it would give the city a new tool to address issues "on all San Francisco streets," but officials on Tuesday emphasized that the new policy was not a sweeping citywide restriction. Officials plan to implement the overnight parking ban on about one block a month, costing the city about $230,000 a year for sign installation, enforcement, tow subsidies and storage.

SFMTA Director Jeffrey Tumlin will have the sole authority to decide where new signs should be placed, based on findings related to traffic, circulation, public health and safety. Wise said Tumlin and SFMTA will work closely with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the Healthy Streets Operations Center, which conducts the city's encampment sweeps, to prioritize streets for enforcement.

"Our message is clear: accepting our help is not just an option, it is the option," Breed said in a news release Wednesday. "If someone is offered housing, shelter, and support but turns us down, they cannot remain on the streets."

City officials portrayed the changes as a balanced approach designed to get people living in vehicles into more safe and stable housing while also addressing community public health and safety concerns exacerbated by inhabited vehicles on city streets. Those concerns include impaired sight lines for other drivers, illegal dumping of garbage and waste onto streets and sidewalks, and diminished availability of on-street parking. "This is a tool, in fact, we never want to use," Tumlin said. "It's a tool of last resort."

But advocates for unhoused people argue the policy does not constitute a real solution for those living in RVs and will merely push RV dwellers to other areas of the city and increase competition for limited shelter beds. “It’s inhumane,” said Yessica Hernandez, an organizer with the Coalition on Homelessness. “We need real solutions to address homelessness, not punitive measures that push people further into the shadows.”

Those living in RVs in San Francisco include immigrant families, aging and disabled individuals, young workers, and some people who are unemployed and using drugs, according to interviews conducted by the Chronicle. In many cases, people living in RVs do not consider themselves homeless and see offers to move into a group shelter — where they have to share their sleeping quarters and bathroom with dozens of other people — as a poor alternative. More than 520 families are waiting for non-congregate shelter, a temporary housing placement where they would have their own private space.

“I’ve been moving my vehicle every other day just so I can avoid having problems,” an RV dweller named Roger said during the meeting. “I get anxiety attacks when I’m around a lot of people … and the shelter that they’re offering is a navigation center, in which you have 100 people living in the same shelter.”

Dariush Kayhan, deputy director for programs for the homelessness department, said the agency offers different housing and shelter options depending on availability.

Under the new policy, SFMTA said officials in the Homelessness Department and Healthy Streets Operation Center would provide the agency or police with license plate and vehicle descriptions of people who refused shelter and that those would be the only inhabited vehicles that could face towing.

SFMTA Vice Chair Stephanie Cajina, who was the only SFMTA board member to vote against the proposal, raised concerns that officials did not have a detailed written plan for how the policy would be enforced to ensure that people aren’t inaccurately deemed as refusing shelter. “I urge you to consider what it is that will trigger these next steps … because it sounds very dynamic, and somewhat subjective,” Cajina said during the meeting.

The new policies will mean RVs will be banned from parking overnight on more city streets, and members of the public, including those living out of large vehicles, will have less say in the process.

The city’s current policies prohibit overnight parking of large vehicles only on a small portion of city roads where signs are posted — about 47 miles of the city’s more than 900 miles of frontage — but vehicles cannot be towed solely for violating the overnight parking prohibition. Over the past five years, an average of three citations per month were issued citations for such violations, according to SFMTA. Living in a vehicle is also prohibited under the city’s police code, but it is not enforced, Wise said. Adding signage to a new street has required a vote by the full SFMTA Board of Directors, only after lengthy and contentious community discussions.

San Francisco counted 1,444 people living in vehicles in its most recent homelessness census, a 37% increase from 2022. Ninety percent of the city's 130 unsheltered families were living in a vehicle, according to the count. According to a city count in July 2024, 361 large vehicles were being used for lodging in San Francisco.

The city's only safe parking site, which opened in 2022 at Candlestick Point, was meant to hold up to 155 vehicles. But a lack of electricity, accessibility violations and the use of polluting diesel generators has left it serving just 33 vehicles. Homeless advocates for years have been urging the city to open more safe parking sites — a message that they continued to stress Tuesday night.

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https://www.sf.gov/news--sfmta-board-directors-approves-new-city-policy-address-oversized-vehicles-parking-across-san

(**Mayor's 2nd press release — uses most of Sept's press release out October 2, 2024)**

SFMTA Board of Directors Approves New City Policy to Address Oversized Vehicles Parking Across San Francisco

New law proposed by Mayor Breed will allow for an oversized vehicle like an RV to be towed if an offer of shelter or housing is rejected with a goal of getting people to accept services being offered

San Francisco, CA — The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board of Directors approved a new City law proposed by Mayor London N. Breed that will give homeless outreach workers a new tool to get people to accept shelter, housing, and services being offered to those living in oversized vehicles, including recreational vehicles (RVs) on all San Francisco streets. The new law will ensure City streets are used for the purpose for which they were designed—transportation—rather than serving as unofficial parcels for inhabited oversized vehicles.

Supervisors Joel Engardio, Catherine Stefani, Rafael Mandelman, and Matt Dorsey are in support of the change in law.

The approved law will make overnight parking by inhabited RVs a towable offense between midnight and 6 a.m., but only if an offer of shelter, housing, and/or services are rejected. Current overnight parking restrictions will continue to exist on already approved streets. Previously, under the San Francisco Transportation Code, current regulation prohibited overnight parking by oversized vehicles on certain streets but not all.

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) and City agencies regularly offer RV dwellers services and referrals to alternative housing, including offers of shelter,

housing, public benefits, and health services. Services are offered on a case-by-case basis based on need, but include:

Paying for the repair and relocation of RVs, including paying for the rent and fees at an RV park of their choice

Access to shelter

Rapid rehousing vouchers, permanent supportive housing, and hotel vouchers

Relocation services, including utilizing the Journey Home program

As an example of this work, since June, HSH has helped 50 households move from vehicles on Winston Road and Zoo Road and into long-term housing, in addition to conducting outreach to RV dwellers across San Francisco. However, despite several efforts to connect some households to services, offers by homeless outreach workers have been continuously turned down. Given the pending towing, households on Zoo Road were more inclined to accept offers. Today's legislation will apply that same approach citywide.

"This approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors will help us to enforce our laws to ensure that our streets are safe, livable, and accessible to everyone," said Mayor London Breed. "Our outreach workers are going out every to offer help to people and to engage with those living in vehicles and encampments. Our message is clear: accepting our help is not just an option, it is the option. If someone is offered housing, shelter, and support but turns us down, they cannot remain on the streets."

"A functioning city needs streets that function. Residents are frustrated because they pay tickets if their car is a few inches over a line, while an RV in front of their house gets to stay indefinitely and take up multiple parking spaces. The lack of parking turnover denies access to residents and visitors," said Supervisor Joel Engardio, who represents the Sunset neighborhoods on the Westside. "There are times when people need to sleep in their vehicle, and they deserve leeway when the vehicle fits in the space and follows parking rules. Towing should be a last resort when people dump piles of debris in the street while engaging in antisocial and illegal behavior. We cannot accept RVs as a long-term solution to our housing crisis. I support building more affordable housing in my district for formerly unhoused people — including those who currently live in RVs. We can provide shelter and permanent homes for people without accepting an anything goes approach on our streets."

"As we continue our efforts to keep our streets safe and accessible for everyone, this legislation strikes the right balance between compassion and accountability," said Supervisor Catherine Stefani. "With this new law, San Francisco will maintain its commitment to providing housing and services to those in need, while mitigating health and safety risks in our neighborhoods. By equipping City agencies with this necessary tool, we can better protect our communities and support our most vulnerable residents."

“I strongly support Mayor Breed’s proposal. San Francisco should be doing everything we reasonably can to help unhoused households resolve their homelessness, but it is not reasonable or fair to impacted neighborhoods to allow our public spaces to be converted into campgrounds,” said Supervisor Rafael Mandelman. “That is true of encampments on our sidewalks and in our parks, and it is true of RVs on our streets. We can and should offer shelter and services to unhoused households, but we simply cannot allow people to live in RVs on our streets indefinitely.”

“Allowing RVs and other oversized vehicles to serve as makeshift housing is creating too many safety concerns and public nuisances,” said Supervisor Matt Dorsey. “Mayor Breed’s proposal strikes the right balance by ensuring that those living in vehicles are offered shelter or housing options, while disallowing a practice that needs to end. Our goal should be to connect unhoused residents to appropriate services while maintaining safe and clean streets. I think the Mayor’s approach will accomplish that.”

San Francisco has long faced challenges with on-street parking of RVs such as trailers, motorhomes, and campers. Existing policy makes it illegal to live in a vehicle on City streets. RVs parked on streets can present public safety and public health hazards, including impaired sight lines for road users and illegal dumping of garbage and waste matter on sidewalks and streets. In some districts, limited available on-street parking is decreased further due to oversize vehicles being stored on streets. The new law will be implemented and enforced by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) in collaboration with the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD).

“City workers are out on the streets every day offering shelter and housing to people living in recreational vehicles. This legislation will allow for parking enforcement when all of those offers have been refused,” said Jeff Tumlin, SFMTA Director of Transportation. “The number of RVs on City streets is causing a variety of problems. Residents in some neighborhoods are finding the sidewalks in front of their homes blocked by garbage and human waste. And we’re hearing from small businesses in industrial parts of the City that they're struggling to get their deliveries because all the parking spaces are taken up with RVs. We have to do better.”

Since taking office in 2018, Mayor Breed has significantly expanded and improved San Francisco’s homelessness response system, leading to the number of people living on the streets to reach the lowest level in at least 10 years. Under her leadership, San Francisco has expanded shelter beds by over 70%, increased housing slots for formerly homeless individuals by over 50%, and added 400 behavioral health treatment beds.

“The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing is committed to continuing to provide outreach to people struggling with homelessness and living in their vehicles,” said Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director of HSH. “We will use the shelter, housing and financial assistance available to us to move people out of vehicles and into a safe and dignified housing options.”

https://sfist.com/2024/12/06/the-bayview-vehicle-triage-center-will-close-up-for-good-in-march/

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center Will Close Up for Good In March (Dec 6, 2024)

The Bayview RV triage site that's been dubbed the "most expensive homeless response" in SF history has been deemed a failure and will wind down operations in a few months, after blowing through $15 million and only accommodating about one-fifth of the people it was supposed to. During the really bad days of the pandemic, San Francisco was scrambling to find safe accommodations for its homeless population, and was provided a fair amount of state funding to do this. One of these solutions was an RV triage center at Candlestick Point that opened in 2022, but it was little-used and incredibly costly.

So now, nearly three years later, the Chronicle reports that the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHS) is pulling the plug on the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, and everyone will have to get their vehicles out of there by some point in March.

This is ironic, because the site just got its PG&E power hook-ups five weeks ago, after not having full power for nearly three years.

On top of that, DHS is decommissioning the site a full nine months before the city's lease on the place is up, after it was underutilized and suffered a series of logistical snafus.

"We're really not in the business of running RV parks, and that was very clear to us in this process," DHS executive director Shireen McSpadden told the Chronicle.

The site was originally supposed to accommodate more than 150 RVs, but fire marshall limited it to just 35. It only ended up serving about 30 vehicles at a time, with an unknown number of residents in those vehicles. And the program blew through $15.5 million of city and state funding over this nearly three years.

The Chronicle reported on a city budget report in 2023 which noted that "assuming an ongoing capacity of 35 vehicles per night, the cost per vehicle is approximately $140,000 per year, which is by far the most expensive homeless response intervention."

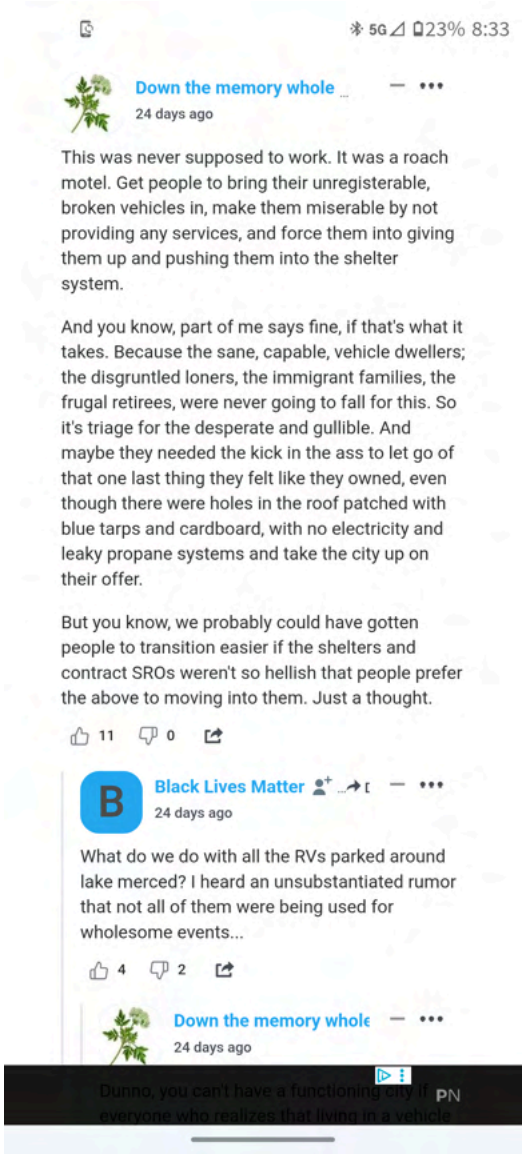
Indeed, the city was spending $275 a night per RV there, whereas one night at the adjacent Candlestick RV Park costs only $145 per night.

When the program expires, the DHS hopes to transition people into permanent housing "or provide them with other support such as vehicle repairs," according to the Chronicle. But the RV-dwelling crowd tends to resist housing support, because they do not consider themselves homeless, and are fine with their status quo. The city is also considering temporary vouchers for existing RV parks in the area, or safe parking spots at other shelter sites that are yet to open.

This is an issue, because people living in vehicles are the fastest-growing segment of the SF homeless population. The latest homeless point-in-time count showed nearly 1,500 people living in vehicles in SF, a 37% increase over the previous count. The sad thing is that the closure of this Bayview Triage Center will put even more vehicle-dwellers out on the streets.

The upside, in this case, is that there are so few people using this facility that it will not appreciably increase that population of vehicle-dwellers on the streets.

(from the comment section of this article)



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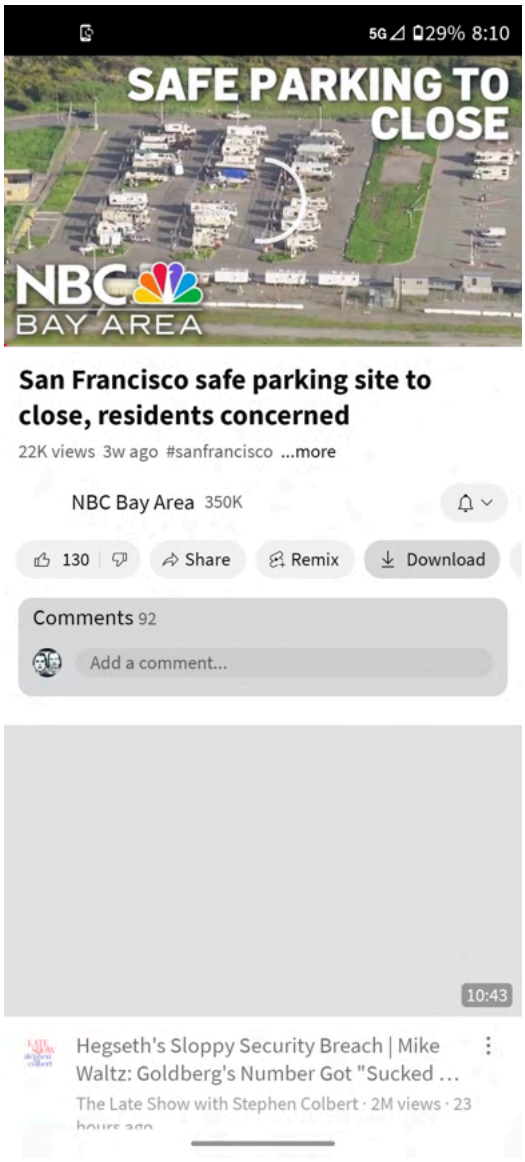

