

REINVESTING IN SHELTER

LESSONS FROM THE NAVIGATION CENTER

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER
CITY SERVICES AUDITOR (CSA)



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**CONTROLLER'S OFFICE
CITY SERVICES AUDITOR**

The City Services Auditor was created within the Controller's Office through an amendment to the City Charter that was approved by voters in November 2003. Under Appendix F to the City Charter, the City Services Auditor has broad authority for:

- Reporting on the level and effectiveness of San Francisco's public services and benchmarking the city to other public agencies and jurisdictions.
- Conducting financial and performance audits of city departments, contractors, and functions to assess efficiency and effectiveness of processes and services.
- Operating a whistleblower hotline and website and investigating reports of waste, fraud, and abuse of city resources.
- Ensuring the financial integrity and improving the overall performance and efficiency of city government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Navigation Center has shown that clients provided with a livable, resource-rich environment can successfully overcome barriers to housing: they can obtain a photo ID, connect to public benefits, link to medical care, and navigate a months-long housing placement process. In previous evaluations, the Controller’s Office recommended that the City spread lessons from the Navigation Center throughout the shelter system.

With new funds available for shelter improvement in FY16-17 and the commitment of the new Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHS) to rethink the City’s system of homelessness services, the City has a unique opportunity to reinvest in shelter. The Controller’s Office seeks to answer two questions about the intersection of shelters and Navigation Centers:

- How should shelters and Navigation Centers fit into a coordinated system of housing placement?
- What would it take to implement key elements of the Navigation Center model within the shelter system? What should the City’s priorities be?

Methodology

Drawing on previous evaluation work, the Controller’s Office identified and prioritized twelve Navigation Center program elements that might be spread into the shelter system and solicited feedback from both City and shelter staff to inform the analysis. As part of this work, the Controller’s Office conducted a feedback session that included all providers of single adult shelter services and also toured the City’s two largest shelters (Next Door and Multi-Service Center South) and a smaller shelter (Dolores Street – South Van Ness).

Recommendations

1. Expansion of the Navigation Center’s priority access to housing is unsustainable. DHS should establish an equitable citywide housing priority system via coordinated entry, based upon consistent, objective criteria and applied equally to all clients, regardless of location.
2. As resources allow, the City should prioritize investments in shelter improvements based on the tiers below:

Tier	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Program Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Priority • Additional Case Management • On-Site HSA Eligibility Workers • Smaller Shelters • Holding Beds / No Curfew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered until Housed • Stay with Partner • 24-Hour Operation • Meals on Demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage for Possessions • Allow Pets • Homeward Bound Beds

Summary of High Priority Program Elements

Housing Priority

Navigation Center clients receive priority for permanent supportive housing placements. HSA recently instituted a policy that prioritizes shelter clients based on length of time homeless and length of time receiving cash assistance. DSHS should create a clear, equitable process to allocate scarce housing resources. Access to housing should be based on a fair set of criteria that apply across the City's entire system of homelessness services. DSHS's current efforts to expand the "coordinated entry" program support this goal.

Additional Case Management

The Navigation Center has a 14:1 client to case manager ratio, while the shelter system has a 40:1 ratio. Providing shelter case management at Navigation Center levels would require an additional 56 FTE of case management positions in shelter, at a cost of \$3.1 million. Case managers could work with clients toward non-housing goals that are achievable within a 120-day shelter stay, such as connection to benefits or primary medical care.

On-Site HSA Eligibility Workers

The Navigation Center has 1.35 FTEs of HSA eligibility workers who help clients apply for public benefits. HSA does not supply on-site eligibility workers to any adult shelters. Shelters could improve client quality of life through connection to public benefits, which help clients meet basic needs and are essential for eventually accessing housing. To staff shelters with the same client-to-eligibility worker ratio as the Navigation Center would require 23.2 FTEs, for a total cost of \$2.7 million, assuming all staff were new hires. The expansion would also require additional coordination by HSA and on-site office space at shelters.

Smaller Shelters

The 75-bed Navigation Center has a welcoming, homey environment supported by both communal and personal space for clients, as well as high staff-to-client ratios. Small shelters represent only 18% of the City's 1,200 shelter beds. The City's two largest shelters each contain over 300 beds, with rooms containing up to 100 beds and little or no outdoor space. A capital needs infrastructure assessment could include assessments of low-cost improvements to increase livability in large shelters, such as privacy screens between beds or partitions within rooms to create a "small shelter" feel.

