

NIMBYism and Sheltering Sacramento's Homeless Population

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An Executive Summary
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NIMBYism and Sheltering Sacramento's Homeless Population
by
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Introduction

The City of Sacramento is experiencing a historic and concerning rise in its homeless population. Sacramento's Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) movement is the city's most significant contributing factor to its inability to quickly shelter its growing homeless population. In the introduction of this policy brief, I provide the reader with a background of my intended client, the City Council of Sacramento. To this client, I offer reasons why sheltering Sacramento's homeless population should be a concern of the Sacramento City Council. I conclude the introduction by observing Sacramento's recent history of sheltering policy, which provides the reader context for the City Council's status of current housing policies and a need for policy intervention.

What Previous Literature Says on NIMBYism

This section of the policy brief explores what previous academic literature has said regarding the history and definitions of NIMBYism. I also review the previous literature that identifies various alternatives to effectively approach and mitigate the problem of NIMBYism. The reviewed literature shows public engagement and market-based solutions might be promising policy alternatives for mitigating NIMBYism.

Policy Analysis

The policy analysis section of this report offers the reader an in-depth understanding of how NIMBYism affects Sacramento's effort in sheltering its homeless population. This section, furthermore, provides a case study of two similar Sacramento shelters, a cost analysis of Sacramento's current sheltering projects, and a discussion on the feasibility and efficacy of Sacramento's current approach to

homeless shelters. I conclude this section by describing the sheltering efforts in the City of Houston, Texas which vary greatly from what is possible in California due to different state laws. This section also provides insights into underlying issues for mitigation against Sacramento NIMBYism.

Conclusion

This policy brief concludes with my informed recommendations to the Sacramento City Council on how “best” to address NIMBYism within the City of Sacramento. First, I advocate for the City Council to adopt a different definition and view of NIMBYism. I suggest the City Council of Sacramento view NIMBYism as a problem of inefficiency. Second, I advise the City Council to use financial incentives to mitigate its local NIMBY opposition. I suggest the City Council changes the way each of its city districts are provided funding for sheltering projects. I use the State of California’s Local Control Funding Formula, as a suggested model for these changes. I also comment on how business entities and individual citizens may require a financial incentive to offset the externalities of accepting additional shelters near their Sacramento homes or businesses.

_____, Committee Chair

Rob Wassmer, Ph.D.

Date

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Introduction

Problem Statement

The unsheltered homeless population in the City of Sacramento is too high. According to Sacramento County's latest Point in Time count (PIT), 3,900 individuals were determined to be unsheltered. This represents a dramatic increase from Sacramento County's PIT of 2017, which counted 2,052 unsheltered individuals (Nuttle, 2019). A statewide comparison of homeless rates, places Sacramento's unsheltered homeless population into perspective. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and best practices of social distancing, the calendar year of 2019 was the last time many counties and private organizations updated their homelessness counts. Thus, in 2019, the State of California averaged 33 per 10,000 experiencing homelessness. Sacramento County averaged 36 per 10,000 people experiencing homelessness, placing it higher than the California counties of San Diego, San Joaquin and Orange. A rise in homelessness is particularly a problem for the City of Sacramento, due to it being home to most of the homeless individuals within Sacramento County. Research from California State University, Sacramento, estimates that 75% of Sacramento County's homeless population lives within the Sacramento city limits (Nuttle, 2019). Sacramento rates of homelessness may further increase due to the economic hardships and housing instability brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, experts believe the count of Sacramento unsheltered is too low, and speculate the unofficial counts are much higher than the PIT of 2019 (Clift, 2020).

Sacramento's increased problem of homelessness is also driven by historically high housing costs, higher rates of mental illnesses and substance abuse, as well as fewer job opportunities for low-skilled workers and a continuation of structural racism, especially amongst the African American and Native American communities (Nuttle, 2019). While all these issues are contributing factors to Sacramento's homeless crisis, it is Sacramento's Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) attitude among many which is a significant factor contributing to Sacramento's inability to produce viable sheltering options. It is important that Sacramento policy makers recognize this in their framing of the issue and when considering creative

policy alternatives to efficiently and equitably address this problem. Finally, the purpose of this report is to provide a scoping analysis to the City Council of Sacramento. As I discuss in this paper, overcoming NIMBYism is a multifaceted and difficult problem to solve. However, it is my belief that through new ordinances, financial incentives, and/or public engagement, Sacramento City Council can mitigate the problem of NIMBYism and provide needed shelter to many of its homeless population.

Who Is This Meant For?

The Sacramento City Council has asked for this policy brief, due to its need for information regarding its local NIMBY movement and how effective that movement is at slowing sheltering policies. The reader should take note, this report is designed as a scoping analysis, a paper informing the Sacramento City Council of policy alternatives, to address NIMBYism and shelter its homeless population. I want the reader to be aware, some of the findings and data used to complete this policy report may be dated, due to the changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the acute dynamic of the COVID-19 pandemic has provided new urgency for an updated sheltering policy (particularly in California) which has only become more pronounced and documented within the last year.