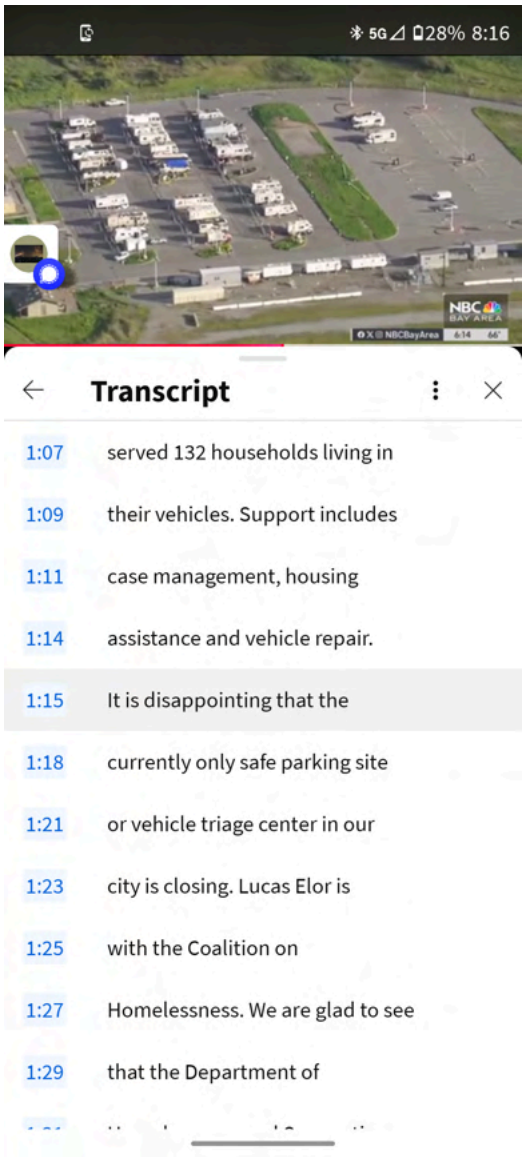
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Transcript
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1:18 currently only safe parking site
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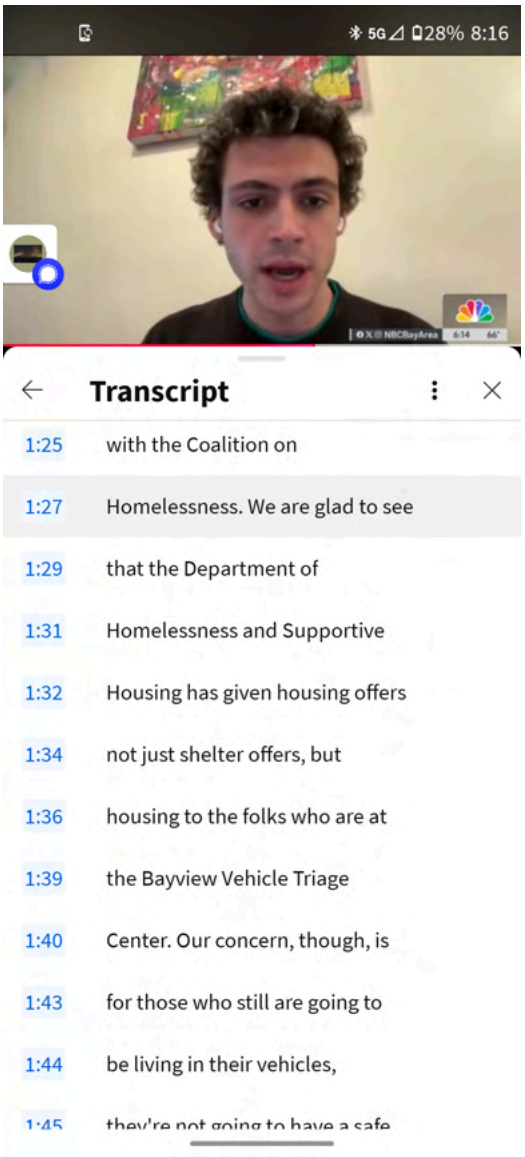
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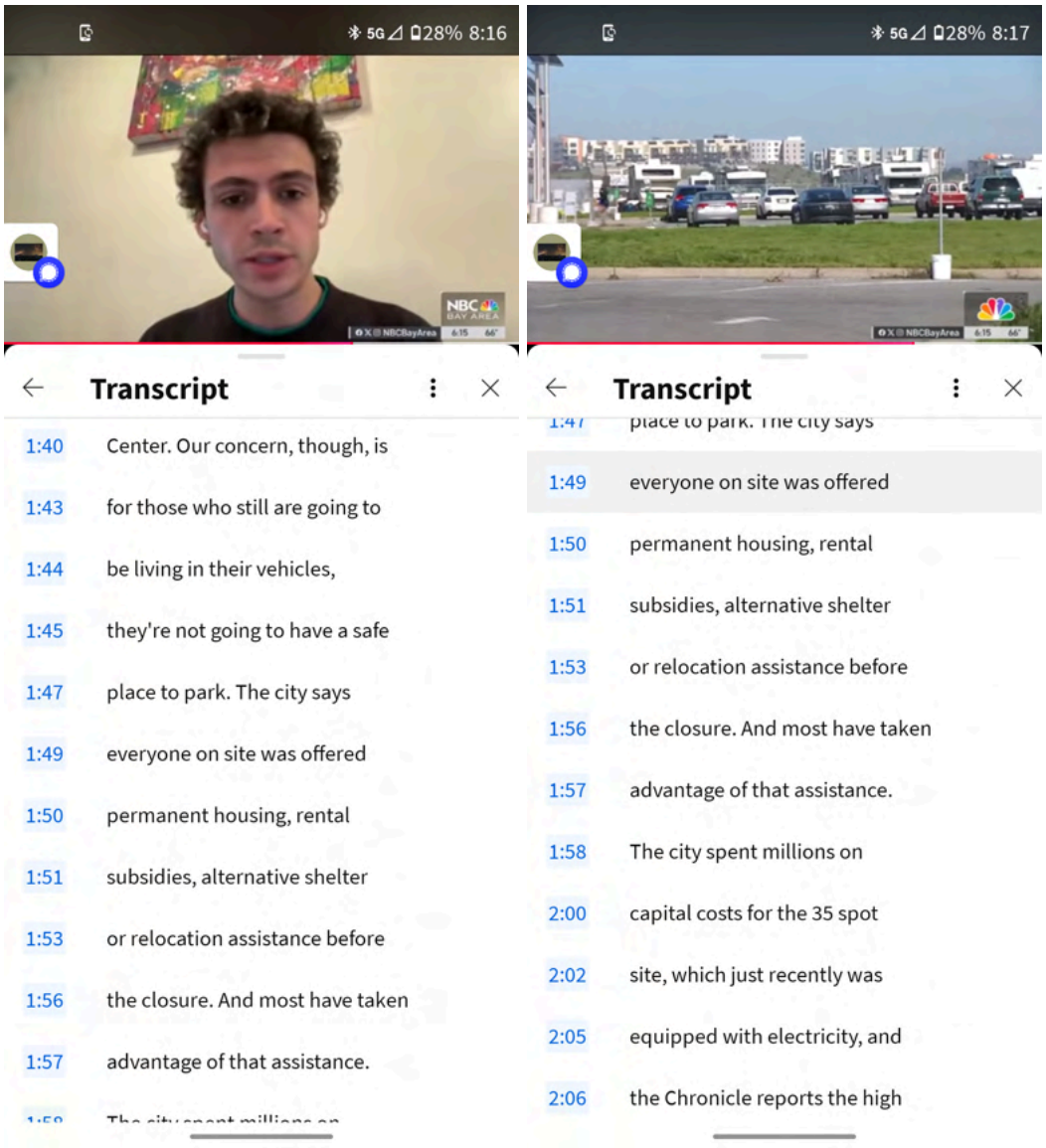

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https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-francisco-to-close-parking-site-for-homeless-living-in-vehicles/

San Francisco to close only safe parking site for homeless living in vehicles

By Amanda Hari/ December 8, 2024 CBS San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO – The City of San Francisco is set to closed its only safe parking site for homeless people living out of their vehicles in early 2025.

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center opened in January of 2022 and since then has run into numerous, costly, problems. Now dozens of people who live there will have to find somewhere else to call home, and many don't know where they'll go.

"I have no clue," said Charles Rawls, who has lived in the parking lot for about a year. "I've been thinking about it. I don't want to do the street thing where you go from street to street, to street every night. It's crazy. You get no sleep." Rawls was planning on being there temporarily, just until he was able to get his vehicle fixed, but it still hasn't happened. He says he's not the only one who has been denied repairs.

"They haven't fixed anyone's vehicle who is in there," said Rawls. "It's supposed to be triage. We're supposed to bring our vehicles in here to get repaired and then we're out on our own. But it just sits there and gets worse. Then the rats get in them." He says the experience has been tough. "When I first got here we didn't have nothing," said Rawls. "It was crazy. They put all this money in it and now they say you're out of here in February. It's crazy."

"Horrible," said Aaron Wilson, describing his experience living in the lot since March "Day after day. Something torturous. Like a prison camp. Treated very unfairly. And we're the bad people because we alerted the authorities."

A budget analyst report in 2023 estimates the cost per vehicle at the site to be about $140,000 per year. Despite that, city officials just managed to connect reliable power in October, nearly three years after opening.

New light poles were installed afterward, and in just a couple of weeks, stopped working. Wilson believes it's due to violent shaking during the storms. The lights have not been fixed. Wilson says many of the people who live in the facility feel the city is closing the site partially because they have complained about the lack of basic necessities, like ADA-compliant bathrooms and other facilities.

"They like to retaliate if you tell on them," said Wilson. "If you're a snitch, you're the lowest common denominator and you'll pay for it. CBS Bay Area was not allowed on the grounds, which has 24/7 security. Wilson believes most of the people who live there are just trying to do the right thing. "We're the good homeless people," he said. "We're here in the shelter like we're supposed to be. We're not out on the street causing trouble or defecating on the street." Wilson doesn't have plans for what he will do if he's forced to leave.

Residents believe they will have to vacate the property by mid-February, but he's still hoping they can get more time. "What I think would be a good thing would be a lawyer to step forward to give us a stay of execution on this because we're talking 60-70 days here that we all have to be gone," said Wilson. "it's just not enough time."

There are about 30 vehicles at the site. The city says case managers will work with residents to repair vehicles or transition them to permanent housing or shelters. But Rawls doesn't think he would want to take it. "I've seen their housing and no I wouldn't," said Rawls about possibly moving into a shelter or permanent housing. Many residents say they are still in shock by the city's decision to close the site and they are trying to remain hopeful that they'll have somewhere safe to go.

https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/homeless-parking-site-close-19962351.php

BAY AREA // SAN FRANCISCO

After a tumultuous run, San Francisco set to close exorbitantly expensive homeless site

By **Maggie Angst**, Reporter

Dec 6, 2024

The safe parking site for homeless people living in RVs at San Francisco's Candlestick Point will close in March.

Carlos Avila Gonzalez/The Chronicle

San Francisco is closing its only safe parking site for homeless people living out of vehicles after three tumultuous years filled with legal disputes, code violations and extensive complaints from those living in and around the site.

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center in an underused parking lot in Candlestick Point will permanently shutter in early March — nine months before the city's lease for the site was set to expire. Case managers will work with residents living in the site's 30 vehicles over the coming months to transition them into permanent housing or shelter or provide them with other support such as vehicle repairs, according to the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

The closure is surprising considering city officials finally managed to connect the site to reliable power in October, nearly three years after its opening. But the site served far fewer people than projected, failed to make a dent in San Francisco's homelessness crisis and cost significantly more than initial estimates.

City budget analysts in late 2023 reported at that time that "assuming an ongoing capacity of 35 vehicles per night, the cost per vehicle is approximately $140,000 per year, which is by far the most expensive homeless response intervention." All told, the city and state spent about $15.5 million on capital and operating costs on the project.

Shireen McSpadden, executive director of the homelessness department, said her agency made the decision to wind down the site due to its high costs and limited success. Many of the residents, she said, were not interested in moving into permanent housing, which was a major goal of the program. "We're really not in the business of running RV parks, and that was very clear to us in this process," McSpadden told the Chronicle.

The site's impending closure highlights the lack of a clear strategy by San Francisco officials to address one of the fastest-growing segments of its homeless population: people living in vehicles. Earlier this year, San Francisco counted 1,444 people sleeping in vehicles, trailers and mobile homes, marking a 37% spike from two years prior, according to its biannual survey of homelessness.

The rise in vehicular homelessness — and a lack of sanctioned places to send people — has created a more pressing challenge for the city's homelessness department and prompted complaints from neighbors about street safety and sanitation issues.

Some people living in vehicles and motor homes are not interested in most of the shelter alternatives offered by city outreach workers. They already have a roof over their heads, and if they move into a shared shelter, they have to give up their personal space. If they move into permanent housing, they have to pay a portion of their income toward rent.

San Francisco officials for years have promised to establish a safe parking site for RVs on the west side of the city but have repeatedly failed to select a site.

At the request of Mayor London Breed, San Francisco transit officials adopted a new policy in October in which San Franciscans living out of large recreational vehicles could face towing if they don't accept shelter. But that could come to an end before it's begun: The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote Tuesday on an appeal of the new legislation.

McSpadden said Thursday that her department was going to "regroup" and try to determine what role safe parking sites would have in the city's homelessness intervention system moving forward. In the spring, the city will open a new homeless site with 60 tiny cabins and 20 safe parking spots, but it's unclear whether officials will look to add any more additional safe parking sites. Some residents at the Candlestick safe parking site were hoping to move into the new community, located at 2177 Jerrold Ave., but a spokesperson for the homeless department said they plan to "start fresh" and prioritize RVs parked on neighboring streets around the new development. McSpadden said her department is considering other interventions for vehicle dwellers, including temporary vouchers for private RV parks.

The site at Candlestick Point, which opened in January 2022, was meant to hold spots for as many as 150 vehicles, with 24/7 staffing and security, bathrooms and other amenities. City officials planned to connect residents with jobs and health care and move them into more stable housing. By nearly all measures, it's fallen far short.

The state fire marshal limited capacity to 35 — a fifth of what it was set to accommodate. And less than a fifth of the 132 households served over time at the site have had a “positive exit,” which officials consider leaving for permanent or other temporary housing or shelter.

At a price tag of more than $275 per parking space per night, the site costs more than most weeknight stays at a San Francisco hotel and the privately run Candlestick RV Park located next door, which charges about $145 per night.

City officials opened the site without electrical service, and when they tried to provide power to the site with generators, neighbors filed a lawsuit arguing that they were violating clean air standards. Even when the city and PG&E finally connected the site to reliable power in late October, it fell flat.

Light poles set up by the city in the parking lot after the site’s electrification stayed up only a couple of weeks before they were taken down because they were vigorously shaking during a storm, according to Aaron Wilson, a resident at the site. “We’re back to pitch darkness over here at night,” Wilson said. “It was all money wasted.”

Residents at the site also have complained about failures to accommodate people with disabilities, prompting an investigation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Paul Reyes, who has lived at the site for two years, said he was eager to move into permanent supportive housing but that the site’s closure was disappointing. “I wished it succeeded because we needed that in San Francisco,” Reyes said. “There are so many people living in RVs, especially families, so I hoped they’d create more of these.” Those who decline housing assistance from caseworkers or who do not secure housing on their own will be asked to leave the site by Feb. 14.

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https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/sf-claws-back-rv-parking-restrictions-homeless-19969866.php

San Francisco shoots down RV parking restrictions adopted this fall to curb homelessness

By Maggie Angst/ Dec 10, 2024

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors on Tuesday rescinded RV parking restrictions crafted this fall by Mayor London Breed in what is likely to be one of the last clashes between the progressive majority and the outgoing mayor.

The policy, adopted in early October by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, would have allowed city officials to tow large RVs and trailers parked overnight on city streets where signage was posted outlawing it. City staff would have been required to offer people shelter before towing an occupied RV.

The appeal request, submitted by a coalition of RV dwellers and homeless advocates, was approved in a 7-3 vote by the board. Supervisors Matt Dorsey, Rafael Mandelman and Joel Engardio voted against it.

“This was the wrong decision by the SFMTA board and I think they needed to be more thoughtful,” said Supervisor Ahsha Safaí. “It just reaffirms that they’re more of a rubber stamp for the policies of the mayor.”

Breed spokesperson Jeff Cretan said in a statement that the policy would have helped city officials “deliver a healthier, cleaner and safer city and get people the services and shelter they needed.” The board’s reversal of the measure, he said, “means it will now remain harder for city workers to do their jobs.”

Under the October policy, SFMTA Director Jeffrey Tumlin was going to have sole authority to decide where new signs would be placed, but only after making a written finding that the RVs there were affecting traffic circulation or the health and safety of neighboring residents. Officials planned to add new signage one to two blocks per month at a price tag of about $230,000 a year. The policy had not yet been implemented, according to SFMTA spokesperson Erica Kato.

Previously, law enforcement could only issue citations, and new signage to ban overnight RV parking required SFMTA board approval. SFMTA Director of Streets Viktoriya Wise called it a “tool of last resort” to address a “difficult, difficult issue.”

“This is a complex problem that requires multifaceted solutions and coordination,” Wise said, adding that the city’s streets weren’t designed to accommodate long-term parking of large vehicles and the sewage and waste tied to them.

Overnight parking of large vehicles in San Francisco is currently prohibited only on a small portion of city roads where signs are posted — about 47 miles of the city’s more than 900 miles of frontage. Over the past five years, an average of three citations per month were issued for overnight parking violations, according to SFMTA. Living in a vehicle is also prohibited under the city’s policy code, but it is not enforced, according to transit officials.

City transit and homeless response officials portrayed the policy as a balanced approach designed to get people who are living in vehicles into safer and more stable housing while also addressing community concerns. Residents in many neighborhoods have put pressure on their elected officials to address the rise in RVs parked on city streets, raising concerns about impaired sight lines for other drivers, illegal dumping of garbage and sewage, and fewer on-street parking spots.

Mandelman, who sided with SFMTA, called the policy “compassionate” and “constrained,” adding that some San Franciscans may argue it didn’t go far enough.

But Preston wasn’t swayed, arguing that the SFMTA’s justification for the policy wasn’t “remotely compelling against the immense harm that it could cause.” No members of the public spoke in support of the measure during the meeting.

Opponents argued the policy was a waste of resources that would increase demand for the city’s limited shelter beds, moving people who already have a roof over their heads into shelter beds that could better serve people living on the streets. They further contended that it would unnecessarily exacerbate and criminalize homelessness, displace families and harm elderly people and those with disabilities.

Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness, said people living in RVs are “creatively solving for themselves the housing crisis” that city officials have been unable to properly address, and the policy would push them backward into more unstable and temporary housing situations.

Carlos Perez said through a translator that he moved into an RV with his disabled brother after his rent became unaffordable. Perez said he would rather live in an apartment but “it’s not easy to find one right now.” Perez pleaded with the board members to “think from your hearts” and reverse the restrictions.

San Francisco counted 1,444 people living in vehicles in its most recent homelessness census earlier this year, a 37% increase from 2022. About 90% of the city’s 130 unsheltered families were living in a vehicle, according to the count. People living in vehicles and homeless advocates who spoke at Tuesday’s meeting repeatedly criticized the city for failing to create a clear strategy to address the growing number of people living in vehicles and recent moves that they say stand to worsen the city’s homelessness crisis, especially for those living in vehicles.

The Department of Homelessness late last week announced that in March they would close San Francisco’s only safe parking site for people living in vehicles at Candlestick Point. That announcement came days after the agency set new limits on how long homeless families can stay in city shelters and restrict who is eligible.

“If you aren’t providing a solution, if we don’t have an answer, we shouldn’t be proposing things without solutions,” said Rebecca Jackson, co-chair of the Women’s Housing Coalition who previously lived in a vehicle with her children.

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https://sfstandard.com/2024/12/13/san-francisco-homeless-vehicle-center-closing/

Paul Reyes was finally getting his life together.

His spot at a city-funded RV site came with free food, laundry services, and therapy. He worked to tackle his drug addiction and felt ready to reenter the workforce for the first time in his 10 years of homelessness.

“All that’s been derailed now,” Reyes said.

City officials said last week they plan to close the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, a safe-parking site whose three-year tenure has been marred by lawsuits, bitter complaints from residents, and an ongoing federal investigation.

The site, which was supposed to serve 120 RVs at a time, housed just 35. Residents have until Valentine’s Day to accept shelter or leave, the San Francisco Chronicle first reported.

That’s nine months before the city’s lease on the Candlestick Point property is set to expire.

The closure will cap a saga that even city officials have acknowledged was a largely ineffective — and costly — attempt to mitigate San Francisco’s vehicular homelessness crisis. It also leaves the site’s vulnerable residents scrambling to find a new place to live.