Holding Beds / No Curfew

Clients at the Navigation Center can come and go at any hour, and only lose their bed if they cannot be located for several days. Clients in shelter must check in daily or their bed is released for a one-night emergency placement, and they may not leave once they check in for the night. Reducing or eliminating check-in would greatly increase the quality of life in shelter and decrease administrative burden, but would also result in the reduction or elimination of one-night emergency beds, allowing some beds to go vacant each night.

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ABOUT THIS ANALYSIS

Overview of the Shelter System

This report focuses on adult shelters. The Navigation Center only serves adults, not families or youth, and the family shelter system has distinct program characteristics that would be impractical to account for in this analysis. San Francisco’s ten single adult homeless shelters have 1,203 beds. Demand for those beds far outstrips supply: 875 individuals were on the wait list for 90-day shelter beds as of August 1, 2016.

Shelter	Populations served	Neighborhood	Beds
Next Door	Women and men	Tenderloin	334
Sanctuary	Women and men	South of Market	200
Lark Inn	Women and men, age 18-24	Tenderloin	40
MSC-South	Women and men	South of Market	340
Hospitality House	Men only	Tenderloin	30
A Woman’s Place	Women only	South of Market	11
Dolores Street – Santa Maria / Santa Martha / Jazzie’s Place ¹	Women, men, and gender nonconforming	Mission	80
Dolores Street – Santa Ana	Men only	Mission	28
Providence	Women and men	Bayview	110
Providence Women’s	Women only	Western Addition	30

Methodology

Both City and shelter staff informed this analysis. The Controller’s Office conducted a feedback session with shelter staff and affiliated organizations hosted by the San Francisco Homeless Emergency Service Providers Association (HESPA) that included all providers of single adult shelter services and also toured the City’s two largest shelters (Next Door and Multi-Service Center South) and a smaller shelter (Dolores Street – South Van Ness).

Drawing on previous evaluation work, the Controller’s Office identified and prioritized twelve Navigation Center program elements that might be spread into the shelter system. Where possible, the report includes cost estimates for specific staffing proposals.

Organizations who gave feedback

- United Council of Human Services
- St. Anthony’s Foundation
- Curry Senior Center
- Hamilton Family Center
- Episcopal Community Services
- Community Awareness and Treatment Services
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Providence Foundation
- Dolores Street Community Services
- Larkin Street Youth Services

¹ Dolores Street Community Services runs shelters at two locations in the Mission: Santa Ana shelter on 24th Street and the Santa Maria / Santa Martha / Jazzie’s Place shelter on S Van Ness. The report treats these as two shelters.

Unless otherwise stated, all references to “Navigation Center” in this report apply to the original Navigation Center at 1950 Mission Street. The Navigation Center at the Civic Center Hotel and future Navigation Centers may employ variations on the program model that the Controller’s Office has not evaluated. Except where noted, the analysis excludes Homeward Bound clients and beds dedicated to Homeward Bound.

Previous Evaluation Reports from the Controller’s Office

The Controller’s Office has provided ongoing program evaluation of the Navigation Center since its inception in March 2015. View previous reports in the Navigation Center series online at www.sfcontroller.org:

- [More than a Shelter: An Assessment of the Navigation Center’s First Six Months](#)
- [Navigation Center Year-End Evaluation](#) and [Infographic](#)
- Perspectives from the Navigation Center qualitative series
 1. [Understanding the Navigation Center’s Operations](#)
 2. [Encampment Homelessness in San Francisco](#)
 3. [Navigation a Cross-Sector, Multi-Agency Collaboration](#)
 4. [The Future of the Navigation Center – Location, Scale, and Scope](#)

WHAT IS THE NAVIGATION CENTER?

The Navigation Center provides room and board to as many as 75 San Franciscans and their pets while case managers connect them to stable income, public benefits and permanent housing. Previous Controller's Office reports have highlighted the Navigation Center's dual program goals: it is at once a low-barrier shelter for individuals living in encampments and an intensive case management program that prepares clients for stable placement in permanent supportive housing.



