

Tuolumne County Navigation Center

A Homeless Services Interim Housing Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Revised 5/11/2023

On April 11th, 2023, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors gave direction to County staff to issue a public notice of intent to purchase the former Oak Terrace Memory Care facility at 20420 Rafferty Court in Soulsbyville to be developed as a Navigation Center with interim housing. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to meet with members of the community to both listen to concerns and seek solutions to those concerns. County staff met with members of the Willow Springs Homeowners Association Board and staff, members of the Sonora Vista Homeowners Association Board, and members of the administration and Board of Directors from Soulsbyville School. In addition, concerns presented at an Open House event at the Oak Terrace site and in correspondence from community members were considered.

The information below represents staff efforts to bring clarity to specific areas of Law Enforcement, Safety & Security; Facilities; Zoning & Use; Finances; and areas of General Concern.

LAW ENFORCEMENT, SAFETY & SECURITY QUESTIONS

- 1. Is the Sheriff supportive of this location?** *The Sheriff has stated that he thinks endorsing one location over another is outside of his purview of responsibility but that he does believe housing is an essential element in providing homeless services. He has further stated that he trusts the Health & Human Services Agency staff in operating successful housing programs that support individuals toward self-sufficiency and reduce homelessness in Tuolumne County.*
- 2. Does the Sheriff's Department have capacity to respond to calls at the Navigation Center and surrounding areas?** *The Sheriff has stated that his department will continue to respond to all calls across the County within their protocols for priority and urgency, and staffing ability. He has also stated that their successful recruiting and training of new staff is on the rise in part because the Board of Supervisors has placed more funding into competitive deputy pay.*
- 3. What will the Sheriff do to prevent crime at the Navigation Center and surrounding areas?** *The Sheriff has stated that his staff will work with County staff at the Navigation Center as needed, patrol the area regularly and offer to help housing communities set up Neighborhood Watch programs. The Behavioral Health Crises Team could be an additional resource.*
- 4. What should be done if people trespass on private property?** *If there is an imminent threat to safety, call 9-1-1. Trespassing on private property is prohibited and is addressed through the Participant Facility Agreement (PFA).*
- 5. Will people be allowed to walk on roads near and adjacent to the Navigation Center?** *If the roads are public, yes.*
- 6. Is there a law regarding how close this type of facility can be to a school?** *No.*
- 7. Will there be on-site security?** *The County has budgeted for security cameras and parking lot lights as well as 24/7 onsite staff. There is some concern from neighbors that parking lot lights might create unwanted "light noise"; staff will continue to work with the HOA to discuss this issue. There is outdoor lighting available that minimizes glare and reduces light trespass and skyglow.*
- 8. Will the facility be fenced?** *The buildings are already fenced, a cross fence will be installed between the buildings to securely separate the two buildings. There are no plans to fence the entire property but the possibility of installing parking lot gates is being considered.*
- 9. Will there be smoking restrictions to mitigate fire concerns?** *People will be allowed to smoke tobacco in designated areas only and not inside the building. Medical and recreational use of marijuana is prohibited.*
- 10. Can Cal Fire inspect the property and address fire fuels and needed mitigation?** *CalFire has*

inspected the property and will work with County staff to remove some of the underbrush on the hillside by the parking lot as well as reduce ladder fuels to create defensible space.

- 11. There is no 24/7 manned fire station in our area. Can that be changed?** *As a result of grant funds and Board of Supervisors priorities, the fire station in Mono Vista will be staffed 24/7 as soon as sleeping quarters are provided.*
- 12. Will the use, possession, or sales of illegal substances be allowed at the Navigation Center?** *No.*
- 13. How will the County prevent camping in tents and cars onsite?** *The Navigation Center is a housing initiative and not a safe parking or camping initiative. No camping in tents or cars will be allowed onsite. Both law enforcement and the onsite manager will assist in enforcing these rules and available case managers will provide housing alternatives.*
- 14. Can a school resources officer be assigned to Soulsbyville School?** *County staff has offered this to school administration as an option.*
- 15. There is a need for updating some fencing and security cameras at Soulsbyville School. Can the County help with these expenses?** *Yes. The County is currently working with school administration on design & costing and has budgeted \$50,000 for the project.*