A parking lot with a red, graffiti-covered truck and several RVs parked beside it. A painted wall is partially visible on the left.

A spokesperson for San Francisco’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing did not say why the city is shuttering the property early but noted that it was originally intended as a “temporary two-year solution to address vehicular homelessness.”

The project has long been under scrutiny for its high price tag. City documents show that in 2023, the annual cost to keep one vehicle at the site was $140,000. That was “by far the most expensive homeless response intervention,” city analysts wrote.

At that price, you could house a resident in a “Grand Deluxe King Room” at the Westin St. Francis for a year — with a towering city view and $100 per diem. But the site’s residents say it’s a far cry from an upscale Union Square hotel.

For one thing, there are the rodents. Ramona Mayon, who has lived at the site since August 2022, said one morning she found a dead mouse under her stove. She said a mechanic told her mice had nested in her RV’s engine compartment and may have damaged the vehicle’s wiring. Photos viewed by The Standard show dead rodents strewn across the RV site.

Then there's the electricity problem. The site, which opened in January 2022, didn't gain permanent power until Oct. 29 this year thanks to problems connecting it to the PG&E grid. That set the stage for a 2023 lawsuit in which a citizens group accused the city of running 16 unauthorized diesel generators at the site.

The Homelessness Department didn't answer questions about how much the city spent to electrify the site or what it plans to do with the property for the remainder of the lease. Meanwhile, Aaron Wilson, who has lived there since March, said there is daily friction between residents and the staff of Urban Alchemy, the nonprofit charged with running the site. "It's a prison camp," Wilson said, referring to the fact that residents aren't allowed to have visitors.

Wilson and two other residents who spoke to The Standard referenced an instance in which a staffer appeared to mock a deaf resident during a heated exchange.

At one point, residents sought to form a tenants union to fight what they called "shameful" quality of life.

"Stop this communist regime that violates our BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS," one resident wrote in February, Bay City News reported.

"We have met all of the stated contract goals that the city asked of us at the Bayview Vehicle Transit Center," Urban Alchemy official Kirkpatrick Tyler said in an email. "In line with shelter best practices nationwide, we've adopted a no outside visitor policy to protect both the residents at the transit center and our staff."

But the biggest point of friction stems from the fact that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is investigating the site, Wilson said.

Kelly Hughs, a resident since November 2022, said she sparked the probe with a complaint that she couldn't access the site's shower trailer, or the dog park and gazebo, with her wheelchair. "This is an open investigation, and we cannot comment further," a HUD spokesperson said in an email.

Hughs said Urban Alchemy removed the dog park and gazebo after she complained; the amenities were no longer at the site when The Standard visited this week. "They told everybody, 'It's because the [American Disabilities Act] person can't use it,'" Hughs said of the staffers. "That's retaliation."

Residents have long clashed with the Urban Alchemy staffers who run the site. An Urban Alchemy employee at the site described residents who've complained about alleged mistreatment and ADA violations as "entitled" and "troublemakers."

“You’re supposed to stay here for six months, get your shit together, then move on to the next,” said the employee, who is not authorized to speak to the press and didn’t want to be named. “They’re just leeching off the resources and preventing others from using them. And then they complain that they’re being forced to leave. “Basically, you’re just squatting in your mobile home on our property,” the employee added.

The property is owned by the state of California.

“Our team has gone out of the way to work closely with the residents at the Transit Center to ensure that their spots are secure,” Tyler said via email, “even if there are minor mistakes because we know how important it is to provide these residents with a more stable situation than being on the streets.”

It wasn’t supposed to be like this. City officials originally envisioned a site offering 120 RV spots where residents could access showers, therapists, toilets, and electrical and sewage hookups for their vehicles. They wouldn’t have to worry about getting ticketed, and the site would connect them with mechanics who’d fix their motor homes for free.

It’d be a place for homeless residents to regroup — and a way for the city to get scores of lumbering vehicles off Bayview streets.

But the city was never able to remove the “desired” number of RVs off the street “because the site capacity has been so much lower than originally planned,” a spokesperson for the city’s Homelessness Department wrote in an email.

City contracts viewed by The Standard note that the site couldn’t reach capacity until it was fully electrified — which didn’t happen until almost three years in.

The site has failed to meet its objectives over its nearly three-year tenure.

Just 31 people from the 132 households that have cycled through the site have entered long-term housing, temporary housing, or shelter, the Homeless Department spokesperson said.

The city will no longer make dedicated safe parking sites a central part of its homelessness strategy, the spokesperson added, given that “it has not proven to be as impactful as anticipated.” Still, the city is set to open an interim hosting site in the Bayview next year that will include 60 tiny homes and 20 RV spaces, bolstered by an $8 million state grant. The Homelessness Department’s director, Shireen McSpadden, has said people staying on the existing Bayview site likely won’t be offered spots there.

That’s left current residents struggling to plan their next moves.

Mayon, who found a dead mouse under her stove, said she wants to stay in San Francisco. She said the only reason she moved to the site was because the city threatened to impound her RV if she didn't. "I have no alternative," she said when asked why she's stayed despite her complaints. "My RV was broken being brought here. I was forced to come here." She said the towing company that transported her RV to the site damaged it, and she has struggled to repair it.

"We can't comment on any client's specific situation but all offers of shelter are voluntary," the Homelessness Department said over email. "One is not coerced or forced to take any offer of services within the Homelessness Response System."

Hughs, who said she filed the ADA complaints, plans to drive to Texas and live with family. But she needs to fix her RV before she can hit the road. She said she's banking on city-funded mechanics to help. "I'm worried that something's gonna fall out from underneath me," Hughs said. "Nobody here wants to go from their RV to an SRO in the Tenderloin. That seems like a death sentence."

Reyes said he's hopeful the city will help him find housing. He'd like to live with roommates in a residential neighborhood instead of an SRO, where he'd likely have to give up his RV. But he said it's been difficult to navigate the city's complex network of service providers. And he can't help but feel as if the site's closure is a setback. "I was getting there," he said. "Everything was planned out; everything was falling into place."

https://youtu.be/kMUjbkK77Ng?si=cyVi5RVxXNcQBR9N (to watch the full video of the encounter of the Director from Urban ALchemy, Lou Reed, with the deaf man Feb 4, 2024)

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http://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/bay-area-city-open-homeless-parking-site-for-less-20105429.php

Bay Area city opening a homeless parking site for half of what it cost S.F.

By Maggie Angst/ Feb 4, 2025

San Francisco officials are shutting down the city's only safe parking site for homeless people, a troubled project dubbed "by far the most expensive homeless response intervention." Meanwhile, another Bay Area city is opening a similar project at about half the cost per vehicle, pointing to San Francisco's ongoing struggle to provide homeless services at a reasonable price tag.

San Jose in the coming weeks is set to open its second site for homeless vehicle dwellers at 1300 Berryessa Road with the capacity to hold 86 vehicles.

Construction costs for the San Jose site totaled $9.7 million, or approximately $113,000 per parking space, according to Jeff Scott, spokesperson for the city's housing department. The city was able to cut $6 million from the initial capital cost estimate by making several design changes, according to San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan. San Jose plans to spend approximately $4,380 a month per space on site operations during the first year.

By comparison, San Francisco spent $7.1 million, or about $203,000 per space, on capital costs for its 35-space safe parking site at Candlestick Point. The city expended an additional $9,200 per space per month on operations last year, according to expenditures provided by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Deborah Bouck, a spokesperson for San Francisco's homelessness department, said in an email that "all projects are different" and that without seeing a detailed budget of the San Jose site, she could not comment on the cost disparity.

Mahan said he's hoping to cut San Jose's costs even further.

"I'm still not satisfied," Mahan said. "We need to bring down that cost per space per year if we're going to scale solutions to homelessness, and we need to find ways to help people contribute and pay into the system if they have income."

San Francisco officials late last year announced that they will close the Candlestick Point project in March — nine months before the lease was set to expire. The decision came after three tumultuous years filled with legal disputes, code violations and extensive complaints from those living in and around the site.

The site served far fewer people than projected and cost significantly more than initial estimates. City budget analysts in late 2023 reported that the Candlestick parking site was "by far the most expensive homeless response intervention" in San Francisco.

The site, which opened in January 2022, was meant to hold about 150 vehicles. But due to infrastructure problems and larger-than-anticipated vehicles, the site was limited to 35.

Despite the site holding about a fifth of the projected capacity, San Francisco's homelessness department did not reduce the contract amount of the site's main service provider, Urban Alchemy. The contract amount for Urban Alchemy, which covered operating, cleaning and securing the property, was left as originally executed "to allow the city to quickly pivot" and expand capacity "when it became available," according to Bouck. That expansion never happened because it hinged on the city's ability to connect the site to reliable electricity. The site was finally hooked up to the electricity grid in October, a month before officials announced the project would be shut down. The site's lack of electricity necessitated the use of polluting diesel generators, which sparked a lawsuit from neighboring residents, and expensive daily fresh meal deliveries.

San Jose entered a $2.8 million grant agreement with the nonprofit WeHOPE for the entirety of its safe parking operations, including security, case management, maintenance, shower services and meals. San Francisco last year paid Urban Alchemy $2.6 million to operate a site with less than half the vehicles — and to cover only part of those functions.

San Francisco contracted with separate nonprofits for case management, meals and shower services. Similar to Urban Alchemy, the homelessness department did not reduce staffing funding for Bayview Hunters Point Foundation, which provided case management support. However, the nonprofit only hired two of the four case management positions covered under their contract.

In an email, Bouck said the Candlestick Point site was “successful in keeping 35 occupied vehicles off Bayview streets,” but that it became clear over time that people living in the site were uninterested in moving out of their vehicles and into permanent housing — one of the project’s main objectives.

Before officials announced the site’s closure and vowed to help residents relocate, less than a fifth of the 132 households served from January 2022 through October 2024 had a “positive exit,” which officials consider leaving for permanent or other temporary housing or shelter.

San Francisco estimates that there are more than 1,400 people sleeping in vehicles, trailers and mobile homes. The city plans to open a new homeless site with 60 tiny cabins and 20 safe parking spots this spring, but it’s unclear whether officials will look to add any more additional safe parking sites.

San Jose is testing out new strategies for addressing a growing number of people who are living in RVs as an alternative to street homelessness.

City officials recently counted more than 1,000 vehicles that were presumed to have people living inside. Since the city is expected to nearly triple its shelter capacity over the next year, officials are taking a stronger stance against unsanctioned tent and RV encampments.

San Jose last month implemented a pilot program to temporarily ban recreational vehicles and trailers from certain parts of the city.

“We’re concerned about the well-being of our vulnerable neighbors who are homeless, but at the same time, it’s important that we’re clear that permanent encampments will not be tolerated in San Jose,” Mahan said. “As we make historic investments in expanding safe places for people to be, we’re going to hold people accountable to coming indoors.”

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https://localnewsmatters.org/2025/02/21/homeless-unions-of-both-sides-of-bay-sue-cities-to-prevent-sweeps-program-closures/

Homeless unions on both sides of Bay sue cities to prevent sweeps, program closures - Local News Matters

(Illustration by Diane Bakunawa for Local News Matters; photos courtesy Jay Harris, Joe Dworetzky/Bay City News)

Homeless “unions” on both sides of the San Francisco Bay are suing cities to prevent sweeps of encampments or program closures.

In federal court in Oakland, the Berkeley Homeless Union is seeking to obtain a preliminary injunction against the city of Berkeley’s intended sweep of the encampment located at and around Eighth and Harrison streets. On Friday, the union was successful in obtaining a temporary restraining order keeping the status quo in place pending a hearing that was initially scheduled for Thursday and is now rescheduled for March 4.

Across the Bay, on Tuesday, Ramona Mayon filed a lawsuit against San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie and the city in San Francisco Superior Court. Mayon is the founder of the “Candlestick 35,” a union formed by the residents of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, a “safe parking site” for people living in their vehicles.

Mayon’s suit requests the court to order the city to hold a public hearing on the closure of the site and enjoin the city of San Francisco from closing the site in the meantime. Mayon argues that the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing failed to comply with a city charter provision that requires a public hearing before the closure of a public program or facility like the VTC.

The separate lawsuits follow in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in June 2024 in the case City of Grants Pass v. Johnson. In that case, the high court found it was not a violation of the Constitution’s prohibition against “cruel and unusual punishment” for a city to enforce its anti-camping ordinances against people sleeping on the streets, even if there was no alternative shelter available.

Following the ruling, cities in the Bay Area stepped up their enforcement of anti-camping laws, but the court’s decision did not end legal challenges to the efforts, though the plaintiffs relied on different legal theories.

Interestingly, the two unrelated suits are spearheaded by women who are living in their recreational vehicles and are treated as homeless because they are “vehicularly housed.”

Berkeley
The area around Eighth and Harrison streets in Berkeley has long been a sore spot for city administrators because of the accumulation of debris and trash from people camping on sidewalks in that area. On Jan. 7 of this year, the city told the approximately 47 people camping in the area that that site was a public nuisance and a danger to public health and safety. The city said that if the nuisance was not abated, those living at the site would be cited or arrested and their property impounded.

In July 2024, the group had formed a loose “union” as a mutual aid organization that would enable the group to band together and raise their concerns with city officials.

Yesica Prado, 32, lives in her RV at the site and was one of the leaders in responding to the city’s notice. The group undertook a massive cleanup of the site — removing more than 3,000 pounds of trash and debris. They also asked for an administrative hearing to request the city to stand down on the closure.

After the administrative hearing, the city denied their request and by a notice dated Jan. 31, said that the people at the site had until Feb. 10 to leave. The city said it intended to declare the site a “no-lodging area,” so the encampment could not return.

The union and three individual members of the union then sued the city. They raised several legal arguments, but a key one was that many members of the encampment were disabled within the meaning of the Americans with Disabilities Act and they were entitled to request ‘reasonable accommodation” in the city’s enforcement of the prohibition on camping.

The lawsuit alleged that 31 of the people at the encampment were disabled and of that group, 16 had submitted formal requests for a reasonable accommodation and more requests were forthcoming. All of the requests were denied by the city. The union requested a temporary restraining order to preserve the status quo pending a hearing on its request for a longer-term injunction.

Obtaining a TRO or an injunction in federal court is never easy. The moving party must show, among other things, that its claims are likely to be meritorious and that it would be irreparably injured if relief is not given.

Last Friday, Valentine’s Day, the union’s petition for a TRO was successful. U.S. District Judge Haywood Gilliam Jr., sitting in Oakland, wrote a three-page opinion in which he said that the plaintiffs had raised “serious questions” about whether the city had complied with the ADA in determining to clear the encampment.

Gilliam said that under the ADA, a disabled person cannot be denied “the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity” because of their disability.

He cited existing rulings that said that enforcement of a local law can constitute “services, programs or activities” of a public entity. He went on to say that the regulations that implement the ADA require cities to make “reasonable modifications” in such services, programs and activities to prevent violations of the law unless the government can show that such modification or accommodation would “fundamentally alter” the government program.

Gilliam noted all three of the named plaintiffs were disabled and had unsuccessfully requested an accommodation. The plaintiffs alleged that “the city failed to engage in a good-faith interactive process to explore reasonable accommodations for their disabilities and ultimately failed to provide them with any accommodation at all.”

“Sweeps are incredibly violent — people are coerced out of their homes, and their belongings are destroyed. It’s a traumatic experience that no one should have to endure, and I don’t wish that harm to my neighbors or anyone else.” said Yesica Prado, Berkeley Homeless Union

The judge did not decide whether the city’s conduct violated the ADA, but he found that the plaintiffs had raised serious enough questions that he would keep the status quo until the full hearing.

Prado, who graduated from University of California, Berkeley with a master’s degree in journalism, was elated with the ruling.

She said, “I feel a deep sense of relief knowing that this TRO has given us a temporary reprieve from the looming threat of forced displacement.” She added, “sweeps are incredibly violent — people are coerced out of their homes, and their belongings are destroyed. It’s a traumatic experience that no one should have to endure, and I don’t wish that harm to my neighbors or anyone else.”

As a journalist as well as a person experiencing homelessness, Prado has a unique perspective on what she describes as Berkeley’s “failure to provide accessible shelter and accommodations for people with disabilities.”

She said, “many of our union members have disabilities that make it impossible for them to just ‘move along,’ yet the city has consistently ignored their needs. I hope this case leads to real mediation and forces the city to rethink its approach to encampments.”

San Francisco
Meanwhile on Tuesday in San Francisco, Mayon requested a state court to stop the closure of the safe parking site at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area until the city held a public hearing on its intentions.

Mayon, 64, is a colorful battler who identifies not as homeless or “vehicularly housed” but as an ethnic nomad (she came from a Roma/Gypsy/Traveller background). She has lived in a school bus or RV for all of her adult life, but when her husband died during the COVID-19 pandemic and her RV failed, the city treated her as homeless. Her vehicle was ticketed and threatened with impoundment. She fought back with a lawsuit and plenty of street theater and was able to keep the city at bay for months, but she ultimately agreed for her RV to be towed to the VTC, where she says she was told that it would be repaired.

The Bayview VTC had opened in January of 2022 with fanfare after the city had run a successful pilot program at Balboa Park for the “vehicularly housed.” At that time, nearly a quarter of the city’s 4,300 unsheltered homeless were living in vehicles. The idea was to create a safe place for the owners to park without fear of ticketing or impoundment and where they could access social services.

The program was plagued with problems from the beginning. In September 2023, the city’s budget and legislative analyst declared it to be “by far the [city’s] most expensive homeless response intervention,” an astonishing claim since the city did not provide housing or shelter, but just served up an unused parking lot where residents brought their own vehicles.

Beyond the expense, operational problems roiled the waters. For nearly three years, the city was unable to provide a connection to the electric grid and for most of that time, the residents’ RVs could not connect to power — a fundamental part of the program. There were serious problems with rats at the site getting into the wiring of RVs, the site repeatedly flooded, and there were ongoing complaints over the quality of food delivered to the site because, in the absence of electric power, the residents could not cook or keep perishables refrigerated.

On Dec. 5, 2024, HSH announced that it would be closing the site at the end of this March and all residents had to be out by March 3. Ironically, HSH made its decision just weeks after the years of effort and millions of dollars in expense to hook up permanent power were finally successful. HSH's decision was a surprise given the recent electrification of the site and the fact that at that point, there was nearly a year left on its lease.