While sheltering policy has many facets and sub-topics, this paper intends to view Sacramento's sheltering problem through the lens of NIMBYism. As the reader proceeds through this paper, they will notice I have subdivided it into five sections and they are as follows: Executive Summary, Introduction, Literature on Addressing NIMBY, Policy Analysis, and Conclusion. The Executive Summary provides an overview of what the entire paper will be about, and what conclusions it may draw. The Introduction section defines my problem statement and provides a brief client history of the City Council of Sacramento, their interests in this policy topic, and establishes the need for a public policy intervention. What Previous Literature Says on NIMBYism, section provides an overview of NIMBYism. This section also explores the logic behind NIMBYism and explores literature from across the United States, showing NIMBYism is pervasive, affecting many jurisdictions. The Policy Analysis section explores various case

studies, costs of sheltering projects, and provides a cross-comparison analysis of sheltering efforts in other cities. The Policy Analysis section also offers alternatives for the City Council regarding methods of public engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic also plays a role in my analysis and suggested policy alternatives. This pandemic has the potential to lead to even higher rates of homelessness. As moratorium laws begin to lift, landlords may evict tenants who cannot afford to pay their rent (Recede, 2021). Finally, the conclusion section of this paper discusses the limitations of my research, and the need for future study of this important topic. This section also offers my suggested policy alternatives and provides recommendations to the Sacramento City Council.

Client Background

The Sacramento City Council is composed of nine elected individuals - eight council members and the city's elected mayor. The Sacramento City Council is responsible for governing a population of 513,624 and a city boundary of 97.92 square miles (City of Sacramento, 2021). The recent history of Sacramento's sheltering efforts suggest it will need a robust policy response from the city government. The following is a recent history of sheltering policies within the city of Sacramento.

In 2016, then Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson created a city council subcommittee to address Sacramento's rising homeless counts. Out of this sub-committee, a pilot program called "Pit Stop" was created with the goal of providing restrooms for the cities homeless. Project "Pit Stop" ran over budget, and the city ended the program (KXTV, 2017). However, Sacramento County's 2017 PIT, found that the City of Sacramento was making progress, showing a decrease in its unsheltered homeless population to 1,613 individuals. The 2017 PIT was trending downward from the 2015 (PIT) counting 1,711 unsheltered homeless. In 2018, the City and County of Sacramento began efforts to assist 3,600 individuals to get into housing and add 300 new shelter beds (Sacramento Steps Forward, 2019). In 2018, the creation of the

Sacramento County Homeless Plan (SCHP) provided \$19 million in funding, enhancing the city's financial position, to address homelessness (Sacramento Steps Forward, 2019). Notably, in 2019, the City Council approved a \$100 million trust fund, perhaps indicating that mitigating homelessness is high on the city's policy agenda (Steinberg, 2019).

While Sacramento's recent history suggests its policy and funding may be willing to address this issue, the data indicates these efforts may not be enough. As I have previously cited, the Sacramento County 2019 PIT found a historically high number of unsheltered individuals living in Sacramento County. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic may continue to make this problem worse. According to one study, California is experiencing a 7% increase from its 2019 homelessness rate (Nicoles, 2020). If the County of Sacramento saw a 7% increase in its homeless population, hundreds more would be without shelter, and many of them living within the City of Sacramento. Despite its recent effort, Sacramento's struggle to mitigate and house its homeless, serves as justification for a stronger policy response from the City Council of Sacramento. I believe this paper will provide the City Council some support in thinking about how to mitigate its local NIMBYism, which is the most significant factor, in the creation and implementation of a proper policy solution to this problem.

Justification for Intervention

Sheltering Sacramento's homelessness can be viewed as a problem of both efficiency policies and equity policies. The City Council's justification for sheltering its homelessness population should stem from the direct and indirect costs of homelessness. Unsheltered homeless populations place significant costs upon the City of Sacramento. For example, in 2015, the City of Sacramento spent \$13.6 million on homelessness. According to city documents, \$6.6 million were spent on homeless services, while \$7 million were spent on mitigating homeless impacts. Notably, the most expensive city budget item (used by Sacramento homeless populations), were city emergency services, specifically ambulance rides to the

emergency room. City documents also report that within the Fiscal Year of 2014, homeless costs were widely shared across city departments, affecting almost every intercity agency. In fact, out of Sacramento's 16 City Departments, 12 incurred some cost due to homelessness (City of Sacramento, 2015). Sacramento's reporting also notes that 80% or \$10 million of these costs come directly from its General Fund (City of Sacramento, 2015). This same city finance report also found that these numbers are probably undercounted, and the costs from homelessness to both public and private sectors were probably higher.

The Sacramento City Council should also consider the indirect costs of homelessness. Homelessness is indirectly affecting Sacramento's private sector and its citizens. For this reason, NIMBY's should have an interest in sheltering Sacramento's homeless population. As the research shows, homelessness adds to costs of neighborhood blight and a city's emergency services. According to the National Institutes for Health, 33% of annual emergency room visits are from chronically homeless individuals. Many of these costs get passed on to area hospitals, and then eventually to consumers through higher premiums (Garrett, 2012). Unsheltered homeless populations are also a cause of neighborhood blight. Neighborhood blight describes the phenomena of things like abandoned homes, or damaged property, spoiling the value of a neighborhood or specified area (Stumpf, 2018). Researchers studying Chicago neighborhoods found neighborhood blight could cost the local government \$34,000, and as much as \$220,000 in indirect costs to local property owners (Bieretz and Schilling, 2019). While neighborhood blight may not be a direct comparison, or substitute for Sacramento's homeless encampments, the City Council should consider the true costs of allowing its homeless sheltering to persist, causing blight and spoiling property value at the expense of Sacramento's business owners and residents (Garrett, 2012).