FACILITIES, ZONING & USE QUESTIONS

- 16. How many rooms are there?** *One building has 12 rooms and the other 13 rooms. Two rooms on one side will be converted for the onsite manager and one room on the other side will be used by the respite onsite manager. The remaining 22 rooms will be available for occupancy by program participants.*
- 17. Is this a good location given that general services are far away?** *The Junction shopping Center is less than 5 miles away and Dollar General is within walking distance. Transportation options are available and may be included as part of case management to support the needs of program participants in accessing healthcare and other services.*
- 18. Will vehicles and bikes be allowed onsite?** *Only operational, registered and insured vehicles will be allowed on site. Bikes will be allowed.*
- 19. Is Rafferty Court public or private?** *The paved Rafferty Court that exists now is a private road on an easement that is 25' on each side of the property line between the Oak Terrace parcel and other parcels within the Sonora Vista subdivision. Rafferty Court, and the adjoining parcels (including the Oak Terrace property), is part of County Service Area #48, which was established by Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 228-93 in 1993.*
- 20. Can Rafferty Court legally be used by the public to access Sonora Vista?** *Yes. Despite having never been accepted by the County as a public road, Rafferty Court is an easement for egress and ingress, and is maintained under County Service Area #48.*
- 21. Are the roads in Sonora Vista public or private?** *Public.*
- 22. Can the public use the roads in Sonora Vista for walking, driving and riding bikes?** *Yes.*
- 23. Can Sonora Vista become a gated community?** *Yes, but the County Service Area would have to be dissolved and the roads in the HOA made private which could be a long and arduous process.*
- 24. Some winters there is significant snow at this elevation. How will that be addressed at the Navigation Center property?** *Currently, Oak Terrace is a part of the County Service Area for Rafferty Court which includes snow plowing. The parking lot at the facility will be cleared as a part of their service to all County properties. Case managers continue to provide services during inclement weather.*
- 25. Will an environmental review take place?** *Yes. The purchase of this property is required to go through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. The County envisions applying one or more CEQA exemptions to the purchase of this property.*
- 26. Are use permits needed?** *A conditional use permit would normally be required but the County is*

exempt from its own zoning ordinances, pursuant to Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, Section 17.52.070, which provides Title 17 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code regarding zoning “shall apply to all public bodies, districts and agencies, including federal, state, county, municipal and local (other than the County of Tuolumne).”

- 27. Is the intended use of this property consistent with the current zoning?** *The property is in the C-1 zoning district, which allows the intended use of the property with a conditional use permit. As described above, the County is exempt from its own zoning ordinances, pursuant to Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, Section 17.52.070, and a conditional use permit is not required. Moreover, pursuant to Section 8698.4 of the California Government Code, planning and zoning regulations shall be suspended for homeless shelters during a declared shelter crisis. The County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 42-21 declaring a shelter crisis in Tuolumne County on May 4, 2021.*
- 28. Is there an easement across the Oak Terrace parking area for access to the Sonora Vista community propane tank?** *No.*

OPERATIONS QUESTIONS

- 29. What is a Navigation Center with Interim Housing?** *The Tuolumne County Navigation Center is part of a housing initiative for Tuolumne County residents who are unhoused or vulnerable to homelessness that provides housing for up to six months with supportive services to help eliminate barriers to permanent housing.*
- 30. Is this a walk-in emergency shelter?** *No*
- 31. Who is eligible to be housed here?** *Tuolumne County residents who are engaged in social services and who meet funding criteria for the program. Currently, funding criteria is limited to elderly, disabled, families, and transitional aged youth.*
- 32. What is the admission process?** *Referrals are screened by the Department of Social Services Homeless Services Unit for program eligibility. An intake appointment will be scheduled with eligible participants to include a background screening, and an assessment. Admission will be determined by a team of local services providers using information gathered from the intake, their experience, and safety guidelines following Housing First and Fair Employment and Housing Act rules. Once determined eligible for the Navigation Center, participants will be required to engage in case planning and case plan development, review the Bridge/Interim Housing rules and sign the facility agreement stating they agree to follow the terms of the program.*
- 33. Will background checks be conducted on each program participant?** *Social Services will utilize public access systems such as Megan’s Law, eCourts, and self-disclosure to determine if there is criminal activity. Staff do not have the legal right to conduct a criminal background check on program participants and law enforcement is only allowed with probable cause.*
- 34. Will registered sex offenders be allowed to live in the facility?** *No*
- 35. Will drug addicts and alcoholics be allowed to participate?** *Yes, a person with an addiction who has successfully completed a rehabilitation program or is actively engaged in outpatient services and is currently clean and sober may become a program participant. Random drug testing cannot be a mandatory part of the program as it is a violation of regulations. Some program participants may have testing as a part of their mandated case plan.*
- 36. Will transportation be available at the Navigation Center?** *Yes. Transportation is contingent upon individual needs and included in their case plan. Participants will be provided the tools to access transportation. The case manager may provide transportation for program participants on an as needed basis and case-by-case. Public transit will be made available through Dial-A-Ride and/or a fixed route with pick-up directly in front of the building.*
- 37. What will the residents do about food?** *There are many options for food that include but are not limited to the following: CalFresh, individual cooking using onsite facilities, food from local*