According to Mayon's petition, the city acted unilaterally and did not comply with a provision of the city charter that requires a public hearing before closing a program or facility. Mayon and the union wanted such a hearing so they could challenge the basis for closing the site; Mayon alleged that the city's reasons were pretextual and the real reason was that residents had pursued claims that the city and its contractors violated the ADA.

After months of back and forth, the city is providing repair services for some of the residents so that their RVs will be street legal and fully documented when they leave the site. That will allow them to relocate to private camping sites or join families or friends outside of the city. Mayon's petition asks the court to give the residents more time to leave the site so that work can be completed. The court has not yet scheduled a hearing on Mayon's request.

Meanwhile, on Thursday morning, Mayon fired off a gruesome email to the mayor and each of the members of the city's Board of Supervisors. She said that on Wednesday afternoon, a resident of the VTC slit her wrist with a kitchen knife after she was advised that she was no longer eligible for a rapid rehousing voucher that would have paid for her rent after leaving the site. An ambulance was called, and other residents bandaged the wound. (A spokesperson for HSH did not immediately respond to an inquiry about the incident.)

Mayon alleged that Wednesday evening, when the resident returned from the hospital with stitches in her arm, HSH's contractors at the site for more than an hour refused to permit the resident to enter and return to her vehicle apparently because she had used a weapon — the kitchen knife — earlier in the day. Mayon said the latest incident made her "incandescent with anger." Mayon and the union have been a thorn in the side of HSH. A website that documents the alleged conditions at the VTC is titled "Welcome to Camp Dismal."

https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/homeless-unions-on-both-sides-of-bay-sue-cities-20178499.php

(Same story as above/ different outlet)

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https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/residents-of-bayview-safe-parking-site-on-edge-as-20194297.php

Residents Of Bayview Safe Parking Site On Edge As Closure Approaches

Bay City News
Joe Dworetzky and Jay Harris/ February 28, 2025

In an old parking lot behind the site of the former Candlestick Park in San Francisco, tensions are running high.

In early December 2024, the city delivered an unexpected message to the roughly 35 people living in 31 recreational vehicles at the "safe parking" site known as the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center.

The city told them that it had made the "hard decision" to close the site even though there was nearly a year left on the lease. The city informed the residents that if they have not accepted an offer of alternative housing or shelter, they must vacate the VTC with their RVs this coming Monday, March 3.

The city said if they fail to do so, on Tuesday their RVs will be towed and impounded.

While it wasn't a secret that the VTC would one day close, residents couldn't understand why it was happening just weeks after the city succeeded in finally getting a permanent power connection at the facility. That had been a three-year effort that cost millions of dollars, and it would now be rendered worthless. The residents said the city's decision made no sense, particularly because there was no place for the RVs to go except back to the streets.

The Decision to Close the Site

It was a hard decision to close the site, and the "gut punch" was that the city had just gotten electric to the site, said Emily Cohen, deputy director for communications & legislative affairs for the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. In a Feb. 3 interview with Bay City News, Cohen discussed the decision to close the VTC and identified several factors in the closure decision.

She said that her department has learned a lot over the past few years, "but the overarching thing is that we just have a lot more work to do to understand how to best serve the population of people living in their vehicles, because it's a really different sort of situation."

Most HSH "clients" are "sleeping rough" or in encampments and getting into shelter is their priority, and "we found a really different sort of psychology and motivation at the vehicle triage center," Cohen said.

"There are a portion of people who live in their vehicle who would like to be left alone to live in their vehicle in a safe place," she said.

Other factors influencing the closure were the great infrastructure expense, the fact that the state lease could not be renewed again, as well as expensive environmental litigation instituted by the neighbors. She also mentioned the challenges in making a site like the VTC accessible.

She said that the different motivations of vehicle dwellers, when combined with those issues "just added up to enough. It's time to wind this down, rehouse people and try a different model going forward."

She added, "I think that that's what government is supposed to do. If something's not working, you're supposed to end it and move on. Like, we don't want to just keep doing something that has that is demonstrating that it's not working."

The Residents' Perspective

On Thursday, BCN spoke with a dozen residents of the site and asked them to explain how they felt about the city's actions and what they were going to do on Monday.

They were uniformly scared and angry. Many did not know what they would do.

For many of the residents, the choice offered by the city -- accept an offer of housing or take their RV and leave -- was at best a phantom choice.

Their RVs are their homes and, for many, their most valuable asset. For the most part, the housing or shelter that they have been offered is, in their opinion, either unworkable or illusory and they would likely have to give up their RVs to accept the offer (few could pay the cost of commercial storage.)

On the other hand, even though they would rather live in their RVs, most of their RVs are not operable and even if they can get them back to the city streets they came from, they will face ticketing and impoundment, the very things they came to the VTC to escape.

The residents blame the city and its contractors, two non-profit corporations -- Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation -- that together have been paid upwards of $8 million for their work since the site's January 2022 opening. They also blame the rats.

The Problem with Rats

Resident after resident recounted the same story. They came to the VTC after city workers told them that they would be able to park safely without fear of new tickets or impoundment. They were told the city would help get the vehicles repaired and registered. They said the city would provide power at the site to run the electric in their vehicles.

Residents say that the promises were empty. There was no power at the site for more than two years, and there was -- until recently -- very little repair work. However, there was a problem no one warned them about -- the site was infested with rats.

Resident after resident said that they drove their RV to the site under its own power, but rats ate the insulation off the wires underneath and ruined the electrical system, so they no longer ran. They said the rats ate holes in the underside of their RV's. One resident said the rats lived in the walls and seats and dashboard of her RV. Another described using poison to kill dozens of rats in his RV.

One of the longtime residents, Mauritio Castro, 56, said that the rats in his RV were so bad that he had to sleep in his minivan.

Robert McCrory is a combat veteran who served in Libya and Grenada. He says that he has PTSD from his service. After his service, he was a sheet metal worker. His RV was fine when he came to the VTC, but it became infested with rats. McCrory said, "it was a luxury [RV] before, but the rats chewed up my seat. They chewed all the wires underneath." He said that he jacked up the RV to see underneath, "I see there's holes where the rats have ... ate through my dash and made it so they can come and go, which I understand; they want to survive like everything else."

He has two dogs and a cat but that hasn't been enough to get rid of the rats. "You can't catch them when they're underneath the floorboards. And they're in the walls because all the wires in the walls, there's a little pathway and the rats run running through that," he said.

The Promise of Repairs

Many residents felt that the city and its contractors failed to make good on the promise to fix their RVs and help get them registered and so the RVs were lawful to operate.

Henry Borrero, 56, lives at the VTC in a drivable but unregistered 2006 Ford Explorer. He also has a trailer for his belongings. He's been at the VTC "since the beginning," and he was expecting to live there another year, at least until the end of the city's lease on the VTC land.

Borrero's car runs, but it hasn't been registered for two years, and he doesn't have the money to pay two years of registration fees. "Now they're going to kick us out and I got to take my chances on the street with no registration," he said.

He said, "They're throwing us out here with no registrations or no nothing to have on vehicles. So they want to take our vehicles. I don't know why they want to take the vehicle because we have nothing to live in now."

Mark Noti, 62, tells how he and several other VTC residents were bussed to the DMV as a first step toward getting their vehicles repaired and registered.

"I told 'em what was wrong with it. It needed a carburetor, needed a gas tank and a gas line, a starter, a battery, and tires. And the registration." At the DMV, he was told that he needed the VIN number to register the vehicle, so he left and returned the next day with the information. "They said I got the stuff that I need to get it registered now ... [But then] they turned around and said they had no more funding ... [One day] they chartered a bus and took us all down here [to the DMV]. But the next day they ran out of money."

Now What

Olda M. says she bought her RV after a dark period of addiction. She got treatment and when she left the facility as a recovering addict, "I decided to buy my home, my trailer. And I worked very hard for, like, six months to [get] the money and buy my trailer."

She was very proud of the RV. Getting it was her "biggest goal" and it has helped her stay sober for five years. She brought it to the safe parking site because she kept getting tickets and was worried it would be impounded. She said the city told her that the site would be a safe place.

Like many of the residents, for Olda M. the question of what happens when the facility is closed is top of mind. She has been in a state of anxiety and agitation for weeks. The city has offered some residents shelter, while others got rental vouchers. Olda is willing to give up her RV because it does not run any longer. Like other resident, rats chewed up the electrical system and got inside the vehicle, terrifying her.

While Olda would give up her RV, she did not want -- under any circumstances -- to live in an SRO in the Tenderloin where she would be exposed to heavy drug use. She had been told that she could get into a "rapid rehousing" program that would allow her to rent a small apartment with a bathroom and kitchen. However, last week the city's contractors told her that she was being denied rapid rehousing and all they had for her was a room in an SRO on Eddy Street in the Tenderloin. She says that she has mental health issues -- all documented with the city -- and her therapist had written a detailed letter explaining that it was not safe for her to be in that situation.

When the city's contractors told her that her only choice was an SRO, she said, "do you want to kill me? You want to kill me? You don't have to do it. I going to do it myself." She was in her car where she had a cooking knife. With them watching, she took the knife and sliced open her wrist. There was blood everywhere and chaos. The city people did not help; it was other residents who staunched the bleeding, called an ambulance, went to the hospital with her.

When she returned to the site, bandaged and with six stitches, the contractors wouldn't let her into the site until a standoff with residents forced them to relent.

(Cohen said that she could not discuss individual residents, but said that there were numerous inaccuracies in the residents' report about the incident.)

Olda M. does not know what she will do on Monday if she is made to leave. If it comes to it, she will get her car towed somewhere on the street and will live in it, but she knows it could be only a matter of time until she is ticketed, and her RV impounded. The thought makes her sick.

She says, "You know what I feel? I am feeling they just will take everything I have."

Hail Marys

Many residents, like Olda M., said they did not know what they would do come Monday. Some thought there might be a reprieve that would let them stay at least for long enough for the city to carry through on the offer of repairs.

There were a few balls in the air. Ramona Mayon, founder of the Candlestick 35, the self-declared union of site residents, filed a lawsuit against the city asking for an injunction against the closing. Mayon is not a lawyer but has a long history of representing herself in court. Her suit raises a provision in the city charter that requires a public hearing before the closing of a city facility. She says no hearing was held before the city announced closure.

She says the residents deserve a hearing where they can show that the city's stated reasons for closure are a pretext. She believes that the real reason for the closure comes from the union's work in calling out violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act at the site. She believes the closure is retaliatory for blowing the whistle on the city and its contractors for ADA and other violations.

How well her legal arguments will work is unclear, but Mayon is not relying solely on the courts.

Mayon has also peppered the new mayor, the Board of Supervisors, and HSH leadership with emails outlining the violations she believes that she has documented. Her writing is bombastic and at times aggressive, but she prides herself on being a documentarian. She backs up her assertions with videos she has taken at the site and posted to her YouTube channel.

The Endgame

While there are still balls in the air, many residents fear the worst. Andrew Kucharski, 41, is deaf and communicated with BCN by a phone program that translated his signing into speech.

Kucharski has been living at the VTC since it opened in January 2022. He lives in a 2010 Ford Econoline 3500.

"It's broken," he says. There's no windshield and the catalytic converter was stolen during the time he has lived at the VTC. The vehicle also needs new tires and engine repair. "I was offered repairs several years ago, but then they said the repairs were too pricey."

When they announced that the VTC would be closing, "I was given the option to either have my RV repaired or to accept shelter. I chose Option 1." But he says they never repaired his vehicle.

He doesn't want to leave the VTC site, but he expects that on Tuesday, they will try to tow his car. "I'm not sure what will happen," he says. "If I'm in the car, can they tow it?" On Tuesday, after the VTC is closed, he said, "I expect to be kicked out. I don't understand why."

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https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/san-francisco/san-francisco-safe-parking-site-to-close/3805943/

San Francisco safe parking site to close, advocates concerned

Published February 28, 2025

San Francisco is letting those living in the city's only safe parking site know it is closing by Monday. If those living at the site haven't accepted a housing offer, they will have to move out.

The city informed those living at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center of the closing in December, but some said they are still trying to find housing.

"I think I was one of the first ones who drove in here about 2 years ago," said Franky Rodriguez. "I went looking [for] places here in the city where they are industrial areas so we don't disturb anyone."

According to the San Francisco Department of Homeless and Support, the site has served 132 households living in the vehicles. Support at the site includes care management, house assistance and vehicle repair.

"It is disappointing that the current only safe parking site or vehicle triage center in our city is closing," said Lukas Illa with the Coalition on Homelessness.

The city said everyone on the site was offered permanent housing, rental subsidies, alternative shelter, or relocation assistance before the closure, and most have taken advantage of that assistance.

"We are glad to see the Department of Homeless and Supportive Housing has given housing offers, not just shelter offers, but housing to the folks who are at the Bayview vehicle triage

center. Our concern is that those who are still going to be living in their vehicles will not have a safe place to park," Illa said

The city spent millions on capital costs for the 35-spot site, which was recently equipped with electricity. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the high costs and limited success are among the reasons for the closure.

The city said that those who have accepted offers can stay onsite for an extension while their housing is finalized. Those who haven't have to be out by Monday.

https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/san-francisco/san-francisco-safe-rv-parking-lot-cleared/3807854/

City begins clearing out safe RV parking site in San Francisco

By Sergio Quintana • Published March 3, 2025 • Updated on March 3, 2025 at 5:51 pm

Residents at San Francisco's Bayview Vehicle Triage Center -- a city-run safe RV parking site at Candlestick Point -- were being kicked out Monday. This after some residents had been told last week that they would be able to stay on site until they were able to move into more permanent city housing.

Aaron Wilson said he had expected to stay a little longer, but the city isn't keeping it's word and was told to be out by 5 p.m. He was handed a letter from the Bayview Hunters Point Foundation offering him a shelter bed Monday. "Big room, 50 cots, not mattresses, with drug addicts and other sorts of miscreants that come in, flop down. Then pick their stuff up and go get high again, this is what it is," he said.

On Friday, NBC Bay Area was among those who reported that some residents would be allowed to stay at the RV site as long as they had accepted an offer of housing -- and that housing was not available for them to move into yet. On Monday just before noon, a city Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing spokesperson re-confirmed that promise with a lengthy statement that reads in part, "For guests who have accepted housing offers but the housing placement is still pending, they will be able to stay onsite for a short period of time until they move into their housing." The spokesperson's statement even confirmed that 33 people are still at the RV park, 11 of which have agreed to accept the city's offer of housing.

Wilson said he's been told he'll be headed to The Granda in the Tenderloin. But that site is still undergoing renovations.

Then, an updated statement from the Homelessness and Supportive Housing spokesperson said, "All guests will be leaving the site today, March 3. All guests will have the option to transfer to a shelter program."

Wilson said the whole situation, and the conflicting information, has left confused and frustrated. He said that he's come up with an emergency plan, to have his RV towed out of the park if he's ordered to leave Monday. Wilson said the new offer to move into a shelter in SoMa is not an option because he has pets and he doesn't know what would happen to his RV. So he's spent the day trying to figure out what happens if they follow through with plans to try to force him out, and cut the power at this site. "All these sort of things that you take for granted when you have the electricity," he said. "But when you don't it's gonna be no heat. All of the functions for the charging of the cell phones, that's what they're doing to us."

NBC Bay Area reached out to the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the mayor's office for clarity about why the city has changed its position on the RV park so suddenly, and has not heard back.

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https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/san-francisco/residents-rv-parking-site-housing/3808935/

People at now-shuttered RV parking site in San Francisco wait for housing

By Sergio Quintana • Published March 4, 2025 • Updated on March 4, 2025 at 5:24 pm

Several unhoused people in San Francisco were back out on the street Tuesday, waiting for housing they say they were promised but isn't ready yet.

This comes after the city shut down the RV park where they had been living. It also comes as Mayor Daniel Lurie touts a new pilot project with his former foundation to try to head off family homelessness.

On Gilman Avenue in the Bayview neighborhood Tuesday, several RVs were parked on the street after people were evicted from the city-run safe RV park where they had been staying.

People whose RVs were out on the street said they had been promised they could stay in the park until the permanent housing the city had promised was ready. But that all changed on Monday. "They rounded everybody up, they told everybody everything is getting locked up at five and threw us out," former RV park resident Melissa Carter said. "They said the sheriff's coming."

Carter said she and her husband are looking forward to moving into city housing, but their place won't be ready for another three weeks. Until then, they're out on the street.

Former RV park resident Ramona Mayon acknowledged that park operators had warned that the city had planned to close the safe RV park months ago, but she said she was also told she could stay.

Meanwhile, the city announced a new homelessness pilot project with Tipping Point Community, a group founded by Lurie. Tipping Point Community CEO Sam Cobbs said they will be spending $11 million over the next 18 months to try to prevent family homelessness in the city. “Not only will we provide financial assistance for up to 1,500 families but we will also bring in those other support services that they may need to actually stay housed," Cobbs said. The pilot program is expected to begin enrolling families in April. Cobbs said all the money for the project is from private donors.

NBC Bay Area contacted the mayor's office to ask him about the new city partnership with his former foundation and to ask about the situation that's happening at the shuttered RV park, but his press team had not made him available as of Tuesday evening. His press secretary did send a cellphone video shot by his office Monday discussing the homelessness prevention pilot project. "We are going to change the narrative here in San Francisco, and this pilot is going to help us do that," Lurie said in the video.

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https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/s-f-spent-millions-on-a-homeless-rv-dweller-site-20200841.php

S.F. spent millions on a site for homeless RV dwellers. Now they're back on the street

By Maggie Angst/ March 4, 2025

Saul Leon prepares the trunk of his car as he moves out of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center on Monday.
Gabrielle Lurie/The Chronicle

The demise of San Francisco's only parking site for homeless people living in vehicles could be used as a case study on how difficult it is for one of the nation's wealthiest cities to solve its intractable homelessness crisis.

Over the past three years, San Francisco has poured more than $18 million into establishing and operating the site in an underused parking lot at Candlestick Point — probably the most expensive per capita intervention ever tried by the city. But despite city efforts to get the residents into housing or shelter, when officials shut down the site late Monday night, nearly all of the site's 35 or so residents were back to where they started — on the streets.

Many didn't go far, either. On Tuesday morning more than a dozen RVs, trailers and other vehicles were stopped on either side of Gilman Avenue, a quarter-mile from the shuttered site.

"It's horrible," said Olda Madera, who paid $100 to get her broken-down RV towed onto the nearby street. "When you're parked on the street, you don't feel safe."

Olda Madera holds her cat after getting her RV towed out of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center.
Gabrielle Lurie/The Chronicle

Olda Madera, right, gets her RV towed out of the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center and onto a nearby street.
Gabrielle Lurie/The Chronicle

The site, which opened in January 2022, was meant to give hundreds of vehicle dwellers a temporary place to stabilize, get connected with jobs and health care, and transition into permanent housing. But the city grossly missed the mark.