Clients are referred to the Navigation Center primarily via Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) contact with encampments or via the Mission Neighborhood Resource Center (MNRC). Five beds are set aside for the Homeward Bound program to give individuals a place to stay overnight before taking a bus to be reunited with family elsewhere; these clients stay only a day or two and do not receive case management services.

Clients that meet referral criteria are assigned a case manager who helps them make a plan to prepare for housing placement. To be successfully housed, clients need to have proper documentation (for example, photo identification or service animal certification) and proof of income. Clients work with on-site benefits eligibility workers from the Human Services Agency (HSA) to connect with public benefits programs that provide stable income.

Small size, guaranteed beds, and ample resources allow the Navigation Center to provide more services and amenities for clients than a typical shelter: Clients may come and go as they please without fear of losing their bed and may eat at any time. Mixed-gender dorms allow clients to stay together with partners. Ample space allows pets to run and clients to store possessions. The site has reduced security and fewer program rules.

On average, clients stay at the Navigation Center about three months before entering permanent supportive housing.

HOW CAN THE NAVIGATION CENTER INFORM SHELTER INVESTMENTS?

The Controller's Office examined twelve distinctive Navigation Center program elements, the state of shelters with regard to those elements, and what investment would be needed to implement each. We looked at investments that either improve client experience of temporary shelter (e.g., removing curfews) or connect clients to benefits and services (e.g., case management). The shelter analysis includes single adult and transitional age youth shelters; domestic violence, medical stabilization, and family shelter were not included.

We have grouped these investments into three tiers, based on their feasibility and likely impact:

- **HIGH** priority investments are major improvements to the City's overall system of homeless services.
- **MEDIUM** priority investments could result in meaningful change, as resources allow.
- **LOW** priority investments are areas where the shelter system already provides the service or return on investment is low.

Investments fall into three possible categories:

- **One-time funds** that are best spent on non-recurring investments like infrastructure improvements.²
- **Recurring funds**, such as staffing, that must be supported in future years.³
- **Policy changes** that require staff time and may involve tradeoffs between differing program goals.

During our feedback meeting with shelter staff, we invited each staff member to assign up to five "up-votes" and four "down-votes" to each element. The net score (up-votes minus down-votes) is presented as **shelter staff priority**.

Note that this analysis does not include all possible uses of new funding, but rather focuses on distinctive Navigation Center elements. For example, staff at MSC-South reported that they need a second elevator on site. Such site-by-site infrastructure needs are beyond the scope of this analysis and are best evaluated through a separate capital needs assessment. Other improvements suggested by shelter staff included:

- Client transportation after 10:00 p.m.
- Additional taxi vouchers and bus tokens
- Relaxed rules around drug paraphernalia and use
- Wi-Fi access for clients
- Funding to buy nicer everyday items, like shower curtains and blankets

² Bond funding approved earlier this year allocated approximately \$20 million for shelter improvement and could fund some of these investments.

³ In its Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget, the City has set aside approximately \$900,000 for increased shelter staffing.

Housing Priority

Tier	HIGH
Shelter staff priority	*
Investments	Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Clients of the first Navigation Center receive priority for permanent supportive housing placements. Case managers submit all clients to the coordinated entry portal, though most are ultimately housed through HSA programs. Case managers report clients who are not placed via coordinated entry to housing placement staff when they have the basic documentation established for placement. Placement staff members identify available units, and case managers help clients apply to the housing program. Placement staff offer units not used for Navigation Center clients to others in the pool, including clients in shelter.</p>	<p>HSA recently instituted a policy that prioritizes shelter clients with CAAP⁴ benefits for available housing placements based on length of time homeless and on CAAP benefits or amount of shelter use. Shelter clients who are not on CAAP benefits are considered for available housing placements based on shelter use. Previously, length of homelessness was not a factor, and instead, community providers took turns to identify specific clients for placements when units became available.</p>

* Category was not presented to shelter staff for ranking; however most shelter staff expressed frustration with the current system.

Shelter staff reported that many of their clients had been patiently “playing by the rules” for years, waiting for housing, only to have Navigation Center clients — some of whom have had short episodes of homelessness or little time in San Francisco⁵ — given priority for available housing placements. Most Navigation Center clients were referred from encampments, and staff have only recently developed clear screening criteria that include length of homelessness. Shelter staff shared further anecdotal reports of clients choosing to leave the shelter for an encampment in the hopes of getting housing through a Navigation Center placement.