Importantly, research from the Rand Corporation shows how sheltering lowers the cost of these externalities, providing the City Council of Sacramento more justification for action, and reason to engage

and solve its crisis of homelessness and NIMBYism. In 2012, the Rand Corporation studied Housing for Health (HFH), a program created by the County of Los Angeles Healthcare Services (LACHS) that offered housing to a portion of Los Angeles County's unsheltered homeless population. The Rand Corporation observed a group of 890 unsheltered homeless individuals who frequently used emergency services. Notably, the Rand Corporation found that, when sheltered, this population's frequency of emergency room visits, acute mental health screenings, and inpatient stays decreased and led to much lower costs for the county (Hunter, 2018). More specifically, prior to enrolling in the HFH program, an unsheltered homeless individual's costs to Los Angeles County were about \$38,146 (Hunter, 2018). However, when enrolled in HFH and provided shelter, the same individual's costs (for services and housing) ended up being less at about \$30,000 (Hunter, 2018). The findings of the Rand Corporation and Bieretz and Schilling (2019), should direct and encourage the City Council, and NIMBY groups, to collaborate and shelter the homeless population of Sacramento.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has provided the Sacramento City Council with the unique challenge of effectively and quickly sheltering their homeless (Graswich, 2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced the City of Sacramento (and its neighboring jurisdictions), to implement strict lockdown measures requiring many of the area's businesses to lay off workers, which has triggered rates of unemployment not seen in decades (Hamann, 2020). Sheltering Sacramento's homeless may not only be worthy of a policy intervention, due to its cost savings, but may also help Sacramento families during a time of pandemic and crisis.

History of Sheltering Concerns

The history of Sacramento's sheltering policy is tied to the history and trends of homelessness throughout Sacramento and the United States. City of Sacramento Homeless Services Administrative Officer, Angela Marin and City Councilmember Guerra acknowledged Sacramento's current lack of shelters for the homeless population stems from problems found in Sacramento local and national history.

Sacramento's unsheltered homeless problem has a historic through line back to the 1980s, specifically, Federal cuts adopted by the Presidential Administration of Ronald Reagan. According to research from the Sacramento area non-profit Loaves and Fishes, the Reagan Administration cut key funding for services and housing for people suffering from mental health issues, who are more likely to be homeless (Brown, 2020). While the inertia of Reagan-Era federal budgets may be responsible for some of the unsheltered homeless populations in Sacramento, today, it's the NIMBY movement obstructing funding and implementation of effective housing policy. NIMBY's may seem to be the bad actors, thwarting Sacramento's sheltering efforts for their own gain. However, the research suggests otherwise, that in fact NIMBYs are not against sheltering policies, if they do not affect their personal interests.

As found in the academic literature, NIMBYs are rational actors, looking to maintain and increase their monetary value. For example, NIMBYs might look at their home value as a price index, a signal as to how much their real estate is worth. Importantly, many Americans (not just Sacramentan's) have most of their net-worth invested into the ownership of their homes (Pew Research, 2011). Also, as prices of homes in California increase, so will the voices of Sacramento NIMBYs. In fact, Sacramento is projected to be one of the most in-demand housing markets in the United States in 2021 (Hamann, 2020). As observed by Sacramento City Homeless Services Administrative Officer, Angela Marin (2021) Sacramento housing unaffordability will continue pushing more of its poorest, and vulnerable populations into homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also a significant factor driving Sacramento's homeless population higher. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly destabilized housing for the most vulnerable populations in Sacramento. Recent studies have shown the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many minimum wage workers to lose their jobs leading them to be unsheltered and homeless (Nixon, 2020). Sacramento County's PIT is now stalled indefinitely due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic (Clift, 2020). It is estimated that many people in Sacramento have become unsheltered and homeless within the

last year, which provides substantial concern and urgency for the Sacramento City Council to find lasting policy interventions to address this important issue.

What Previous Literature Says on NIMBYism

In the following section, I will review some of the academic research that defines what NIMBYism is and explore claims from the research, informing the Sacramento City Council of viable alternatives to combat NIMBYism. Sacramento's NIMBY Movement may be the most significant obstacle to the City of Sacramento building additional homeless shelters. As outlined earlier in this report, research from the Rand Corporation clearly exhibits the direct savings sheltering can provide. In short, when sheltered, homeless individuals require less services. Homeless individuals who achieve self-sufficiency, provide a cheaper alternative to Sacramento, rather than letting people remain homeless. The Rand Corporation's research also shows sheltering provides a cost savings and serves as additional justification for the City Council to take action against NIMBYism. The Mayor of Sacramento and members of its City Council seem to agree and have made it clear that building shelters is high on their policy agenda (Gonzalez, 2021). I believe an overview of the previous research about NIMBYism is crucial for the City Council to identify the proper policy alternatives to address this issue.

Defining NIMBYism

As suggested by Craft and Cleary (1991), the NIMBY Movement is a phenomenon best described as a combination of personal cost considerations. In short, NIMBYs are concerned with the impact on their own neighborhood's social, political, economic, and geographic climate. NIMBYs do not necessarily target a City's policy agenda, so long as it does not negatively affect their property values. I believe that if NIMBYs are understood through this lens, public engagement with NIMBY groups might be easier, and perhaps provide more expeditious policy considerations and alternatives to address sheltering homeless populations. Opposition to building power plants or waste storage facilities near a neighborhood is a

simple example of NIMBYism (Tizard and Thornton, 2010). While NIMBYs desire the benefits of these utilities, (electricity and energy production), they do not want these facilities near their homes. Similarly, NIMBY's may appreciate what sheltering can do for the homeless, just not near their homes or businesses. Tighe (2010) observes NIMBYs concerns of adverse impacts on property values, anti-government sentiment, anti-poor sentiment, and racial prejudice and segregation as rational.

Finally, Public Opinion Theory observes that NIMBYs sentiments might be misunderstood by their non-NIMBY counterparts; that, in fact, NIMBYs may be framed by popular media outlets, rather than accurately reporting their sentiments and perspective (Tighe, 2010).