Shireen McSpadden, executive director of the city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, announced the closure of the site in late December, citing its exorbitant costs and limited success stories. Originally designed to hold up to 150 vehicles, the site never held more than 35 because of infrastructure issues and planning problems. A lack of electricity at the site led to the use of polluting diesel generators, which sparked a lawsuit from neighboring residents and necessitated expensive daily meal deliveries. Several residents filed complaints about a failure by the city and nonprofit operators to accommodate people with disabilities, which prompted probes by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Less than a fifth of the 132 households served over the three years had a "positive exit," which officials define as leaving for some form of housing or shelter.

Monday's closure came nine months before the city's lease was set to expire and just a few months after the site was finally connected to the electricity grid. City budget analysts in 2023 dubbed the site "by far the most expensive homeless response intervention" in San Francisco.

Homelessness department spokesperson Deborah Bouck said in a statement Monday that everyone was offered permanent housing, rental subsidies, alternative shelter or relocation assistance before the site's closure. The agency and nonprofits running the site, she said, had "held community meetings with guests, gave ample written notification and worked diligently with guests to identify places for them to go upon closure of the site." However, only two people moved into permanent supportive housing before the site shuttered.

Andrew Kucharski moves a mattress at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center.
Gabrielle Lurie/The Chronicle

Several who turned down housing offers said they did so for various reasons, including limitations on pets, concerns about drug activities in buildings in the Tenderloin and SoMa, and a desire to avoid housing that required them to share a bathroom or kitchen. Some said they were offered housing vouchers but could not find a landlord who would take them. About a dozen others planned to accept offers for housing, but they were informed days before the shutdown that their units would not be ready in time. The city set those people up with a congregate shelter bed in the interim, but most said they would rather wait it out in their vehicles.

Enrique Olivas said he recently toured an apartment complex that he wanted to move into but was still waiting Tuesday morning to hear back from his case manager about whether or not he got the spot. "I'd like to move in there," he said. "But they haven't gotten back to me to tell me what they're doing about it."

In a statement provided to the Chronicle on Feb. 27, Emily Cohen, a spokesperson for the homelessness department, said that people with pending housing placements would be "able to stay onsite for a short period of time until they move into their housing." But by Monday, the agency seemed to pull an about-face. Nonprofit staff operating the site told everyone they had to leave by 5 p.m.

"We're in panic," Ramona Mayon said as she prepared to take some of her belongings to a storage space Monday afternoon. "People are completely freaked out."

As the Monday evening deadline neared, an employee from the homelessness department and Urban Alchemy rode around on a cart, giving people a countdown. Residents were frantically calling tow trucks, packing up belongings and figuring out their next move.

Violet Moyer, who lives in a townhouse on Gilman Avenue, said she was frustrated, but not surprised, when she woke up Tuesday morning to see the cluster of new RVs parked along the road. "In our neighborhood, there's no enforcement and there's no accountability," she said. "This would not happen in richer neighborhoods. … And now we're in a situation where not only do we not have a vehicle triage center for these folks to have access to water, power and sewage, but they are now living next to our community park and elementary school, without a way for the police to enforce bad behavior that often comes with the unsanitary conditions of living on the street."

San Francisco earlier this year counted more than 1,440 people sleeping in vehicles, trailers and mobile homes across the city, marking a 37% spike from two years earlier, according to its biannual survey of homelessness. After complaints from residents regarding this growing segment of the city's homelessness population, former Mayor London Breed proposed new overnight RV parking restrictions in the run-up to the November election.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency passed a version of Breed's proposed policies, late last year, but the Board of Supervisors rescinded the restrictions.

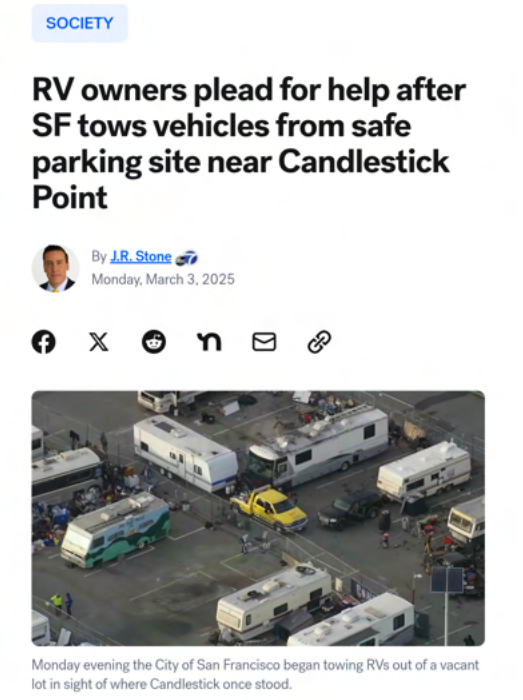
San Francisco spent $7.1 million on capital costs for the parking site at Candlestick Point and more than $3.5 million on operations each year, according to the homelessness department. Despite serving about a fifth of the site's initial anticipated capacity, officials did not substantially modify the cost of the contract with the site's two main operators, Urban Alchemy and Bayview Hunters Point Foundation.

Supervisor Shamann Walton, who represents Bayview-Hunters Point, said he supported the site's closure with the understanding that officials were working to move its residents into stable housing and open a new interim homeless housing project at 2177 Jerrold Ave. with 60 tiny cabins and 20 parking spaces for people living in vehicles.

But on Monday, hours before the scheduled closure of the Candlestick Point site, Walton met with staff from the homeless department and mayor's office who informed him that they were considering eliminating the safe parking space at the Jerrold Avenue site and instead put more than 200 shelter beds there. Walton called the move a "bait and switch" and said he wasn't going to entertain the idea. "You're not going to address the city's unhoused needs by putting everyone in Bayview-Hunters Point," Walton said. "That's not going to happen."

Over the past two years, unsheltered homelessness — people sleeping in tents, informal structures, sleeping bags or vehicles — doubled in the Bayview-Hunters Point area. The district accounts for 17.6% of the city's homeless population, the largest share across the city, but just 5.7% of its shelter and permanent supportive housing beds, according to city data.

https://abc7news.com/post/san-francisco-rv-owners-plead-help-city-tows-vehicles-safe-parking-site-candlestick-point/15975283/



SOCIETY

RV owners plead for help after SF tows vehicles from safe parking site near Candlestick Point

By J.R. Stone
Monday, March 3, 2025

Monday evening the City of San Francisco began towing RVs out of a vacant lot in sight of where Candlestick once stood.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- Monday evening the City of San Francisco began towing RVs out of a vacant lot in sight of where Candlestick once stood. The RVs had been allowed to park there for the last three years.

Some said they knew this was coming, others are now saying, "We need help!"

"I start a federal case on Monday and we're just going to have a long discussion about how people in RVs are treated like second-class citizens," said Ramona Mayon who lived at the parking site.

All the while, outrage from the 30 plus people who were still living there and now don't know where they will go. Those with the City of San Francisco issued a statement, in part saying, "Everyone onsite was offered permanent housing, rental subsidies, alternative shelter, and/or relocation assistance prior to the closure of the site."

Mayon, who has filed a lawsuit on this matter, says that is not the case.

"All the stuff that you see in the paper the Mayor London Breed and the new one saying that there is RV parks, there is RV repair, we're giving subsidies to go to RV parks, none of that is true. You talk with any people that you catch out here in the next day or two and it's nothing, there's nothing," said Mayon.

"I can't even give no emotions right now because if I did I'd probably be in jail," said Henry Borrero who lived at the site.

"You're that angry?" asked ABC7 News reporter J.R. Stone.

"They didn't give us no warning. They just told us to get out, that's it," said Borrero.

City representatives says the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center served 132 households since it was opened in 2022. We previously reported that there were issues here from the start with flooding, rats, and a lack of electricity.

The RVs were towed the equivalent of a few football fields from where they were parked. Mayon says mechanics that were brought in, often couldn't fix some of the problems with RVs like hers and the money to fund those mechanics ran out.

"Probably 20 RVs left in there and people aren't giving them up so what are we supposed to do? Where are we supposed to go? And RV parks are what the solution is across the country for older poor people to live in. It is Americana," said Mayon.

"If you could say something to the mayor what would you say?" asked Stone.

"Help. Help us out please, we need somewhere to go," said Borrero.

For now, many will be just down the street from where they were before being towed.

The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing issued this statement:

"Since opening in January 2022, the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center has served 132 households living in their vehicles. As part of our support for guests at the VTC, the onsite provider offers case management, housing assistance, benefits advocacy, employment assistance, medical referrals and vehicle repair. Over the past several months HSH and the nonprofits operating the site have held community meetings with guests, gave ample written notification and worked diligently with guests to identify places for them to go upon closure of the site. Everyone onsite was offered permanent housing, rental subsidies, alternative shelter, and/or relocation assistance prior to the closure of the site.

There are some guests who are working towards housing, and they will maintain their prioritization for housing even after the project is closed. All guests who were present on site on March 3rd were offered shelter as a last final placement offer before closing the program."

https://sfist.com/2025/03/03/its-curtains-for-the-bayview-rv-triage-center-closing-today-after-blowing-through-15-million/

It's Curtains for the Bayview RV Triage Center, Closing Today After Blowing Through $15 Million

3 March 2025/ Joe Kukura

Once dubbed "by far the most expensive homeless response intervention" in SF history, the Bayview RV Triage Center is being shut down today, after a three-year run of pricey logistical snafus and frankly very little usage. It was a little over three years ago, during the very dark January 2022 days of the pandemic, that San Francisco opened the Bayview RV Triage Center in hopes of providing safe accommodations for the homeless population. It was not a success right out of the gate, nor really at any point after leaving the gate.

RV dwellers initially refused to move there, for its lack of electricity and a ban on propane tanks.

And a 2023 Chronicle exposé dubbed the facility SF's "'most expensive homeless response' ever" for its $15 million price tag on a place that only hosted about 30 vehicles at a time.

So we learned in December that the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHS) that operates the facility was planning to pull the plug on the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center sometime by March 2025. And something is actually happening on time with this project, as NBC Bay Area reports that the RV center is demanding everyone be out by the end of today.

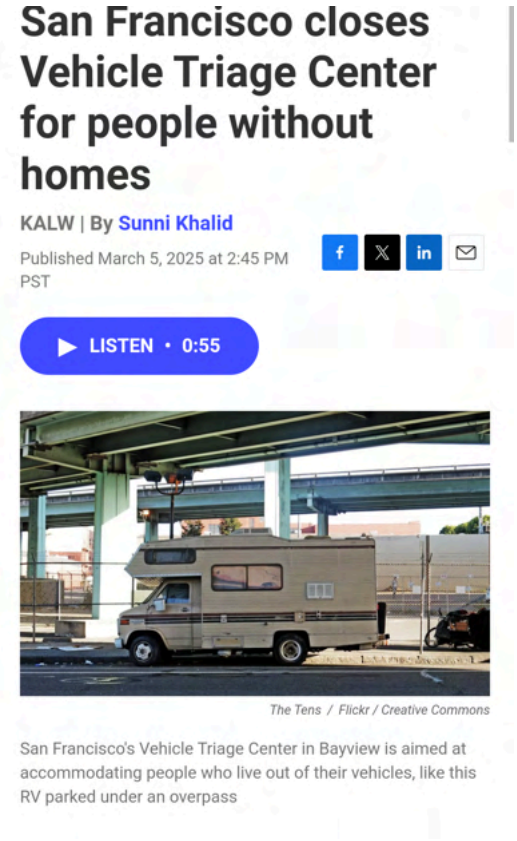
"I think that that's what government is supposed to do," DHS deputy director Emily Cohen told KPIX. "If something's not working, you're supposed to end it and move on. Like, we don't want to just keep doing something that is demonstrating that it's not working."

Per NBC Bay Area, everyone staying at the site has been offered housing, alternative shelter, relocation assistance, or some form of rental subsidies. A few stragglers will be allowed to stay a bit longer if their housing deals are still being finalized. But obviously, many of these people may not have the means to get their vehicles out of there, so there may be quite a mess left behind.

"I'm going to have to find a place for the vehicle in the interim," resident Aaron Wilson told KPIX. "I have to get it registered and then I can have it for sale, right? And in that time I have to hope it doesn't get broken into. That's why they call this safe parking, break-ins to RVs is very common in San Francisco, it's almost assured. If you leave and they've been watching it you open yourself up."

Still, the costs for this facility were staggering. A 2024 Chronicle analysis found the city was spending $275 a night per RV there. Meanwhile, the cost of a one-night stay at the Candlestick RV Park right next door costs only $145 per night.

https://www.kalw.org/bay-area-news/2025-03-05/san-francisco-closes-vehicle-triage-center-for-people-without-homes



San Francisco's Vehicle Triage Center in Bayview is aimed at accommodating people who live out of their vehicles, like this RV parked under an overpass.

Earlier this week, San Francisco closed its Bayview Vehicle Triage Center as a "safe parking" site for people living out of their RVs and cars.

SFist reports the end came after the city spent more than 15 million dollars to create and operate the VTC, which was located in an old boat launch parking lot in Candlestick Point State Recreation Area.

The Vehicle Triage Center opened in 2022 with a two-year lease. It was designed to have enough parking space to accommodate 35 RVs, although it never reached that total. The site was a place where people living in their vehicles could park and receive services without fear of tickets or impoundment. But the center was unable to weather a series of problems, including lawsuits from neighbors, a rat infestation, and no permanent supply of electricity.

When the site officially closed on Monday, the city notified residents that they needed to exit the center, or their vehicles – some of which are inoperable – would be towed.

https://www.sfstandard.com/2025/03/19/san-francisco-homeless-311-response-times/

The San Francisco Standard

After 50k homeless camp complaints, SF's response time depends on where you live

As tent sweeps accelerate elsewhere, residents of one neglected district wait up to 10 times as long for a response, data show.

Timothy Simon's view was almost perfect. From his Bayview hilltop balcony, he could see the downtown skyline, the glistening bay, and the Oakland hills in the distance. But in the foreground, for much of the last five years, was a line of RVs.

He tried everything to have the persistent homeless encampment removed. He pestered cops, filed 311 reports, and lobbied City Hall. But the city's response to his pleas was often no response at all, he said.

"We're sitting out here with this beautiful little strip," said Simon, gesturing to his view of San

The San Francisco Standard
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said.

"We're sitting out here with this beautiful little strip," said Simon, gesturing to his view of San
Francisco's southern shoreline. "Our issue is, the city wants to keep treating this like an industrial shithole."

Timothy Simon at his Bayview home. | Minh Connors for The Standard

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Timothy Simon at his Bayview home. | Minh Connors for The Standard

Simon points to a line of RVs parked outside Candlestick Point State Recreation Area. | Minh Connors for The Standard

The San Francisco Standard

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Simon is one of an increasingly vocal group of Bayview residents frustrated with the lack of response to their complaints about homeless encampments.

The city's response time to these grievances is far slower in Bayview-Hunters Point than in any other neighborhood, according to an analysis by The Standard of reports to the 311 help line. City staff took a median of 14.6 days to close 311 encampment cases in the Bayview last year, nearly 10 times the citywide median of 1.5 days.

The number of 311 encampment complaints skyrocketed citywide last year after a landmark Supreme Court decision freed officials to take a more aggressive approach to removing tents and RVs. In 2024, the 311 system logged nearly 48,000 encampment reports. This year, the city is on track to reach about 58,000, more than double the 2021 total. The pre-pandemic high, in 2019, was 70,000 complaints.

Related

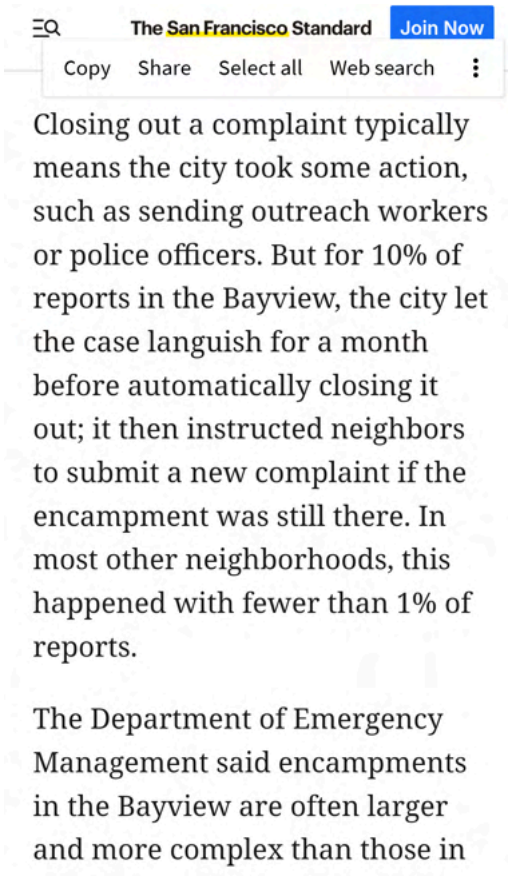
SF's most arrested homeless man sleeps outside his childhood home

Homeless migrant children win shelter extension after city eviction

The San Francisco Standard

Even with the increased volume of 311 cases, officials managed to respond to reports faster across much of the city. But in the Bayview, the median resolution time quadrupled between 2023 and 2024.

For comparison, the median time to close a complaint in the Marina in 2024 was less than a day. In the Tenderloin, it was 1.8 days. In Portola, it was 6.1 days, second only to neighboring Bayview, with its two-week median resolution time.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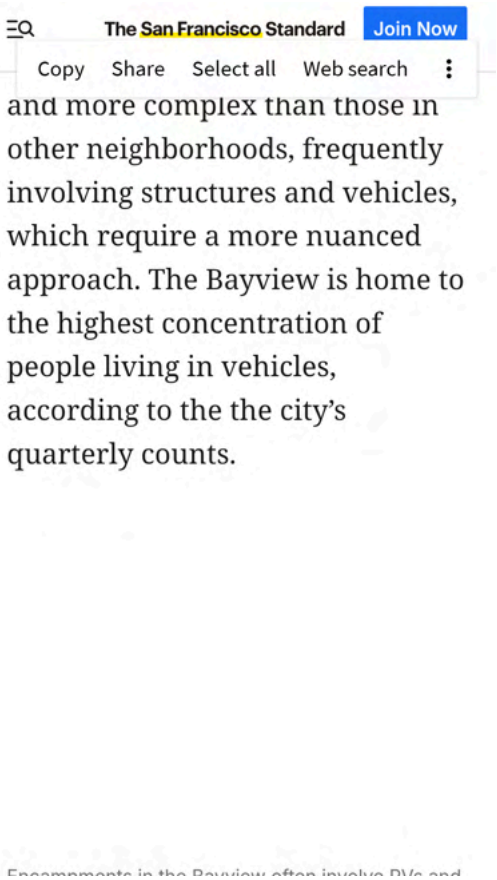
Closing out a complaint typically means the city took some action, such as sending outreach workers or police officers. But for 10% of reports in the Bayview, the city let the case languish for a month before automatically closing it out; it then instructed neighbors to submit a new complaint if the encampment was still there. In most other neighborhoods, this happened with fewer than 1% of reports.
The Department of Emergency Management said encampments in the Bayview are often larger and more complex than those in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and more complex than those in other neighborhoods, frequently involving structures and vehicles, which require a more nuanced approach. The Bayview is home to the highest concentration of people living in vehicles, according to the the city's quarterly counts.