foodbanks and pantry programs.

- 38. What are the costs related to the Navigation Center acquisition and on-going operations?** *The sale price of the facility is \$2 million. Both the acquisition costs and the operational costs will come from grant funds. No County General Fund money will be used. Currently, there is grant funding for operational costs for 10 years. A more complete budget is available to the public in a separate document.*
- 39. Will homeless people from out of town be able to participate in this program?** *If a person is receiving public benefits in another community, they would not be eligible for assistance through Tuolumne County Department of Social Services.*
- 40. How many people will be allowed to live in the facility?** *Currently, there are 25 bedrooms total, 22 of which will be made available to not more than 44 program participants. Intake will begin slow with admission of not more than 5 people for the first three months.*
- 41. How will the program be managed?** *Tuolumne County Health & Human Services will provide case management services. Participants must be eligible for a Health and Human Services Agency homeless/housing program. Contracted onsite managers will provide onsite management 24/7. Service organizations and community volunteers will be encouraged to participate in peer support and programming. Participants will be connected with various community service providers contingent upon the service objectives outlined in their case plan.*
- 42. Will people be allowed to bring personal items?** *Yes, but with limitations due to space constraints and no illegal or dangerous items.*
- 43. Will people be allowed to have pets?** *Consideration of pets and how that program will work is still under development and will require community partnerships and support.*
- 44. How long will people be allowed to live in the facility?** *Up to six months.*
- 45. If a person is exited from the program for lack of compliance, how will that be handled?** *Case workers will cooperatively develop an exit plan and provide support to implement that plan. No participant will be “kicked out the front door” and left to their own devices in the community.*
- 46. Will children and adults be sharing this facility?** *The facility has two separate buildings that will be fenced individually. One building will be for families and women, and the other for men. Both buildings will have outdoor lounging and recreation space. The family building will eventually have a small playground.*
- 47. How will healthcare be accessed for program participants?** *Participants will be provided the resources to access transportation. The public health mobile van will be made available onsite connecting individuals to primary care doctors, tele-health appointments, provide vaccinations, and education. Other health care services will be incorporated into their individualized case plan and supported through case management.*
- 48. Will new staff be hired and how will it be paid for?** *New staff were hired in 2022 specifically to support the homeless program. These staff will share time at the facility where their clients reside. Site management will be hired through a county contract.*
- 49. Are program participants expected to pay rent? What if they can't, how will this affect the budget?** *Rent will not be a condition of entry and will not be included in the operating budget.*
- 50. Will visitors be allowed onsite?** *No, other than case managers and other partner organizations who provide direct service.*
- 51. Will there be quiet hours?** *Yes*

FINANCES

- 52. How will this be funded?** *Current funding is available for Tuolumne County through the following grants: Homeless Housing, Assistance & Preventions, Permanent Local Housing Allocation, CARE Act, and the Opioid Settlement.*
- 53. Does funding from the Opioid Settlement have to be used to support addicts?** *Opioid funding*

may be used to support outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation, and those who have successfully completed a rehabilitation program, who are currently clean and sober and who need a safe and healthy environment in which to live and complete their rehabilitation.