The Logic of NIMBYism

As some research suggests, NIMBY opposition to building shelters may be both reasonable and rational. As observed by Culhane & Wachter, in 1999, the United States built subsidized shelters in Philadelphia, finding no decrease to the area's (not subsidized) home values. The Culhane & Wachter study controlled for the area's demographic, housing, and amity variables. While their research is now decades old, their lessons still hold value and are consistent with the motivations driving the Sacramento NIMBY movement. However, research from the Independent Budget Office of New York City (IBO-NYC) makes claims in tension with the findings of Culhane & Wachter. The IBO-NYC found that when a residential home is located within 500 ft of a homeless shelter, it sold for 7.1% less than if it had not been in such proximity to the homeless shelter. The IBO-NYC made an even greater claim, that when a home is within 500 ft of more than one homeless shelter, it sells for 17% less (IBO-NYC, 2019).

Literature on Addressing NIMBYism

The body of research about mitigating NIMBYism is growing and provides insight into how the Sacramento City Council could move forward on this issue. Schively (2007) notes that overcoming NIMBYism can be achieved by using collaborative forms of communication and empowerment.

Schively, (2007) suggest that a public engagement campaign by the government or stakeholder groups will allow NIMBY's to better understand the risks and rewards of what a sheltering project might be bringing to their backyards.

Housing Illinois (2019), a non-profit research center, pushes for policy makers to think differently about how to address the problem of homelessness and NIMBYism. Housing Illinois advocates for governments to provide tax relief or eliminate property taxes for non-profit organizations who provide housing and homeless shelters. Housing Illinois believes this is a proactive policy tool, allowing for nonprofit organizations to provide shelter and reduce barriers to sheltering. Allowing for non-profits to be more involved in this process may also provide increased local community support, allowing for more public acceptance and ownership of sheltering the areas homeless. However, I believe organizations like Housing Illinois fail to recognize the contemporary literature and practice of NIMBYism. As I have established and discussed, NIMBYs will push back on these government funded projects, as shelters may provide a detriment to their business or housing values. The City Council might be wise to explore models where sheltering projects provide incentives, which offset a shelter's negative externality.

Wassmer and Wahid (2018), provide a different policy alternative to mitigating NIMBYism. They examine the possibility of policymakers entering a Cap-and-Trade type sharing model—allowing local jurisdictions to provide financial compensation to neighboring jurisdictions, to build their required share of affordable housing, as set by California state laws. While Wassmer and Wahid's research is specific to California's need for affordable housing, rather than sheltering homeless populations, its lessons show a creative way for a community or jurisdiction to complete a policy objective, and offset cost. Finally, the City of Sacramento may take an unprecedented step and possibly mitigate NIMBYism through changing city laws. In 2021, the City of Sacramento could be one of the first cities in California to change its exclusionary zoning laws, allowing for most city parcels of land and four housing units per parcel (Garcia, 2021). While this policy is targeted at addressing Sacramento's housing affordability problem, it

may serve as an indicator that the City leaders of Sacramento have found a viable policy stream and sentiment to pass through creative and progressive sheltering assistance and reform.

Two Cases of Homeless Shelters in Sacramento

There are two almost identical homeless shelters being built within the city limits of Sacramento. They serve as a useful observation tool for Sacramento NIMBYism. The two observed homeless shelters are both located within the City Sacramento, share an almost identical construction build, and sheltering capacity. However, each of these shelters have received different reactions from NIMBY groups, affecting the policy making of the City Council.

Location 1: W/X Shelter

In 2019, the City Council of Sacramento approved the construction of two 100-bed temporary homeless shelters. One of these shelters will be located between the streets of Broadway, X St., Highway 50 and Highway 99 (W/X shelter). An almost identical shelter is being built in Sacramento's Meadowview Neighborhood. Each shelter is estimated to cost Sacramento about \$10 million dollars--for both costs of construction and wrap around services they plan to provide (Clift, 2020). The W/X shelter's construction and date of completion is now behind schedule due to COVID-19 and delays from zoning restrictions (Clift, 2020). Notably, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has approved Sacramento to continue the project and has formally asked the Federal Highway Administration to remove its opposition (Gonzalez, 2020). The W/X Shelters' NIMBY opposition has been minimal which seems to be due to its location. In my research, NIMBYs seem to have fewer arguments against this shelter because of its location. The W/X Shelter is located under an overpass, and on land not close to any valuable business district or residential neighborhoods (Rucker, 2020). The land is also not owned by (or of interest to) Sacramento residents, as it is owned by the Federal government and managed by the state. Unlike Sacramento's W/X Shelter, the Meadowview location has experienced fierce NIMBY opposition, forcing the City Council to change its policy (Clift, 2020).

Location 2: Meadowview

As reported by Capitol Public Radio's Steve Milne (2019), the Meadowview Shelter experienced fierce debate from City Council membership and the public. The tension between the Council members can be seen via video recording of their debate and vote of 7-2 to approve of the shelter's location and funding. Notably councilmember Angelique Ashby was critical that the City does not "do shelters well" and that the City is opening itself up to liability lawsuits (Milne, 2019).

The NIMBY opposition to the Meadowview Shelter seems to be consistent with the literature as it will be placed near the neighborhood's Bonnie Pannell Community Center (Milne, 2019). As noted previously by Angela Marin (2021), a prominent religious leader of a church in Meadowview (located near the homeless shelter) objected strongly to its location and the unintended effects. The Meadowview community, and prominent church leader, had strong reservations and objections to adult single men being near the Bonnie Pannell Community Center and Meadowview's main residential area. Marin (2021) also observed that it was only after the City of Sacramento agreed to make this a women and children's shelter that Meadowview NIMBY opposition faded. Marin (2021) also noted the irony and unfortunate circumstance that Sacramento's largest demographic of homeless individuals are single adult males.