The Navigation Center has been able to rapidly house clients because of its priority access to scarce permanent supportive housing vacancies, but expanding its priority access to housing would be unsustainable. Prioritizing housing for Navigation Center clients means de-prioritizing other clients, many of whom are in the shelter system. Based on its current rate of housing placement, the first 70-bed Navigation Center requires almost a quarter of all annual vacancies in the City’s supportive housing portfolio to house its clients.⁶ If similar priority is given to clients in a seven-Navigation Center program, it will quickly exhaust the City’s pool of permanent supportive housing, leaving no placements for shelter residents or other homeless individuals.

DHS should create a clear, equitable process to allocate scarce housing resources. Access to housing should be based on a fair set of criteria that apply across the City’s entire system of homelessness services.

⁴ County Adult Assistance Programs provide cash benefits to clients and fund permanent supportive housing units through the Care Not Cash program.

⁵ See the [Navigation Center Year-End Evaluation](#), p. 9.

⁶ See the [Navigation Center Year-End Evaluation](#), p. 31.

The City's existing "coordinated entry" system is intended to provide such citywide criteria and prioritization. All supportive housing programs receiving federal dollars (Continuum of Care and veterans' programs) must use a coordinated entry and assessment system that allows for any agency to refer homeless clients to housing and includes a basic needs assessment and written criteria for prioritizing housing placements. Currently, the highest priority group for coordinated entry in San Francisco consists of individuals who have been homeless for over 13 years and veterans who have been homeless over one year.

Most of San Francisco's supportive housing is not federally funded, but DSHS plans to voluntarily expand coordinated entry to cover the City's entire supportive housing stock. To do so, stakeholders would need to agree upon an expanded set of prioritization criteria to address the needs of specific populations, such as the medically vulnerable.

DSHS has already begun to integrate coordinated entry into the Navigation Center program: coordinated entry case managers are now able to refer highest priority clients to Navigation Centers in preparation for housing, though most referrals still come from outside coordinated entry.

"We should have a system where no matter where someone is residing they have the same opportunity for housing."

- Shelter staff member

How can shelters and Navigation Centers work together within a citywide coordinated entry system? Options include:

- Navigation Centers become the final exit point for most permanent supportive housing placements; referrals to Navigation Centers are restricted to clients in the highest priority tier for coordinated entry who are unprepared for housing placement. Clients may be referred to Navigation Centers from any location, including shelter.
- Navigation Centers focus on homeless clients with specialty needs regardless of priority level for housing. Examples may include frail or senior clients, clients with behavioral health treatment needs, transitional aged youth, or other subpopulations that require targeted service interventions to become stable and ready for housing.
- Clients who are in the highest priority tier *and* unsheltered are referred to Navigation Centers where they receive intensive case management services in preparation for housing. Sheltered clients in the highest tier receive housing preparation services in shelter. Note: the number of unsheltered homeless in the highest tier is unknown and may not be sufficient to fill multiple Navigation Centers.
- Clients in the highest priority tier for coordinated entry receive Navigation Center-style case management regardless of their location. Navigation Centers become low-threshold shelters focused on encampment homelessness but do not guarantee housing placements.

However the City chooses to deploy Navigation Centers, an equitable citywide housing priority system should be based upon consistent, objective criteria and apply equally to all clients, regardless of location. If Navigation Centers expand without a new housing prioritization strategy, they could become expensive shelters with no housing destinations, and shelter clients who have waited for years may have no housing at all.

Additional Case Management

Tier	HIGH
Shelter staff priority	15
Investments	Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>The Navigation Center has five full-time case managers, for a client-to-case manager ratio of 14:1. Case managers work with clients to remove barriers to housing, including establishing income through connections to benefits, obtaining a photo ID, getting documentation for service animals, and connecting clients to medical care. Case management is ultimately geared toward helping clients obtain housing. Because clients remain in the Navigation Center until housed, they have an extended period of time to work on case management goals.</p>	<p>The client-to-case manager ratio in the shelter system is 40:1. While the City does not run a single citywide case management program in shelter, it spends approximately \$1.7 million on 30 shelter-based case management full-time equivalent staff (FTE) across a patchwork of programs and funding sources. See Appendix A for a summary of case management programs in shelter.</p>

The average cost of a City-funded case manager, after benefits, is \$55,966. Providing shelter case management at Navigation Center levels would require an additional 56 FTE of case management positions in shelter, at a cost of \$3.1 million.