- 54. Are there deadlines for the use of the grant funds?** *Yes, but none that are immediate. Every grant has a life cycle with milestones that must be reached and timelines that need to be followed.*
- 55. What is the budget for this program?** *None of the Homeless Services programs are supported by General Fund dollars, rather all funding comes from grant sources. The Homeless Services Coordinator position is partially funded by the General Fund. Health & Humans Services Agency staff are funded through the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Health Care Services. Additionally, County programs cannot be budgeted with deficit spending. An overview budget can be found on the Homeless Services Virtual Bulletin Board at <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board>.*
- 56. How is the County affording property taxes, insurance and utilities for operations of this project?** *The County doesn't pay property tax to itself, neither does it have to purchase consumer level fire insurance because it is self-insured. Also, as a part of the Tuolumne Public Power Agency, the County gets significantly discounted electricity.*

GENERAL COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- 57. What will happen with property values in this area?** *There is no definitive answer to this question. What is known is that if the program is run poorly and the facilities are not maintained properly then surrounding property values would be at risk. The County currently runs three supportive homes that have not affected neighboring properties adversely. Several licensed appraisers were consulted, they all agreed that if the program was run well, like Oak Terrace, then values on adjacent homes would not be adversely affected.*
- 58. There are school bus stops near this facility. Has this been considered?** *Yes*
- 59. If families are housed here, will that be a burden to the school district?** *Increased enrollment comes with increased funding but also increased burden to the school to provide specialty services. County staff and school administration discussed this reality. The County offered to support services to students who live at the Navigation Center and who also attend Soulsbyville School in any way possible which may include transportation services and mental health services.*
- 60. The playgrounds in the community are not for public use. What can be done about enforcing this?** *Whatever effective measures are being implemented now should continue. The program participants in the Navigation Center will sign an agreement that they will not access private spaces. An onsite playground is planned for program participant families. The community will also be given a phone number to call to report any problems with program participants.*
- 61. Why was the process of selecting a site so hasty?** *The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors have been developing strategy and policy for homeless services since 2018 through the development of the Plan to Combat Homelessness, the Housing Element and several other strategic initiatives. All these processes included public input and participation. Over the last two years these plans have been gaining traction for implementation. Actual movement toward acquiring housing as a part of the implementation of these plans has only become a concern to the public recently because those plans are being implemented near them.*
- 62. Were other sites considered?** *There are limited number of facilities available for sale in Tuolumne County that could operate as a Navigation Center and that are within budget. All known and available properties have been considered. New construction is too expensive with the limited available funding.*
- 63. The Homelessness Committee didn't vote in favor of this location, so why is it being considered?** *This is true. It is also true that at a subsequent Board of Supervisors' meeting three*

members changed their vote and offered their support. Also, the Homelessness Committee did vote in support of recommending to the Board of Supervisors the Homeless Services Priorities for 2023 which include the development of a Navigation Center. The Board did vote in favor of these priorities on December 13, 2023. The Homelessness Committee acts as an advisory committee to the Board and are appointed to the committee by the Board of Supervisors. All decisions about policy are the Board's to approve not the Committee's.

64. **The community survey about the Navigation Center showed 74% who responded were against this location, so why is it being considered still?** *The survey was intended to be one of many opportunities for the community to give input to the Board of Supervisors on moving forward with acquiring the Oak Terrace facility. Board members will take the results of this survey into consideration as they make future decisions.*
65. **Does the County have a real estate agent representing them as an agent on this property procurement?** *No. The County has not contracted with a real estate agent to represent their interests on this transaction.*
66. **Does the County or any staff member receive a bonus or commission for their work related to the acquisition of this property?** *No. Multiple staff members from multiple departments are working on the legal procurement of this property in compliance with government code. No staff member receives commission, bonuses, or additional compensation.*
67. **Why can't you use currently unused County buildings?** *All the buildings that the County owns are currently used, slated to be used or otherwise not in a condition to be used for this purpose.*
68. **Why isn't the County spending this money on more staff for sheriff and fire instead of homeless?** *The homeless housing grant funds that the County has been awarded cannot be used for any other purpose.*
69. **Why a Navigation Center instead of greater effort put forth to develop more permanent housing options?** *The Navigation Center and interim housing is just one of several steps that are being developed to create a managed homeless system of care in Tuolumne County and it is a priority that is approved by the Board of Supervisors. There are also great efforts being put into developing other forms of affordable housing by the Tuolumne County Community Development Department.*