'Relegated' to the Bayview

Bayview residents refute the idea that the slower response in their community is due solely to the complexity of its encampments.

They attest that the neighborhood has long borne the brunt of the city's ills — from chronic potholes to persistent illegal dumping and hazardous pollution — while standing last in line for government services. To this day, about a quarter of Bayview blocks are labeled by the city as "unaccepted," meaning the Department of Public Works takes no responsibility for their condition.

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

"This isn't a planned neighborhood," said Marsha Maloof, president of the Bayview Hill Neighborhood Association. "You couldn't live as a Black person anywhere else, so we were relegated to this area. All these years later, we still don't have a lot of things that would come to a planned neighborhood."

Warehouses and empty lots make up much of the community, providing refuge for homeless people who would face greater scrutiny in other parts of the city.

In one corner of the Bayview

In one corner of the Bayview lined with abandoned fields and factories, two homeless migrant families from Honduras live in trailers parked next to each other.

A homeless father holds his 1-year-old son inside their RV in the Bayview. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

A 1-year-old boy played with toy monster trucks inside one trailer. His father cried as he explained their fears of being towed.

"They would leave us on the street," said the father, whom The Standard is not naming due to the family's immigration status. "Every parent seeks the best for their children, but under these circumstances, it is not possible."

Prior to living in the RV, the family slept on trains and buses, or in a school gymnasium in the Mission, the father said. He said he works in construction but business has been slow due to the

business has been slow due to the rain.

"We came to San Francisco because San Francisco is — well, from what one hears — a sanctuary city that supports immigrants," the father said. "Not that we are in better condition, because the city doesn't want us to be living here either."

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

Having grown up in poverty or experienced homelessness themselves, several Bayview residents said they empathize with people living on the streets. But they see the city's response as insufficient and inconsistent.

"Those families deserve affordable housing. I'm all in on that," Simon said. "But the city just throws money at it so they can have their little atonement. It doesn't really make certain that the money is being properly allocated and distributed."

'A cold day in hell'

‘A cold day in hell’

The stretch of Gilman Avenue that extends into Candlestick Point, within view of Simon’s balcony, embodies how the city’s well-funded efforts often fail to improve the lives of homeless people and housed residents alike.

Throughout the Covid pandemic, there was a persistent RV encampment along the road. In 2021, people were living out of about 150 vehicles at the Candlestick site, infuriating neighbors, who filed numerous complaints. Officials eventually

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

complaints. Officials eventually took action after major flooding in November 2021 left people stranded.

Ramona Mayon, 64, looks out from her RV parked on Gilman Avenue on March 10. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

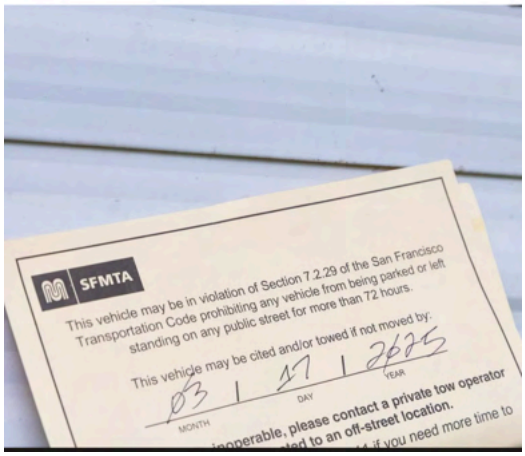
In January 2022, the city opened a triage site in a parking lot at the end of the road where homeless

In January 2022, the city opened a triage site in a parking lot at the end of the road where homeless people could live in RVs. The site provided access to showers, bathrooms, and three meals a day — desperately needed resources for people living in vehicles.

The cost of the facility reached $17 million by the time it closed March 3. But that figure mystified clients, who say the food was nearly inedible and the staff unaccommodating.

“They make millions while we’re given a bowl of gruel,” said Ramona Mayon, who has lived in

“They make millions while we’re given a bowl of gruel,” said Ramona Mayon, who has lived in an RV for more than two decades. “There’s such a huge gap in the money that’s spent and the services we receive.”



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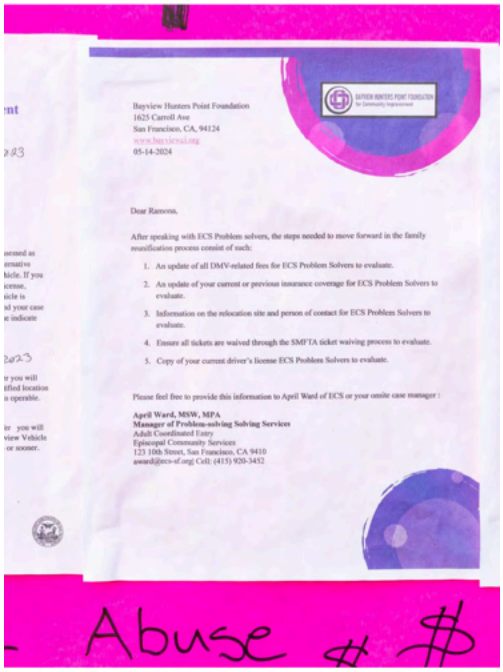

Notices and letters are posted on Mayon's RV. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

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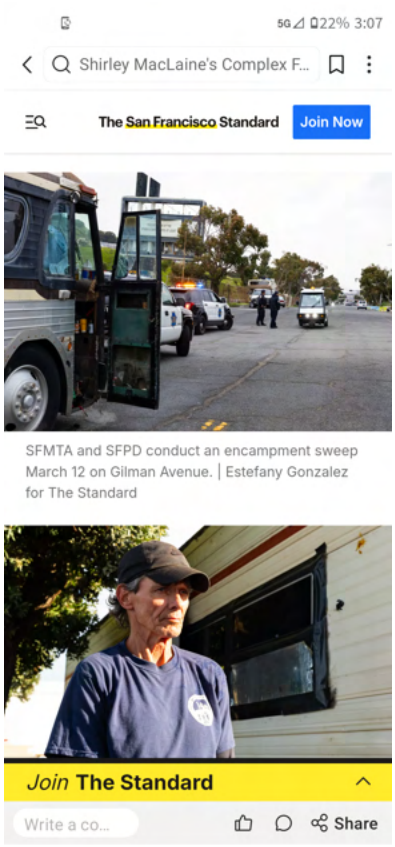
Notices and letters are posted on Mayon's RV. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

When the city shuttered the site, roughly a dozen people moved their RVs back onto Gilman Avenue. The new gathering quickly drew complaints from locals.

Several people living in the RVs said the city's Homeless Outreach Team had promised them spaces at another parking site, Jerrold Commons. But when city workers moved the group on March 12, no social workers were on the scene — just police and tow trucks.



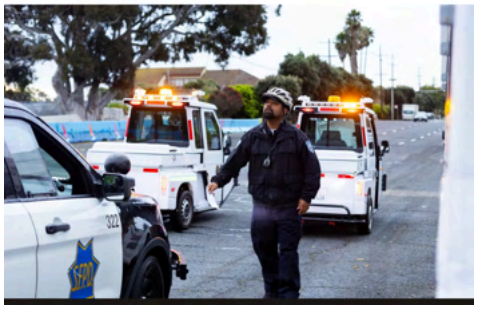
SFMTA and SFPD conduct an encampment sweep March 12 on Gilman Avenue. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

"I was terrified. I'm too old and too sick to be towed," said Mayon, who has cancer. "They never come through. It's not the Department of Homelessness, it's the Department of Gaslighting."

The Department of Emergency Management said in a statement that none of the RV occupants on Gilman accepted shelter, but the city's outreach team would "continue to work with the former guests to support their transition." Of 42 people living at the triage site when it closed, the city moved 12 into housing and five to shelter.

Charles Rawls and Henry Borrero attempt to tow Mayon's RV during the March 12 sweep. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard



The San Francisco Standard Join Now

After the sweep, the lineup of RVs scattered across the neighborhood. Those with working vehicles helped make last-minute repairs for less fortunate members of the group. One man, who was deaf and only gave the name Andrew, used a U-Haul to tow several vehicles to safety.

"I know it's a lot, but we can't leave anyone behind," Mark Noti, an RV occupant, yelled to Andrew as they struggled to unlock the steering of one RV. "It'll be a cold day in hell when I let them take something."

A line of RVs after their occupants relocated following the encampment sweep. | Estefany Gonzalez for The Standard

By the end of the operation, at least three of the RVs had moved half a mile away. Another eight moved around the corner, next to a children's park, where police immediately issued the occupants another five-day notice to move.

The San Francisco Standard Join Now

"It could be me," said Lajuan Bibbs, a lifelong resident. "I feel bad for them. They've got to live somewhere."

Others looked on in disbelief.

"It's stopping our kids from playing in the park," said Gayle Hart, who lives across the street. "It's ridiculous. No way in a community park in the Sunset or the Marina District would they have these RVs right here."

David Sjostedt can be reached at david@sfstandard.com
Noah Baustin can be reached at nbaustin@sfstandard.com

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ABC documentary @ https://youtu.be/8Mv2ZDZMtG4?si=JeuOniEBJzpMVg75
Out March 31, 2025 and contains statements by Emily Cohen about how the City is thinking about doing more “safe parking”.

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Ironic that we can get our RVs back one time from SFMTA if we are “in the system as homeless”.

https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/drive-park/towed-vehicles/reduced-fees-first-time-tow-and-low-income-individuals

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My own blog about the place:

https://bayviewvtc.wordpress.com/

Pilot Program: Vehicle Assistance Fund to Cover Unaffordable Vehicle Costs for People Experiencing Homelessness

July 2024

Introduction

The Financial Justice Project (FJP) in the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector partnered with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation (BVHPF), and Urban Alchemy to pilot a Vehicle Assistance Fund to support people living in their vehicles. The pilot program served people experiencing homelessness who reside in their vehicles at the Vehicle Triage Center (VTC) in fiscal year 2023-2024.

This report provides a summary of the pilot program's goals, design, and impact. Based on lessons learned from the pilot program, FJP provides recommendations to leverage this program concept to other populations and sites in San Francisco.

Background

San Francisco is the first city and county in the nation to launch a Financial Justice Project to assess and reform how fees and fines impact our city's low-income residents and communities of color. Fines, fees, and financial penalties can trap low-income residents in a maze of poverty and punishment and prevent people from succeeding. FJP works with community groups, city and county departments, and the courts to advance reforms that work better for people and for government. Working with partners, FJP has eliminated or adjusted dozens of fees and fines to lift a financial burden off struggling residents.

FJP has partnerships with HSH and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) to create meaningful reforms to prevent people experiencing homelessness from losing their cars to unaffordable costs, such as towing costs, booting costs, and parking citations. People experiencing homelessness in San Francisco can receive one-time fine and fee waivers on tow, boot, and parking citation costs by working with a Coordinated Entry Access Point.

Despite these important resources, thousands of vehicles owned by people in poverty are towed each year, and many people are never able to reclaim their cars due to outstanding vehicle expenses. These expenses include an inability to pay for vehicle registration and other DMV fees, as well as smog tests and minor repairs to pass vehicle inspection for registration. Between July 2020 and March 2021, of the 1,321 total tows that typically impact people in poverty (for unpaid citations, lapsed registration, or for leaving a vehicle parked for 72 hours or more), 1,282 tows (97%) were because of expired registration.

Once a car is towed, it becomes very difficult for someone in poverty to reclaim the vehicle. Nine percent of vehicles that are towed are eventually auctioned for nonpayment of required fees. Between 2005 and 2017, 57% of the towed vehicles that

were auctioned were for expired registration. Currently, there are no City funds that can be used by residents to pay for these required vehicle expenses.

The risk of losing a vehicle is particularly acute for people who are living in their vehicle. The vehicle is often their biggest asset and source of stability. While living in a vehicle may not be a permanent housing solution, people are generally worse off when they lose their car and end up on the streets or in the shelter system. By then, their problems are more complicated and often more expensive to resolve.

Based on the 2024 Point-in-Time Count, there are approximately 1,442 people in San Francisco who live in their vehicles, a 37% increase from 2022. During the Fall of 2022, FJP surveyed nearly 50 people living in their vehicles in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood to better understand the needs of this population. We found:

- 46% of people said their vehicles had been towed for registration issues.
- The majority of people surveyed identified as Black (28%) or Latino (35%).
- Over half of the respondents reported having a disability.
- The biggest challenges people faced were unpaid registration, repairs to make their vehicles operational, and outstanding parking tickets.

Pilot Program

Goals

Through a partnership between FJP, HSH, Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation (BVHPF), and Urban Alchemy, we developed a Vehicle Assistance Fund Pilot Program to help people experiencing homelessness pay for vehicle costs. The pilot program tested if the Vehicle Assistance Fund is a cost-effective, harm reduction, and tow-prevention strategy. We sought to understand whether paying for people's vehicle costs will help people:

1. Keep their largest asset and prevent them from ending up on the streets or in the shelter system;
2. Relocate their vehicles to a safe and sustainable location; and
3. Make their vehicle a more humane place to live by sealing it to keep weather and rodents out.

Funding

The pilot program was philanthropically funded with $100,000 raised by The Financial Justice Project.

Pilot Program Site Selection

FJP and HSH worked collaboratively to determine where best to deploy the Vehicle Assistance Fund. We considered several populations to focus on, including people living in their vehicles at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center, people living in their vehicles on the streets of San Francisco, and people who are housed but for whom losing their vehicle could tip them into homelessness.

HSH was particularly interested in deploying the funds at the Vehicle Triage Center (VTC), which is located at Candlestick Point in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. The VTC is a safe parking site that launched in January 2022. Currently, there are 35 parking spots for people who are vehicularly housed with approximately 50-60 clients living at the site at any given time. There are future plans to expand the site's capacity. HSH provides funding for the VTC, including funding for the two community-based organizations on site: Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation and Urban Alchemy manage the site on a day-to-day basis and provide case management for clients. The lease for the VTC site was slated to end in January 2024, and HSH was concerned that vehicles would need to be towed off the site if they were inoperable. This would likely leave clients without their vehicular home if they could not afford to pay the tow fees. Given this urgency, FJP and HSH decided to begin using the funds at the VTC.

Pilot Program Guidelines

Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation was selected to implement the fund due to its presence at the Vehicle Triage Center. Together, along with HSH and Urban Alchemy, our organizations developed the following pilot program guidelines. Additionally, the working group developed forms, policies, and processes to guide implementation of the program and distribution of the funds.

> Eligibility. People living at the Bayview Hunter's Point Vehicle Triage Center (VTC) were eligible for this fund. The first recipients of the fund were people that are classified under HSH's "problem-solving status," which means the first people who were assisted with vehicle expenses were those who have identified a pathway to resolve their homelessness without seeking ongoing shelter or a housing resource from the homelessness response system. For example, several people living in their RVs at the VTC wanted to repair their vehicle and get it registered so they could drive it to live with a relative in another state.
>
> Use of Funds. Funds were used to pay for vehicle repairs to make them operational and road-ready, vehicle weatherization and rodent-proofing, DMV fees and documentation, driver's license renewals, vehicle registration, smog checks, and to pay for vehicle insurance. We set a guideline of $3,000 per person. Higher amounts required additional review and working group agreement. We based this amount on completed financial assessments of people's needs.
>
> Priority Clients. We prioritized individuals who had a verified destination they could safely and sustainably relocate to, such as a relative's property. These individuals often need financial assistance to pay for repairs, vehicle registration fees, other DMV fees, etc. to get their vehicle safe and operational to drive to their destination. If individuals did not have a place to move their RV to, funds were used to repair and weatherize vehicles to ensure VTC clients have a safe and dignified place to live in while they are at the VTC. Many vehicles at the VTC

are old, poorly insulated, and unsealed, which can result in rodents, rain, and cold temperatures getting in.

What Was Accomplished
The pilot program launched in the Fall of 2023. BVHPF identified a mobile mechanic who specializes in RV repairs to assess vehicles at the VTC, with client consent. The mechanic assessed 31 vehicles (out of approximately 35 vehicles on site during the duration of the pilot program). Concurrently, BVHPF conducted assessments with clients to understand if they needed financial support with vehicle registration, other DMV fees, or had outstanding tickets that added barriers to obtaining vehicle registration. BVHPF also worked with clients to determine if they had a viable relocation plan.

Based on both the mechanic's vehicle assessment and BVHPF's client assessments, the working group prioritized three clients to make operational repairs to their vehicles. In addition, BVHPF identified general contractors to weatherize and rodent-proof the RVs on site. In total, 23 vehicles were weatherized to seal them from the rain and cold weather. And 22 vehicles were rodent-proofed, in response to the needs identified in the client assessments.

Expenditure Description	Total Spent
RV Repairs & Assessment Fees	$22,436.26
Rodent Proofing	$42,715.50
Weatherization	$21,999.96
DMV Expenses	$8,085.38
Administrative Fee	$3,750.00
Total	**$98,987.10**

Lessons Learned and Challenges
Below are the key lessons learned and challenges encountered through the pilot program.

- **The clients at the VTC had specific and unique needs, which made this population particularly challenging to support with relocation and vehicle repairs**. The pilot program was aimed at supporting people with the necessary repairs needed to relocate to a safe and sustainable location. However, tying the fund to reunification or permanent housing presented a challenge for many people at the VTC to become eligible for funds. People living in their vehicles are oftentimes afraid to seek permanent housing inside and are reluctant to give up living in a vehicle that they may have grown accustomed to over many years. Several clients had viable relocation plans to stay with family elsewhere in San Francisco or in other states, but the vast majority of the VTC clients did not have

a relocation destination. The working group also explored whether moving to a local RV park would be feasible for clients. However, many RV parks in the Bay Area set guidelines on the age and condition of vehicles (not allowing older or poorly maintained vehicles) or had very high fees, making this option infeasible for clients.