As observed in the academic literature and case studies of Sacramento's W/X and Meadowview Shelters, it seems NIMBYs may have substantial influence over a homeless shelter's location, or the type of people it may house. As noted by Clift (2020), these shelters are the same size, shelter the same amount of people, and carry the same financial costs. However, the Sacramento City Council changed its position and policy for the Meadowview location due to the NIMBY reaction, allowing only women and children to live in this shelter. While this example is powerful, Sacramento has many other examples of where NIMBYism was successful in stopping sheltering efforts.

As recently as 2019, Councilmember Jeff Wilson proposed building 49 small cabins across the street from Garden Valley Elementary School. This project was targeted to house women and children. However, would-be neighbors of the project proposal, and local businesses collected 1,700 signatures opposing the project. This act of NIMBYism, pressured Councilmember Wilson, who subsequently ended his support and proposal for these cabins, abandoning development of this project.

Additional evidence of Sacramento NIMBYism is observed in a blocked project on land operated by Sacramento Regional Transit System and Cal Expo. After NIMBY pressure, both Governing Boards of both jurisdictions denied the City Council's approval to place shelters at these locations (Clift, 2020). Another example of the power of NIMBYism is observed by Councilmember Eric Guerra's failure to find approval for his sheltering efforts. Guerra's proposal for Tiny Homes built on the site of the former San Juan Motel (on Stockton Blvd), across the street from an active homeless encampment (of 75 homeless individuals), was abandoned due to local business opposition (Meer, 2020).

Finally, NIMBYism in Sacramento was not only evident, but prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this pandemic, the City of Sacramento requested 12.5 million dollars from the State of California to purchase the Hawthorn Suites Hotel, hoping to convert to a homeless shelter. Project Roomkey, a California state-run program provides funds to local jurisdictions for sheltering a jurisdiction's homeless population. In brief, a wealthy real estate developer filed a lawsuit against this action by the City of Sacramento's effort to convert this hotel. I should note, the Hawthorn Suites Hotel is in Sacramento's "River District" which is home to about 1,000 homeless individuals and is the city's most concentrated homeless population (Hamann, 2020). This lawsuit effectively ended the city's ability to pursue this sheltering option and showed the power and diverse avenues available to NIMBY groups in their ability to prevent sheltering within the City of Sacramento.

Policy Analysis

In this next section, I provide an analysis of Sacramento's NIMBYism as shown through the construction and public acceptance of the Meadowview and W/X locations. I will also provide an analysis of Sacramento's notable sheltering efforts, their costs, a discussion of their financial feasibility and equity issues. I conclude this section by drawing comparisons to the City of Houston in hopes of generating ideas for the City of Sacramento to change its sheltering efforts.

NIMBYism at Meadowview and W/X Shelters

As shown in the previous sections case study, the City of Sacramento is planning on completing two homeless shelters located under the W/X Freeway underpass, and in the Meadowview neighborhood of South Sacramento. Importantly, the W/X and Meadowview Shelters share a similar structure, build type and capacity (Gonzalez, 2020). While these structures share many similarities, their difference can be seen in their reception from Sacramento's NIMBY community. The Sacramento City Council approved the W/X and Meadowview Shelters by a Council vote in the summer of 2019 (Miline, 2019). Notably, neither projects received a unanimous vote. NIMBY sentiments were key in the Councilmembers votes and decision for which population groups they will be sheltered at a given location (Mofit, 2019). For example, W/X and Meadowview shelters were originally intended to serve the same population group, but as we'll discuss, their different locations allowed for differing NIMBY reaction, changing who each of these shelters would be allowed to house (Gonzalez, 2020).

The W/X Shelter is located under the overpass between Sacramento's streets of W and X, underneath US Highway 80. The W/X shelter location is a key reason why its construction and use has experienced little opposition from Sacramento's NIMBY groups. Notably, this shelter is not near large residential, or commercial zones. The W/X Shelter is also located on land not owned by the City of Sacramento, but rather by the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA). The FTA leases this land to Caltrans (Clift, 2020), allowing its use to the City of Sacramento. It seems location is the reason why NIMBY groups

have not been as vocal in their opposition to the W/X Shelters location. Another factor helping W/X shelters avoid NIMBY opposition is its ability to avoid litigation from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) approval process. As observed by Marin (2021), shelters like W/X, located on State managed land, may be exempt from the CEQA Environmental Impact Report process, which is often a tool used by NIMBY groups to slow a sheltering project's development.

The Meadowview locations experience with NIMBY groups is very different from the W/X Shelter. As already noted in earlier sections of the report, the Meadowview NIMBY opposition was mostly due to its proximity to a densely populated neighborhood and a highly valued community center and church (Marin, 2021). NIMBY opposition was successful in changing the City's policies for the Meadowview only to serve women and children. This is notable, since most unsheltered individuals in Sacramento are single and male (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019).

As discussed in the previous section, NIMBYism is a significant factor in blocking homeless shelters from being built and influencing the direction of city policy. In the next section, I provide an overview of how cost considerations may be the next and most important barrier to sheltering Sacramento's homeless. I also cite other Sacramento projects, which are different from the congregate sheltering options of the W/X and Meadowview locations. As I discuss these sheltering options, I will observe their tradeoffs, as well as equity and externality concerns.

Additional Sheltering and Costs Considerations

In this section, I consider the costs of current Sacramento sheltering projects, informing the reader and providing the City Council of Sacramento, some suggestions for criteria and considerations of how much these projects may cost, and for whom they should be built.