While most shelter case management cannot follow a client beyond her 90- to 120-day shelter stay, four months is usually enough time for Navigation Center case managers to prepare a client for housing.⁷ However, case management in shelter is fragmented: SF START and the Coordinated Entry team provide targeted case management for medical needs and housing applications, respectively, while other positions provide more general case management.

Increasing case management would not increase placement into housing without a parallel development of new housing units. Case managers could work with clients toward non-housing goals that are achievable within 120 days, such as connection to benefits or primary medical care.

To be effective, case managers' caseloads must be small enough for them to spend adequate time with clients. Caseloads in shelter could be reduced by a combination of hiring case managers and/or focusing case management services on specific groups of clients.

Shelter staff reported that hiring case managers would require both additional office space and private spaces for conversations with clients. Space planning and some one-time capital investments may be necessary. Allocation of additional space for case management services may decrease available space for beds.

⁷ See the [Navigation Center Year-End Evaluation](#), p. 17.

On-Site Benefits Eligibility Workers

Tier	HIGH
Shelter staff priority	11
Investments	Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
The Navigation Center has support from HSA eligibility workers who help clients apply for and retain Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and cash aid (CAAP). Currently, one Medi-Cal/CalFresh worker is stationed at the Navigation Center half-time, and one CAAP worker is stationed there 85% time, for approximately 1.35 FTE of support for the Navigation Center’s 70 non-Homeward Bound beds (not including supervisory time). These staff members were not new hires, but rather reassigned from other duties. HSA has also waived “workfare” and proof of homelessness requirements for clients while on site, but these requirements are reinstated upon placement into housing. ⁸	HSA has designated representatives at Compass Connecting Point to assist homeless families in connecting to CalWORKs but does not provide on-site eligibility workers to any adult shelters. Clients can access these services at HSA’s central application center at 1235 Mission Street.

Shelters could improve client quality of life through connection to Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and cash aid; 120 days is generally sufficient time to establish enrollment in all programs. The income provided by these public benefit programs helps clients meet basic needs and is essential for eventually accessing housing.

The annual budget cost of one 2905 HSA Senior Eligibility Worker (EW) is \$117,849, including benefits. To staff shelters with the same client-to-EW ratio as the Navigation Center would take 8.6 FTE of Medi-Cal/CalFresh EWs and 14.6 FTE of CAAP⁹ EWs, for a total cost of \$2.7 million, assuming all staff were new hires. Expanding the Navigation Center’s on-site EWs to a larger HSA roving EW program would require additional coordination from HSA management. Shelter staff reported that EWs would need on-site office space. Redesign of existing shelter space could mean a reduction in beds.

The workfare waiver has been a double-edged sword for Navigation Center clients: though the waiver has made it simpler for on-site clients to receive cash aid, Navigation Center staff report that those same clients have frequently lost benefits when this requirement is reinstated upon obtaining housing. Investigation of the waiver’s efficacy would best be tackled in a larger look at strategies for improving HSA benefits retention.

⁸ DPH also provides collaboration to the Navigation Center on linkage to medical care, treatment, and transitions. A full analysis of health programs in shelter was beyond the scope of this analysis.

⁹ County Adult Assistance Programs (CAAP) include county-funded general assistance and other cash aid programs for single adults.

Smaller Shelters

Tier	HIGH
Shelter staff priority	14
Investments	One-time \$ Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
The Navigation Center has striven to create a welcoming, homey environment. Communal space encourages clients to interact. The Navigation Center’s small scale (75 beds) allows staff to get to know and work with clients. Clients have significant personal space between beds and storage lockers.	Of the City’s ten single adult shelters, six are small scale, ranging from 11 to 80 beds. However, those small shelters represent only 18% of the City’s 1,200 shelter beds. The City’s two largest shelters each contain over 300 beds. Existing large shelters have rooms with up to 100 beds and little or no outdoor space.