- **Not all vehicles were repairable.** Based on the mechanic's assessment, there were vehicles that were beyond repair. The cost of repairs would have exceeded the cost to replace the vehicle altogether or would have drained the available funds quickly. While the majority of clients agreed to have their vehicles assessed, there were a small number of clients who declined vehicle assessments.

- **Weatherization and rodent proofing repairs were the most beneficial improvements for VTC clients.** A significant portion of the fund was spent on repairs to weatherize vehicles (e.g., seal them from rain and cold temperatures) and rodent-proofing. These repairs seemed to have the most positive impact on people living at the VTC based on BVHPF's conversations and feedback from clients, compared to repairs to getting vehicles operational and road-ready. These types of repairs improved the conditions for people at the VTC and allowed clients to live more humanely and with dignity in their vehicles.

- **The VTC lease was extended, removing a key incentive for clients to leave the VTC for a more stable housing location.** The City leases the land at the VTC from the State. At the beginning of our work together, the working group was aware that the lease for the VTC may end in January 2024. There was a fear that vehicles would need to be towed off the site if they could not be driven off and that clients would need to find a new place to live or park their vehicle. In October 2023, the lease was extended for another two years, which removed a key incentive for clients to leave the site and take advantage of the vehicle repair fund.

- **It has been challenging to find a mechanic who is mobile and willing to support this population.** BVHPF worked diligently to identify mechanics who are mobile and could come to the VTC site, willing to support people experiencing homelessness with care and compassion, and who could provide services at a reasonable rate given the funding available. There were very few mechanics identified who fit these criteria. The mechanic selected for this pilot program had limited availability to come on site making it difficult for the mechanic to assess and repair vehicles quickly.

- **Expectations about the program were misunderstood and clients asked for additional repairs and were unwilling to leave the VTC.** The working group developed procedures, policies, and forms to help ensure that clients who received vehicle repairs understood the program guidelines and would leave the site once repairs were completed. A tremendous amount of case manager time

from BVHPF was required to support clients in understanding the process. However, it has been difficult to enforce agreements that clients signed to receive repairs due to Shelter Grievance Ordinance protections. Clients have remained at the VTC after receiving repairs and have made litigious threats.

Recommendations

Given the conditions and challenges present at the VTC site, this pilot program was not able to effectively evaluate whether the funds allowed people to keep their vehicles and prevent them from ending up on the streets or in the shelter system or relocate their vehicles to a safe and sustainable location. The pilot program did find that weatherization and rodent-proofing repairs were effective in making vehicles more humane to live in and were very beneficial to clients.

FJP recommends the following over the short- and long-term:

- **Short-term recommendations (with remaining funds)**. In the short term, the group agreed to shift the use of funds from individual repairs and documentation needed to get vehicles road-ready to general repairs that benefit more people (e.g., weatherization and rodent-proofing).

- **Long-term recommendations**. FJP believes that this model of repairing vehicles to help people avoid tickets and tows could be successful under certain conditions and in a way that is sustainable and scalable. However, due to the challenges listed above, we recommend that HSH explore other ways to achieve the initial goals we set out. This may include identifying populations and/or sites where the following conditions can be met:

    - Focus on people who are at greater risk for vehicle impounds and citations (i.e., people not living at a safe parking site);
    - Focus on people who have a confirmed destination to move to and people who are willing to relocate;
    - Focus on people living in vehicles being used as temporary shelter (focus on sedans vs RVs);
    - Create binding agreements for beneficiaries; and
    - Set a clearer cap on vehicle repairs and allowable expenses.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need to better support people who live in their vehicles in San Francisco. This population is most at-risk from enforcement efforts like parking tickets, towing, and booting, and we believe there are ways that the City can intervene to prevent people from potentially losing their vehicles. FJP appreciated the opportunity to develop this pilot program in partnership with HSH, BVHPF, and Urban Alchemy, and looks forward to leveraging lessons learned and recommendations from this effort in the future.

Appendix

1. Vehicle Assistance Fund Pilot Slides – January 2023
2. Vehicle Assistance Fund Kick-off Meeting Slides – August 2023
3. Vehicularly Housed English Survey – Fall 2022
4. Vehicularly Housed Spanish Survey – Fall 2022
5. Bayview Hunters Point Foundation Client Consent Documents and Funding Plan

DRAFT

Planning Update & Proposal

Vehicle Assistance Fund Pilot Program

January 2023

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESSNESS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

THE FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT SAN FRANCISCO

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1. The Problem and Potential Solution to Explore
2. Research and Survey Results
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1. The Problem and Potential Solution to Explore

The Problem

- We repeatedly hear from people whose car is about to be towed because of expired registration or they cannot retrieve their car from the tow lot because they cannot afford some expense related to their vehicle.

- Expenses include an inability to pay for vehicle registration to the DMV and other DMV fees, as well as related smog tests and minor repairs to pass vehicle inspection for registration.

- Currently, there is no fund to address these types of costs.

Potential Solution: Vehicle Assistance Fund Pilot Program

- We would like to collaborate with HSH and SFMTA to **pilot a flexible assistance fund to pay for unaffordable vehicle costs** which result in people's cars being towed and prevent them from getting their cars back.

- We believe that this **harm reduction effort would help people keep their largest asset and prevent them from ending up on the streets or in the shelter system.**

Goals & Guiding Principles

- Pilot a **Vehicle Assistance Fund to pay for unaffordable vehicle costs** which result in people's cars being towed and prevent them from getting their cars back

- Support clients find shelter inside and determine if this **harm reduction effort would help people keep their largest asset and prevent them from ending up on the streets or in the shelter system.** We first need to prevent their situation from getting worse—ending up in the streets—as a step toward helping people get housed.

- Develop a pilot that can be **implemented efficiently and effectively**

- If pilot proves effective, make the case for a **permanently supported Vehicle Assistance Fund**, if pilot proven effective

Proposed Work Plan

Milestone and Key Questions	Timeline
Set the Vision and Develop Common Goals	October
Understand the Problem • Conduct interviews and surveys with directly impacted people • Conduct interviews with key community groups that conduct outreach to SFMTA staff, AutoReturn, unhoused people • Landscape review of other places that have developed solutions to this problem	October-November
Develop and Shape Potential Solutions	December
Move Towards Pilot Implementation	January
Pilot Fund	January-April

2. Research and Survey Results

Understanding the Problem

- Conducted interviews and surveys with directly impacted people (completed 43 surveys with directly impacted people)

- Conducted interviews with:
  - ✓Key community groups (e.g., Episcopal Community Services, Urban Alchemy, Coalition on Homelessness)
  - ✓Vehicle Triage Center staff
  - ✓SFMTA staff
  - ✓AutoReturn

- Landscape review of other places that have developed solutions to this problem

Key Survey Takeaways

- The majority of survey respondents identified as Black or Latino/Hispanic and have disabilities
- Majority are lifetime or longtime San Francisco residents
- About half have had their car towed at least once
- 18 people at the VTC responded
- 25 people from street outreach in San Francisco responded
- The needs are greater for people on the streets than at the VTC
- Main challenges of respondents include: registration issues, repairs to make the vehicles operable, and smog test costs

VTC Survey Results: Overview
(VTC Surveys, N = 18)

- **11%** of respondents do **not** have a valid driver's license
- **72%** of respondents use their vehicle for **shelter** and **sleeping**
- **44%** of respondents reported their car being **towed** in the past
  - Of those who reported being towed, 88% were towed only once and 12% twice
  - Main reasons reported**: registration issues** and **issues with plates** or **driver's license**
  - **50%** of respondents were **not** able to get their vehicle back
- Nearly **83%** of respondents either live alone or with 1 other person

Demographics

- Majority of respondents identified as Latino (**44%**) or white (**27%**)
- **44%** of respondents reported having a disability
- Majority of respondents identified as male (**67%**)
- Majority of respondents (**56%**) are 55 or older

VTC Survey Results: Challenges and Costs (VTC Surveys, N = 18)

- Majority of respondents reported the following as the biggest challenges they face with their vehicles:
  - Unpaid **registration** or vehicle **not registered in their name**
  - **Repairs** to make vehicles operational
  - **DMV** fees and **smog test** fees
  - **Repairs** to make the vehicles operational or safer to live in

- Respondents estimated the total cost to register and make their vehicles operational as:
  - **19%** said between **$0 – $999**
  - **25%** said between **$1,000 – $1,999**
  - **25%** said between **$2,000 – $2,999**
  - **31%** said between **$3,000+**

Non VTC Survey Results: Overview
(Non VTC Surveys, N = 25)

- **60%** of respondents do **not** have a valid driver's license
- **80%** of respondents use their vehicle for **shelter** and **sleeping**
- **48%** of respondents reported their car being **towed** in the past
  - Of those who reported being towed, 25% were towed only once, 33% twice, and 42% were towed 3 or more times
  - Main reasons reported**: registration** or **plates issues**
  - **67%** of respondents were **not** able to get their vehicle back
- Nearly **64%** of respondents either live alone or with 1 other person

Demographics

- Majority of respondents identified as Black (**44%**) or Latino (**24%**)
- Majority of respondents reported having a disability (**52%**)
- Majority of respondents identified as male (**56%**)
- **68%** of respondents are between the ages of **35 – 55**
- **50%** of respondents were **lifetime SF residents, 86%** have been living in SF **16 years or longer***

* This question was added later, 14 people responded to this question and analysis is based on those 14 responses

Survey Results: Challenges and Costs (Non VTC surveys, N = 25)

- **57%** of vehicles are **not operational***
- Majority of respondents reported the following as the biggest challenges they face with their vehicles:
  - Unpaid **registration**
  - **Repairs** to make vehicles operational or safer to live in
  - Outstanding **parking or traffic ticket debt** in San Francisco

- Respondents estimated the total cost to register and make their vehicles operational as:
  - **38%** said between **$0 – $999**
  - **29%** said between **$1,000 - $1,999**
  - **19%** said between **$2,000 - $2,999**
  - **14%** said between **$3,000+**

* This question was added to the survey later, 23 people responded to this question and analysis is based on those 23 responses

Survey Results: Vehicle Type and Registration Status

Respondents reported a **total of 63** vehicles

RV and Trailers (28 vehicles)

- **64%** are either **not registered** to their owners or have an **unknown** registration status
- **79%** have a **functional restroom**
- **43% would not keep** their vehicles if they moved into permanent housing

Passenger Cars (34 vehicles)

- **35%** are either **not registered** to their owners or have an **unknown** registration status

Interview Highlights: AutoReturn

- Main barriers to releasing vehicles for people with low incomes are due to:
  - Issues with DMV registration (either not registered in their name or lapsed registration); many people are 1-2 years behind in registration
  - Uninsured vehicles (for SF Police Department tows)
- Frontline staff are trained to notify all vehicle owners of the available tow discounts for low-income people and waivers for PEH. And have access to the Human Serviced Agency website to verify eligibility
- About 20% of tows are SFPD tows, according to data provided by AutoReturn, which require more stringent release authorization requirements (up to date registration and insurance) and can block people from receiving discounts
- Unhoused people may not receive mailed notification of towed vehicle – storage fees can pile up
- Suggested partnering with the DMV or DMV-certified office to help people with registration and other DMV fees; also suggested preventive measures to help people avoid towing in the first place

Highlights from interviews with key stakeholders

- There is a lot of variability amongst people living in their vehicles (age, ethnicity, #s, etc).
- People have a variety of goals (most want to get into housing, from our surveys, but some want to stay in vehicle).
- A lot of brainstorming about best way to implement a pilot program. How to shape it so that we learn what we need to learn to shape a longer-term approach that uses public funding.
- Won't just take $ to solve the problem. A lot of people don't have valid DL, Car not registered in their name, they need registration transferred; People may need case management/other assistance to navigate DMV processes etc.

Registration Costs

Registration fees depend on:

- Vehicle type (auto, motorcycle, RV, etc.)
- Purchase price or declared value
- Purchase date or date entering California
- The unladen or declared gross vehicle weight (GVW) and the number of axles your vehicle may have
- Whether you have any unpaid parking violations or toll evasion bail
- County the car is being registered in

Range of new vehicle registration costs in San Francisco. In addition, late fees range from $20 - $454.

New Vehicle Registration	Fee	Use/Sales Tax*
min	$94	$0
max	$343	$2,076
average	$237	$1,188
Vehicle Renewal Fee:	$65	

*Note: Use/sales taxes are due to the DMV if a car was not purchased through a licensed dealer (e.g., if it was purchased by a private third party)

3. How a Pilot Program Might Work

3 Potential Target Populations

Population	What could success look like for this population?	Potential ways to reach / serve this population
1. People living in their vehicles at the Bayview Vehicle Triage Center (~65 people)	• People are housed inside • Vehicles are more humane, comfortable, and safe for living • Ensure that vehicles are not towed when the VTC program ends • PEH have a working vehicle to get to work, appointments • PEH have a working vehicle to drive to a longer-term housing solution inside	• Potential partnership with Episcopal Community Services and their mechanic who can assess and repair vehicles • ECS or UA could administer the Fund
2. People living in their vehicles on the streets of San Francisco (~2,000 people)	• People are housed inside • Vehicles are more humane, comfortable, and safe for living • PEH have a working vehicle to get to work, appointments • PEH have a working vehicle to drive to a longer-term housing solution inside • People have a vehicle that is registered and repaired so they can go to work, appointments without risk of being towed	• Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) could reach people and connect them to services at Episcopal Community Services (ECS) • ECS or UA could administer the Fund
3. People who are housed but losing their vehicle could tip them into homelessness	• Prevents people from becoming homeless • People have a vehicle that is registered and repaired so they can go to work, appointments without risk of being towed	• Potential partnership with SFMTA/AutoReturn who can refer people whose cars are towed and can't get them back to ECS • Potential partnership with DMV-certified offices (e.g., AAA) to help people with registration and other DMV fees

DRAFT How a Pilot Program Might Work: First Phase to Focus Vehicle Assistance to Get People a Sustainable Housing Solution

3 Potential Populations

1. People living at the VTC **(partner with Urban Alchemy)**
2. People living on the streets in their vehicles **(partner with HOT Teams)**
3. People whose car is towed and they can't get it back **(partner with AutoReturn)**

UA and ECS would provide case management services

UA could administer

Philanthropic Funds for DMV issues and insurance

Goal is to help people become eligible for Problem Solving Funds

+

ECS could administer

Problem Solving Funds for repairs, gas, RV park entry

Outcomes: People get to a sustainable housing solution

- Ensure vehicles are not towed when the VTC program ends
- People have a working vehicle to drive to a temporary or permanent housing solution
- People have a working vehicle to drive to an RV Park
- PEH have a working vehicle to get to work and stay housed

DRAFT How a Pilot Program Might Work For An Individual

Note: The breakdown below is for a hypothetical person for explanatory purposes

Item	Cost	Source of Funding
Vehicle repairs	$5,000	Problem Solving Funds*
Registration	$2,000 (Max)	Philanthropic Funds
Insurance	$600 (3 months)	Philanthropic Funds
Driver's license	$50	Philanthropic Funds
Gas	$250	Problem Solving Funds
Costs at RV Park	$1,000	Problem Solving Funds
Total	**$10,000 (Max per person)**	

Compare to **~$60,000 annual cost** of someone experiencing homelessness using shelter and emergency services in the City

* Requires a waiver to up the amount of problem solving funds that could be spent

Addition: Weatherization Funds

- Given the need, we are looking to set aside an additional $25,000 of funding for participants at the VTC to weatherize their vehicles.
- Funds would be used to “seal” vehicles and ensure rain, rodents couldn’t enter. For insulating vehicles, repairing leaks, patching up holes, etc.
- We are looking into the estimated cost of such improvements to estimate how many vehicles we can support in weatherizing

Item	Funds Available	Source of Funding
Weatherization Improvements	$25,000	Philanthropic Funds

4. HSH Questions and Answers

HSH Questions From Last Check-in

- Is there enough demand from a potential pilot group to find a permanent housing solution NOW? How many people do we estimate are interested in finding a permanent housing solution?
  - ECS and UA think there would be a demand and news of the pilot will "spread like wildfire."
  - ECS estimated at least 10 people at the VTC would be interested to go to an RV park. UA added that there are 6 people who use their vehicles to drive to work but desperately need repairs and may be good candidates, another 2 people are interested in family reunification.
  - UA estimated that there would also be demand from people living in their vehicles on the streets of San Francisco (at least 2 people that week that they did outreach to might be eligible / interested).
  - Both ECS and UA acknowledged that many people may not want a permanent housing solution; the majority of clients at the VTC have been unhoused for many years and going into permanent housing is intimidating.
  - UA is developing a participation plan to move more people into permanent housing; this fund could be used as an incentive.

- Can the cars actually be fixed or are they beyond repair?
  - ECS believes that the increased funding will make it feasible to repair cars, though some may be beyond repair. They have a mechanic that provides quotes for repair costs.

HSH Questions From Last Check-in

- How would we administer the fund?
  - Potential options: ECS (with Abode Services as their fiscal agent) could administer the repairs and provide case management services. UA could also provide case management services
  - ECS would need to confirm capacity of staff who currently administer Problem Solving funds
  - Potential outreach partners to people living in their vehicles in SF: HOT Team; UA; ECS
- What are the RV parking options in the Bay Area? What are the vacancy rates and costs?
  - 12 to 15 parks within a 40-mile radius of San Francisco
  - Average daily rate of $90 and vary depending on:
    - Number of people
    - Size of RV
    - Pets
    - Desired amenities
    - Duration of stay
  - Most parks require reservations, up to date registration, and fully functional RVs (note: this may be the most challenging for people)
  - Vacancy rates are not available online, must call to determine

Next Steps

- Discuss potential pilot parameters with HSH
- Once finalized, work with potential partners (including ECS, UA, Hot Team) to move toward startup
- Establish clear timeline, performance measures, way to measure progress
- Establish implementation guidelines and any relevant MOUs
- Other?

Kick-off Meeting

Vehicle Assistance Fund Pilot Program

August 22, 2023

Bayview Hunters Point Foundation for Community Improvement

HSH Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing

The Financial Justice Project San Francisco

Urban Alchemy

Introductions and Overview

Purpose: Kick-off Meeting with Vehicle Assistance Fund partners

- Name
- Pronouns
- Organization
- Icebreaker: what's bringing you joy lately?