Absent unlimited revenue streams, the City of Sacramento will have to choose between considerable tradeoffs when building and sheltering its homeless population. Services to a shelter's population will be

the greatest cost for most shelters the City of Sacramento chooses to build (City of Sacramento, 2015). Building materials, plumbing, labor, routine maintenance and real estate costs are also considerations, but second to those of services. For example, the City of Sacramento is paying approximately 8.7 million for the materials for the Meadow and W/X Sheltering projects, and approximately 14 million dollars annually for their maintenance costs and provided services (Vellinga, 2019). Angela Marin (2021) and City Council Member Katie Valenzuela's Office observed an acute awareness that a shelter's services will be its greatest financial cost. Due to Sacramento's growing need for homeless shelters and their services, the City Council should be seeking external revenue streams. As noted by the Sacramento Mayor's Office, funding for services for the W/X and Meadowview locations will come from the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) for their provided services (Vellinga, 2019). Notably, HEAP is a one-time block grant provided to a jurisdiction's Continuum of Care (CoC's) organizations. According to analysis by California's Business Consumer Services Agency, these funds will need to be allocated by the state before the end of June of 2021. HEAP funding is just one example of where Sacramento receives its financing for sheltering its homeless population. Sacramento will need to apply for and be rewarded by entities such as the State of California or the United States Federal government. If the City Council wants to continue to build and fund its shelters, continuing to find extra revenue will be critical. Simply, sheltering projects are too expensive for the City of Sacramento to pursue on their own.

The City of Sacramento has other planned shelters and beds for multiple locations. For example, in 2002 the Sacramento City Council approved for the Capitol Hotel Park to be renovated, allowing it to shelter approximately 134 people, costing an estimated 58 million dollars (Johnson, 2020). The Capitol Hotel Park project is expensive, especially when compared to the projects planned for the Meadowview and W/X locations. What is interesting about this project, is that NIMBY groups have not tried to block or slow its implementation. Notably, the City is paying for the renovation of this hotel which has been a blight to this region of downtown Sacramento. It seems this could be evidence of NIMBY's accepting an incentive, or positive externalities of sheltering projects. I think this could provide a useful model for the

Sacramento City Council. Incentives seem to work, especially those providing an offset, allowing for acceptance of sheltering Sacramento's homeless population. The City of Sacramento is also providing St. John's Center for Real Change and Refuge, 1 million dollars for 40 additional beds to their sheltering efforts (Gomez, 2019). While these projects seem like progress, their sheltering and aid is simply not enough to mitigate the thousands in need of shelter and are too costly to be seen as a sustainable model for Sacramento. By Sacramento County's PIT (2019) more than 5000 people on any given night are without shelter. In some research suggested by Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) this number could be much higher. As I address in this paper's conclusion, I believe the City Council should be thinking about how incentives might aid their efforts to combat NIMBYism and build shelters which might be more cost effective and address the acute and growing need for sheltering in the downtown region of Sacramento.

A homeless shelter's access to essential services, transportation and education, are factors leading to opportunities enabling permanent housing and employment. Providing these services are also expensive, and the costliest consideration for the City Council, as observed in the Literature Review. Location to services can be a cost savings to Sacramento's sheltering efforts. To be most effective, I believe Sacramento will need to purchase and build shelters on large parcels of land, in locations with proximity to Sacramento's transportation services and homeless services. As Sacramento land values are at an all-time high, the City of Sacramento will need financial assistance from the State of California and United States Federal government. As seen in the success of the W/X Shelter, the City Council may also want to think about building shelters on land it already owns. New state level legislation may be required to enhance California's Housing Element laws, which have little enforcement power and accountability.

Representation and Equity Issues

In Sacramento many types of groups are unsheltered. In this section we will explore which groups are experiencing homelessness within the City of Sacramento.

As noted, Sacramento's unsheltered homeless population comes from a PIT Count, which is performed every two years by Sacramento's County of Public Health. As previously observed, Sacramento County's last PIT Count observed there are 5,570 people experiencing homelessness and 3,900 of these people being categorized as "unsheltered" (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). As noted by the researchers of California State University Sacramento, the PIT Count is just a snapshot of one night. It may be more valuable for the Sacramento City Council to consider the "annualized" rate of homelessness, rather than just one night of counting (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). For example, while using an annualized rate, the 2019 PIT count may have found approximately 11,000 people in Sacramento County experiencing homelessness, rather than reported 5,570 (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). The PIT count also provides insight into the demographics and a break-down of who in Sacramento is experiencing homelessness at high rates. Understanding which groups are most affected by homelessness will allow the City Council to be targeted in their public policy decision making process.

As of 2019, 73% of homeless individuals in Sacramento County self-reported as being "single" (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). Notably, 20% reported being homeless as, or with a family member (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). In 2019, the Sacramento homeless population also appears to be getting older. Researchers from Sacramento State observed that 40% of Sacramento's homeless population is above the age of 44. The 2019 PIT data also show that 62% of the Sacramento homeless population identify as being male (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). Perhaps the most notable of these trends is found in the demography of what races are most affected. African Americans and American Indians are the most disproportionately affected by homelessness, when compared to the total of Sacramento's homeless population. As observed in Table 1, African Americans make up 13% of

Sacramento County’s total population, but 38% of its homeless population. Indian Americans make up about 2% of the population, and 8% of its homeless population (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019). It should be noted, this disproportionate trend in African and Indian Americans representation amongst Sacramento’s homeless populations are consistent with those experienced by trends across California and the United States (Baiocchi, A., Curry, S., et al, 2019).

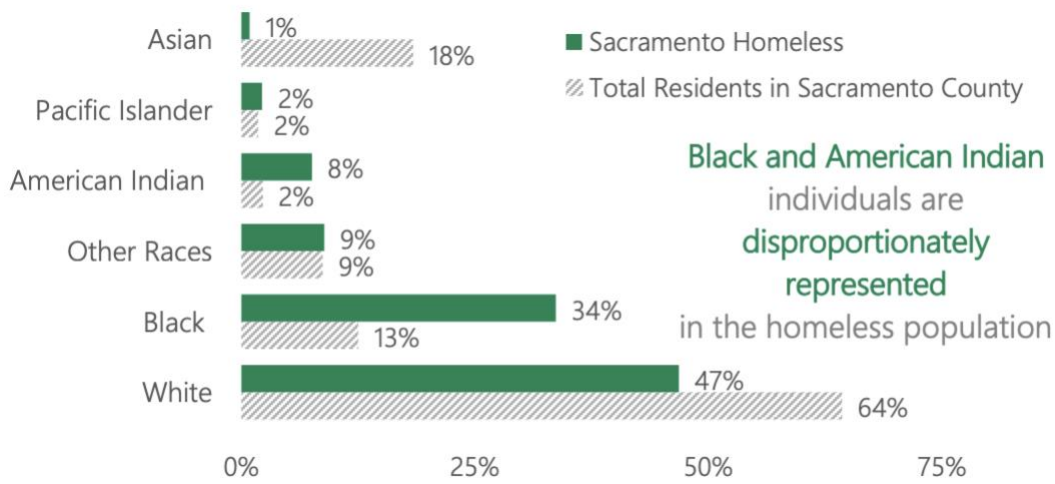


Table 1: Homelessness Demographics, Sacramento County

Based on this data it seems the City of Sacramento will need to provide alternatives to address the disparities in homeless trends within its African and Indian American populations. While policy recommendations will be discussed in a later section, it is the opinion of this paper that Sacramento (and other jurisdictions) should be thinking about how to shelter and serve populations most disproportionately affected by homelessness. The Sacramento City Council should be concerned about the “equity lens” in their decision-making process, due to the trust placed in them by their voters and the public at large. As homelessness affects African Americans and Indian Americans at a higher rate, failing to mitigate these effects may be viewed as negligence, and place the City Council's judgement as less inclusive to those they represent.

Financial Feasibility of Sheltering in Sacramento

The City of Sacramento will need more financial and political support to reach its goals of housing its homeless population. In this paper I have demonstrated the power of NIMBYism, how easily its efforts have shut down the city's sponsored projects to build even modest sheltering options. Sacramento is also facing some of the highest real estate costs in its history. Sacramento's high land values add another complicating factor in its efforts to shelter its homeless population (Solman, 2021). It seems both NIMBY groups and the City Council will find this a hard barrier to overcome. As cited in earlier sections, the City of Sacramento has the beginnings of a revenue stream which could aid its sheltering efforts. While Measure U, Federal HEAP funds, and affordable lease land agreements through entities like Caltrans are creative methods for sheltering projects, Sacramento will need to find continuous funding streams to provide services and continue to build out its sheltering effort.

Additional evidence of Sacramento's need for more financial assistance is observed in its newly established Affordable Housing Trust Fund (Morgan, 2020). In January of 2021, the Sacramento City Council approved 100 million dollars for this trust fund, which will be primarily sourced from the City's taxpayer approved Measure U, Californian State housing fund allocations, and financial resources from both private and nonprofit companies (Morgan, 2020). While encouraging, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, would only provide about 25,000 dollars per homeless. As provided from research by the Rand Corporation, \$25,000 will fall short of what is needed to provide shelter and services. Notably, California's Project Room Key has allowed the City of Sacramento an additional \$2,284,970 for supportive housing, services, and transition of unsheltered populations into permanent housing (Sacramento County, 2020). Project RoomKey is one-time funding and should last through the first financial quarter of 2021 (Sacramento County, 2020). The City of Sacramento might also expect to receive more State and Federal funds for additional legislation. For example, the 1.9 trillion-dollar, American Rescue Act, will provide the United States with 50 billion dollars in housing and homelessness assistance (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021). While a greater analysis of financial

feasibility should be conducted, it's the observation of this paper, the City of Sacramento will need to continue a concerted effort to attract significant dollars from both state and federal funds.

City of Houston and NIMBYism

The State of Texas is a useful counterexample for the kinds of sheltering policy found in Sacramento and California. In Texas, consecration efforts are absent California's high home and real estate costs, CEQA and zoning requirements (Walters, 2020). While Sacramento may be hard pressed to change some of its circumstances (for example things like CEQA), my intent is for the reader to observe a world outside of California, and perhaps help the City Council think differently about its own policy solutions to this problem.

The City of Houston, while very different from any California city, seems to have developed a successful model to address their unsheltered homeless populations. In 2018, Houston had a homeless population of around 8,500 people and has reduced its homeless population to approximately 4,000 individuals by 2019. Houston's efforts seem to be successful due to a robust collaborative effort between 100 private, non-profit, and governmental organizations (Levin, M., & Botts, 2020). The City of Houston also experiences robust financial support for these efforts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in 2018 alone receiving approximately 38.2 million in Federal Aid. The City of Houston credits some of its success due to their online live dashboard of up-to-date homeless data (Levin, M., & Botts, 2020).

I think the City of Sacramento may want to borrow some of the ideas from the City of Houston. It seems an online dashboard, providing live and real-time information to Sacramento officials, and the public, may allow for better public engagement and visibility of their homeless crisis. The City of Houston example also shows as confirmation that the City of Sacramento should continue its pursuit of federal dollars and collaborative relationships with non-profits and its business community

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper and policy report is to inform the City Council of Sacramento of the contemporary power and problem of Sacramento NIMBYism, which is the City Council's most difficult obstacle to adequately sheltering its growing homeless population. I believe as home prices continue to rise, the City Council will continue to encounter NIMBYism, and may need to find aggressive policy tools to achieve mitigating NIMBYism to build the required number of homeless shelters.