Agenda

1. Introductions and Overview
2. Recap Goals and Guiding Principles
3. Review Guest and Vehicle Assessments
4. Collectively Develop Guidelines for Funds
5. Discuss Roles and Responsibilities
6. Review Process for Administering Funds
7. Review and Discuss Potential Challenges with Administering the Funds
8. Discuss Evaluation

2. Recap Goals & Guiding Principles

- Pilot a **Vehicle Assistance Fund to pay for unaffordable vehicle costs** which result in people's cars being towed and prevent them from getting their cars back.

- Support clients find shelter inside and determine if this **harm reduction effort would help people keep their largest asset and prevent them from ending up on the streets or in the shelter system.** We first need to prevent their situation from getting worse—ending up in the streets—as a step toward helping people get housed.

- Develop a pilot that can be **implemented efficiently and effectively.**

- If the pilot proves effective, make the case for a **permanently supported Vehicle Assistance Fund.**

3. Review Guest and Vehicle Assessments

Guest assessments

- How many have been completed to date?
- How many people do we expect to benefit from this?
- Where are the guests in terms of DMV documentation?
- What themes can we understand from the list?

Vehicle assessments

- How many vehicles have been assessed to date?
- What's the average cost per vehicle?
- What are the major problems vehicles have?
- What's the total cost of repairing all the problems?

4. Collectively Develop Guidelines for Funds

What are the eligibility criteria?

- Prioritize guests with a plan to leave the VTC to find permanent housing elsewhere
- Guest vehicles that are repairable
- Guests have sufficient documentation to register their vehicles

What are allowable expenses?

- Vehicle repairs to make them operational
- Vehicle weatherization
- DMV fees and documentation (including driver's license renewals, registration, smog checks)
- Insurance
- Anything else?

What is the cap per person/vehicle?

May be determined based on assessment of all vehicle needs.

5. Discuss Roles and Responsibilities

1. BVHPF will work in collaboration with Urban Alchemy, HSH and TTX's Financial Justice Project to prepare for the launch of the Vehicle Assistance Fund pilot program:

- **Assess all clients currently residing at the VTC** to understand their housing goals, as well as the status of their driver's license, vehicle registration, smog test, insurance, other DMV fees
- **Subcontract or work with an auto mechanic to conduct assessments of vehicles** to determine cost of potential repairs.
- After examining client assessments and mechanics' assessments of vehicles, **develop criteria and allowable uses for the $100,000 vehicle assistance fund** in collaboration with TTX's Financial Justice Project, Urban Alchemy, and HSH.
- **Identify clients** among the approximately 60 people currently at the VTC who meet eligibility criteria jointly created by BVHPF, Urban Alchemy, The Financial Justice Project, and HSH.
- As needed, **create process flow and protocols** for the program and ensure that Vehicle Triage Center clients are aware of the Fund and its eligibility guidelines
- **Create forms and other documentation** needed to implement the program

5. Discuss Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

2. BVHPF will lead implementation of the Vehicle Assistance Fund pilot program:

- **Provide financial and other assistance to VTC clients to resolve vehicle issues** with the DMV and others, including getting driver's licenses, insurance, paying for registration, and transferring registration if the car is not registered in their name.
- **Administer funding to pay for repairs, DMV fees, and other approved expenses**
  - Provide funds to auto mechanic to repair vehicles
  - Provide funds to DMV for license and registration issues or pay for vehicle insurance
  - As possible, work in collaboration with Episcopal Community Services (ECS), if Problem Solving funds can be used

3. BVHPF will partner with Financial Justice Project, who will do a light evaluation of impact of funds and lessons learned of this approach

6. Review Process Flow for Administering Funds

Proposed Process

1. Each participating guest shall be matched with a case worker to manage their participation
2. BVHPF shall itemize all vehicle-related costs for each pilot participant
3. Determine the total amount of money required to cover all approved expenses, for each participant
4. Based on the number of participants and total cost of vehicle expenses, the group will collectively determine what limits may be necessary to maximize impact
5. What else?

7. Review and Discuss Potential Challenges with Administering the Funds

- What are challenges we expect to come up? How will we address these challenges?
- How will we communicate and collaborate with each other?
- What questions are you all getting from guests?

8. Evaluation: What do we want to test and learn from this?

- What do we want to learn from this pilot program?
- How would we explore these questions and learn? With a goal of informing a larger publicly funded solution.
- Should we have the selected pilot participants fill out surveys before they receive the funds?
- How will we stay connected to participants to do a post-pilot evaluation on the impact of the program?
- How did this program help people stabilize, move forward in their lives, and/or get housed?

Questions?

Survey About Vehicle Costs

November 2022

The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and The Financial Justice Project want to learn more about what vehicle costs people struggle to pay and what assistance people might need to pay for these costs. We want to see if it is possible to offer help that would prevent people's cars from being towed or getting tickets and ensures that people can keep their vehicles.

Thank you for completing this short survey! All questions are optional, and your responses will be kept anonymous.

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1. Name: _____ (OPTIONAL)

2. How many people live with you (not including yourself)? _____

3. Do you have any pets that live with you? How many and what kind? _____

4. Do you have a valid driver's license? Circle one: Yes No

5. What types of vehicles do you own and how many do you own?

Type of Vehicle	Number You Own	Is the vehicle registered to you? (Yes/No)	Does the vehicle run?
Recreational Vehicle (RV)			
Passenger Car (e.g., sedan, van)			
Other: _____ _____			

6. If the vehicle(s) are NOT registered in your name, have you tried to register the vehicle in your name? What challenges do you face with vehicle registration?

7. If you own an RV, do you have a functional restroom inside?

   Circle one: Yes No N/A

8. If you were to move into permanent housing, would you keep your RV?

   Circle one: Yes No N/A

9. What types of challenges do you face with your vehicle(s)? Check all that apply.

   - ☐ Unpaid registration
   - ☐ Vehicle not registered in your name
   - ☐ Other DMV fees
   - ☐ Costs related to passing a smog test (e.g., cost of smog test itself, repairs to pass smog test)
   - ☐ Repairs to make vehicle operable
   - ☐ Repairs to make vehicle safer or more comfortable to live in
   - ☐ Outstanding parking or traffic ticket debt in San Francisco
   - ☐ Outstanding parking or traffic ticket debt in other counties
   - ☐ Tow costs and storage fees
   - ☐ Other: _____

10. What do you estimate is the total cost to register your vehicle and make it operational?

    - ☐ $0 - $999
    - ☐ $1,000 - $1,999
    - ☐ $2,000 - $2,999
    - ☐ $3,000

11. Have you had your vehicle towed in the past? Circle one: Yes No

    If yes, how many times have you been towed? _____

    If yes, what was the reason? _____

    If yes, were you able to get your vehicle back? Circle one: Yes No

    If yes, did you use a discount or waiver available to people with low incomes or people experiencing homelessness?

    Circle one: Yes No Not aware of discounts

Survey About Vehicle Costs

November 2022

12. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I need help paying these vehicle costs.	1	2	3	4	5
I am afraid of my car being towed for expired registration.	1	2	3	4	5
If my car was towed, I would have difficulty paying to get it back.	1	2	3	4	5

13. What do you use your vehicle for? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Shelter and sleeping
- ☐ Driving to work
- ☐ Driving to appointments
- ☐ Caregiving responsibilities (e.g., driving children to school, supporting a family member)
- ☐ Other: _____

14: Are you employed?

15: How long have you been in San Francisco?

16: The following questions are OPTIONAL so we can understand more about who is having trouble paying for these vehicle costs:

My race/ethnicity is:

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Mixed

- ☐ Decline to state

My gender is:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

Do you have any disabilities?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ Over 65

17. What additional support do you need? Are there any other comments you would like to provide?

Thank you for completing this survey.

Encuesta sobre costos de vehículos

Noviembre de 2022

El Departamento para Personas sin Hogar y Viviendas de Apoyo de San Francisco y el Proyecto de Justicia Económica quieren saber más sobre los costos de vehículos para personas que tienen dificultades para pagar y qué asistencia podrían necesitar estas personas para pagar estos costos. Queremos averiguar si es posible ofrecer ayuda que evitaría que los autos de las personas sean remolcados o reciban multas y asegurarnos de que las personas conserven sus vehículos.

Gracias por responder esta breve encuesta. Todas las preguntas son opcionales y sus respuestas se mantendrán anónimas.

---

1. Nombre: _____ (OPCIONAL)

2. ¿Cuántas personas viven con usted (aparte de usted)? _____

3. ¿Tiene mascotas que viven con usted? ¿Cuántas y de qué tipo? _____

4. ¿Tiene licencia de conducir que es valida? Encierre en un círculo: Sí No

5. ¿Qué tipos de vehículos tiene y cuántos tiene?

Tipo de vehículo	**Cantidad que tiene**	**¿El vehículo está registrado a su nombre? (Sí/No)**	**¿El vehículo funciona? (Sí/No)**
Vehículo recreativo (RV)			
Auto de pasajeros (por ejemplo, sedán, camioneta)			
Otro: _____ _____			

6. Si los vehículos NO están registrados a su nombre, ¿ha intentado registrar el vehículo a su nombre? ¿Qué retos enfrenta para registrar el vehículo?

7. Si tiene un RV, ¿tiene un baño funcional?

   Encierre en un círculo: Sí No N/C

Encuesta sobre costos de vehículos

Noviembre de 2022

8. Si fuera a mudarse a una vivienda permanente, ¿conservaría su RV?

   Encierre en un círculo: Sí No N/C

9. ¿Cuales problemas tiene con su vehículos? Marque todas las opciones que correspondan.

   - ☐ Registro no pagado
   - ☐ El vehículo no está registrado a su nombre
   - ☐ Otros cargos de DMV
   - ☐ Costos relacionados con pasar una prueba de smog (por ejemplo, el costo de la prueba, reparaciones para pasar una prueba de smog)
   - ☐ Reparaciones para que el vehículo sea operable
   - ☐ Reparaciones para que el vehículo sea más seguro o más cómodo para vivir en él
   - ☐ Multas de estacionamiento o de tráfico pendientes de pago en San Francisco
   - ☐ Multas de estacionamiento o de tráfico pendientes de pago en otros condados
   - ☐ Costos de remolque y cargos por almacenamiento
   - ☐ Otro: _____

10. ¿Cuánto cree que le costaría pagar por todas estas problemas?

    - ☐ $0 - $999
    - ☐ $1,000 - $1,999
    - ☐ $2,000 - $2,999
    - ☐ Más de $3,000

11. ¿Su vehículo fue remolcado en el pasado? Encierre en un círculo: Sí No

    Si respondió Sí, ¿cuántas veces ha sido remolcado? _____

    Si respondió Sí, ¿cuál fue el motivo? _____

    Si respondió Sí, ¿pudo recuperar su vehículo? Encierre en un círculo: Sí No

    Si respondió Sí, ¿usó un descuento o exención disponible para personas con bajos ingresos o personas sin hogar?

    Encierre en un círculo: Sí No No sabía que había descuentos

Encuesta sobre costos de vehículos

Noviembre de 2022

12. En una escala de 1 (totalmente en desacuerdo) a 5 (totalmente de acuerdo), diga si está de acuerdo o no está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

Afirmación	Completamente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Neutral	De acuerdo	Completamente de acuerdo
Necesito ayuda para pagar estos costos del vehículo.	1	2	3	4	5
Estoy preocupado/a que mi vehiculo sea remolcado por tener el registro vencido.	1	2	3	4	5
Si mi auto fuera remolcado, tendría dificultades para pagar y recuperarlo.	1	2	3	4	5

13. ¿Para qué usa su vehículo? Marque todas las opciones que correspondan.

- ☐ Como refugio y para dormir
- ☐ Para conducir al trabajo
- ☐ Para conducir a mis citas
- ☐ Responsabilidades de cuidado (por ejemplo, llevar a los niños a la escuela, apoyar a un familiar)
- ☐ Otro: _____

14: ¿Está empleado/a?

15: ¿Cuánto tiempo has estado en san francisco?

16: Las siguientes preguntas son OPCIONALES de manera que podamos entender más sobre quién tiene problemas para pagar estos costos del vehículo:

Mi raza/etnia es:

- ☐ Blanco
- ☐ Negro
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ Asiático
- ☐ Mixto
- ☐ No deseo especificarlo

7 Mi género es:

- ☐ Masculino
- ☐ Femenino
- ☐ Otro

¿Tiene alguna discapacidad?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No

¿Cuál es su edad?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ Más de 65 años

15. ¿Qué tipo de apoyos adicionales necesita? ¿Tendra mas comentarios que quiere compartir?

Gracias por responder esta encuesta.

Shelter / Mobile Home Community Offer for Receiving the Vehicle Repair Funding

.

Today's Date: _____

Guest Name: _____

The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center site is closing in January 2024. You have been assessed as Problem Solving Status or Unknown Status, which means the city will offer you a congregate (group) shelter placement or help you transition into a mobile home community (If your RV is operable). Please indicate if you accept or refuse the shelter or mobile home community offer below.

Date of Acceptance/Refusal: _____

I Accept Placement: ☐ Congregate Shelter Placement or will accept assistance in moving into a mobile home community – If you accept the offer of shelter or moving into a mobile home community, you will be transferred **as soon as possible** before 01/01/24.

I Refuse Placement: ☐ Congregate Shelter Placement or to receive assistance moving into a Mobile Home Community - If you refuse the offer of a shelter or mobile home community, you will be exited from The Bayview Vehicle Triage Center site on 01/01/24 or sooner.

What reason(s), if any, did the guest give to explain this refusal?

How was this notice delivered?

☐ Physically handed to the guest
☐ In an envelope under the guest's door
☐ In an envelope at the front desk (guest not onsite to receive)

Guest name: _____

Guest Signature: _____

Staff name: _____

Staff Signature: _____

BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT FOUNDATION
for Community Improvement

Vehicle and RV Repair Checklist

Please check all boxes the client has completed to obtain vehicle repair funds with the assistance of their case manager.

□ Resident has completed the vehicle assessment survey

□ Resident has signed the repair agreement.

□Resident meets with case manager weekly.

□ Resident has received a housing assessment.

□ Resident has an active driver's license.

□ Resident has submitted their car registration documents.

□ Resident has submitted their insurance documents.

□ Resident has submitted their proof of vehicle ownership.

□ Resident has submitted their vehicle smog check documentation.

□ The lead Mechanic has assessed the resident's vehicle

Documented BVTC exit plan with case managers

□ Moving to RV park □ Moving with a family member □Moving to an apartment □ Other

DMV Estimated Cost

□ $100.00-$500.00 □ $500.00-$1000.00 □ $1000.00-$1500.00 □ $1500.00-$2000.00 □$2000.00+

Vehicle Repair Estimated Cost

□ $100.00-$1000.00 □ $1000.00-$2000.00 □ $2000.00-$4000.00 □ $4000.00-$5000.00 □$5000.00+

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lot #_____Phone # _____

Car Type: _____ Car Model: _____

Date of Car Estimate: _____ Date of DMV Cost Estimate: _____

Driver License#: _____License Plate#_____

VTC GUEST VEHICLE/RV FUNDING PLAN

This Vehicle/RV funding-based **Funding Plan {FP)** is created in partnership with the program Guest and the assigned Case manager. FP's s are guest centered and must be agreed upon, by the Guest.

The Vehicle/RV Funding Plan: This is a standardized case management plan designed to assist the Guest to identify and achieve attainable vehicle/ RV registration, insurance, Vehicle/RV repairs, and relocation/ permanent housing goals. This document identifies barriers to obtaining vehicle/RV funding and gaining permanent housing and sets goals, action steps, and targeted completion dates.

Categories: 1. Vehicle/RV Diagnosis 2. Driver/ Insurance Documentation 3. Housing Status 4. Housing Plan 5. Estimated Move-Out Date

Not all steps are required to complete and receive the Vehicle/ RV repair funding. Each Step may have additional goals. Each vehicle/RV funding plan is tailored to the individual and is used to support the Guest.

Category	Identified barrier	Goal	Action Steps	Start Date	Guest Signature and Date
1	Vehicle/RV Diagnosis List of Vehicle/RV issues Below :	Identify all issues within the Vehicle/RV.	The Guest will work with a Case Manager and the RV Mechanic to determine all Vehicle/RV-related issues		
2	Vehicle/RV official cost estimation.	Identify the total cost of the repairs needed for the vehicle/RV.	List of all cost related to the Vehicle/ RV below:		
3	Driving License Car Insurance Car/RV Title Car/RV registration	Obtain required documentation	The Guest will work with a Case Manager to obtain referrals to the DMV, AAA, and all car insurance providers to help the guest obtain insurance.		
4	Problem-solving status or housing Refferal status	To determine if the client can move into permanent housing or look at alternative housing options.	Partner with Episcopal Community Services for initial housing assessment and/or assessment renewal. Work closely with a Case manager, ECS, and problem-solving staff to find the guest's preferred housing destination.		

5	Find an alternative RV housing site or a location where the Guests will relocate with their families.	Find a housing solution and the date that the Client will exit the Vehicle Triage Center (VTC).	Final address the Guest will be relocating to below:		
6	Establishing an estimated VTC exit date.	Establish an exit date for the VTC.	Estimated date of exit below:		
7	The Guest agrees on of the Vehicle/RV repairs of the total amount of:$_____	Guest agrees that all approved repairs will be made , if funds are available and agrees to the terms of relocating once Vehicle/RV funds are complete.	Guest agrees that they have received a total of :$_____ in vehicle/ RV repairs Given there is enough remaining funds		
8	The Guest acknowledges that all the agreed upon repairs have been complete.	To provide proof that all Vehicle/RV repairs have been made.	By signing this agreement, the guest agrees that all items listed in the mechanic report have been repaired Have been repaired		
9	Guest Move out Date Below:	To set a date that the guest will exit the VTC.	By signing this, the guest agrees that the fulfillment of the Vehicle/RV repair funding Plan has been complete, and the guest is moving out.		

The barriers, goals, and action steps were developed in partnership with my Case Manager. I understand that each barrier, goal, and action step listed above will support my efforts in obtaining Vehicle/RV Funding. I agree to work on these goals in partnership with my Case Manager and Episcopal Community Service. I will update my Care Manager as I complete the above goals and will communicate any challenges I experience. I understand my Case Manager will offer me support as needed. Failure to work toward the attainment of these goals can result in non-obtainment of vehicle/RV Funding. Upon receiving and completing the Vehicle/RV Funding Plan, the Guest must exit the VTC to their agreed-upon destination within the guest VTC GUEST FUNDING PLAN.

Guest Signature Date

Housing Case Manager Signature Date