My recommended policy alternative is based in the research and discussion of this policy report. My aim is to provide a realistic and measurable alternative before the City Council. However, I also take this opportunity to express my opinion that the Sacramento City Council will need to be creative and bold in its policy action to solve its homeless crisis.

Recommended Policy Alternative

Tiny Homes seem to be a popular choice for sheltering, as they have been advocated by Mayor Steinberg, Councilmember Katie Valenzuela, Councilmember Eric Guerra, among other City Council members and Sacramento homeless advocates. The confidence of public officials' use of Tiny Homes, seems to provide political feasibility. As seen in the City of San Jose, tens of millions of dollars were invested into their own Tiny Home Villages and are strongly supported by its locally elected officials. However, Tiny Homes have notable drawbacks, and the economics of sheltering in Sacramento, are different than those of San Jose. Tiny homes are more expensive to build (per bed or unit), when compared to other sheltering options, such as congregate living structures. Due to the high costs of Tiny Homes (\$25,000 per unit), they cannot be the single solution to Sacramento's homeless crisis. Due to Tiny Homes' high praise and advocacy by local Sacramento leaders, it seems Tiny Homes are more welcomed by NIMBY groups and might allow for business and residents of Sacramento to feel better about their use and could warm the public to sheltering Sacramento's homeless. However, it should be concerning to the City Council that the city has yet to build any of its Tiny Home Villages, again showing the power of NIMBYism.

Due to costs, I believe, congregate sheltering options must also be part of Sacramento's solution.

Congregate shelters seem to be the most efficient form of sheltering. Notably, the Meadowview and W/X shelters have achieved approval by the City Council and acceptance by their local communities.

Location must also be a weight and important consideration to Sacramento's sheltering efforts. To this end, the City Council should support a robust pilot program of Tiny Homes and wrap around services built near the Loaves and Fishes Non-Profit Center. The research is clear, building shelters where services are available helps homeless individuals find jobs and get to permanent housing (Marin, 2021). Locations such as Loaves and Fishes make sense due to their community services, location, and decades of experience working with Sacramento's homeless population. As Governor Newsom noted last fall, "shelters may solve sleep, but it's services which solve homelessness" (Zavala, 2020). Loaves and Fishes is also a known location for many unsheltered homeless and is near transportation and the urban center of Sacramento. NIMBY organizations have clearly been effective at blocking any development or new sheltering capacity to be built near Loave and Fishes. As observed in this policy report, NIMBYism is evident in many of Sacramento's sheltering proposals, and seems the City Council of Sacramento may need stronger regulatory powers stemming from the state level.

Concluding Remarks

The City Council should support California state legislation, which could provide the financial assistance needed for Sacramento to significantly expand its ability to shelter its homeless population. State legislation may also provide the city council with legislative authority and political cover for the City Council to successfully mitigate the opposition practiced by its NIMBY organizations. Absent state level reform, I believe Sacramento should be bold in its actions to incentivize its NIMBY organizations to accept homeless sheltering efforts. Sacramento experienced a sample of this, when NIMBYs favored the renovation and shelters placed at the Capitol Hotel Park. As noted, the NIMBY acceptance was due to a

known and quantifiable benefit they would receive from the hotel's renovation, and perhaps a model for the City Council to follow

The City Council could be creative in how it provides future funding for its sheltering efforts. For example, the State of California uses its Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), to provide financial support to school districts based on financial need. The LCFF also allows each district to choose how this money will be spent. I think Sacramento could follow this spending model, by providing its city district's funding based on their needs for sheltering and services. Like LCFF, each city district could have control of its funding and decision-making process for where their shelters would go, and how the money could be spent.

I also think the City Council of Sacramento may have a policy window, opened by Mayor Steinberg's advocacy for a City Master Plan, to mitigate the pressure of NIMBYs, and provide an ordinance mandating city districts build their fair share of homeless shelter. Policies like this have been tried before at the state level and have failed. The California Housing Element laws hold a similar aim upon all California local jurisdictions. Each of California's local jurisdictions enter a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and agree to build several affordable homes (Association of Bay Area Governments, 2021). The problem with such policies is enforcement. I recommend the City Council pursue other methods (as I've discussed) to mitigate or defeat the threat of NIMBYism. Enforcement is difficult, with many risks, and unknowns. It is also not popular and may place Sacramento City Council members at risk of losing reelection.

As this report closes, it also recognizes challenges the City Council will face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the City Council does not have the most recent data from the County of Sacramento. Sheltering efforts will be difficult without current data, providing a clearer picture of how many homeless individuals are living within the City of Sacramento. For this reason, I believe the City Council continues to collaborate with groups like SSF, California State agencies and other organizations which may provide

a more contemporaneous picture of Sacramento's homeless population, allowing for a more accurate and appropriate policy response. When implementing future sheltering policy, the Sacramento City Council must make equity and access for minorities a priority. If the City of Sacramento fails to house African Americans and Indian Americans at the same rate of other homeless demographics, the City of Council may be at risk of losing public trust of any sheltering effort.

Sheltering Sacramento's homeless population is a problem of public policy with many tensions, none greater than local NIMBY opposition. As illustrated in this policy brief, it has taken Sacramento decades to find itself in this sheltering crisis and made worse by a global pandemic. However, I believe if the City Council of Sacramento can engage its public, providing better visibility to this problem, collaborate and commit to innovative (and even bold) policies, the Sacramento City Council may see its NIMBY opposition fade, allowing for the City Council to successfully shelter its homeless population.

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