Shelter staff reported that the Navigation Center’s success in cultivating a warm and supportive environment was largely due to its small size and high staff-to-client ratios. Smaller facilities create community among residents, where bigger facilities by necessity have a more institutional feel. Client engagement is an important factor in meeting program outcomes like housing placement and benefits retention.



The main men’s floor at Next Door shelter houses 118 men in an open layout.

Navigation Center staff have the time and space to mediate client conflicts before they escalate. In large facilities, shelter staff are stretched too thin to spend significant time with individual clients, and a small conflict can quickly spread when hundreds of clients are kept in close quarters; therefore shelters rely on stricter program rules and tighter security.

Shelter directors requested that District 10 be prioritized for additional shelter beds. Opening new shelters requires locating appropriate sites and overcoming resistance from neighbors.

While acquiring new small shelter spaces would be challenging, temporary shelters like Pier 80 might reduce community resistance and eliminate the need to find new real estate, though they result in potentially expensive recurring start-up costs: The first Navigation Center incurred startup costs in excess of \$700,000, even for a free, temporary space. The Pier 80 temporary shelter

incurred \$124,000 in startup costs, not including rental of the space. Ongoing operation of small shelters is generally more expensive on a per-bed basis.

At the City's large shelters, one-time funding could be used to build privacy screens between beds or partition large rooms into smaller ones, creating a "small shelter" feel and having a lasting impact. A capital needs infrastructure assessment could include assessments of low-cost improvements to increase livability in shelter. Staffing ratios would also need to be congruent with smaller shelters.



Bed partitions at Dolores Street's Santa Maria shelter offer clients more privacy. Clients also have access to an electrical outlet at their bed.

Holding Beds / No Curfew

Tier	HIGH
Shelter staff priority	*
Investments	Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Beds are only released if clients disappear for several days and cannot be located by case managers. Clients can come and go as they please, at any hour of the day or night.</p>	<p>Clients in shelter beds must check in every evening by 7:00 or 10:00 p.m. (depending on the shelter), or their beds are released (for one night only) to someone awaiting emergency shelter. The CHANGES database automatically assigns clients to open bed slots; shelter staff members have little control.</p> <p>For safety reasons, many shelters do not allow clients who leave after curfew to return to the shelter that night.</p>

* At feedback session with shelter staff, this category was combined with “sheltered until housed” and not rated independently.

Even when they have a guaranteed 90-day bed, clients still must wait in line each day to check in by curfew, or else their bed will be given away as a one-night emergency bed. Checking in takes significant time not only from clients but from staff, who must spend several hours each afternoon running the check-in process and additional time throughout the day tracking bed occupancy. Check-in requires curfews, which contribute to the institutional feel of the largest shelters.

Why require check-in? Because the demand for beds far outstrips supply, the City tries to guarantee that beds do not go empty. At the City’s 24-hour resource center, homeless individuals on the 90-day wait list may sit upright in a chair from early morning until midnight hoping for a one-night emergency bed to open up.

Reducing or eliminating check-in would greatly increase the quality of life in shelter and decrease the administrative burden on City and shelter staff who must juggle shifting one night beds – but would also result in the reduction or elimination of one-night emergency beds, allowing some beds to go vacant each night.

Without daily check-in, new guidelines would be needed on when to hold and release beds. For example, how many consecutive nights can a client miss before losing his bed? Holding beds should be done in tandem with eliminating curfews: if clients who miss curfew cannot access a held bed, then there’s no value in preventing someone else from using it. With the elimination of curfews, additional overnight staffing might be needed.

The City has no way to track how many beds are released each night due to no-shows. Before making changes to check-ins and curfews that might reduce one-night bed availability, City staff should collect data to estimate how many no-show beds are currently reassigned on an average day.

Sheltered Until Housed

Tier	MEDIUM
Shelter staff priority	6
Investments	Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
Clients have a guaranteed bed until they are housed (or choose to leave).	Most of the City’s shelter beds are “311” or “Resource Center” beds. These are 90-day reservations, with an option for a 30-day extension. After 120 days, clients must leave the shelter system and re-apply to the waiting list.

Sending clients back out onto the street after 120 days creates cascading problems. Clients may feel the need to retain more possessions (like a tent) to be prepared for their next episode on the street. Clients cannot stay in one place or be guaranteed to return to the same shelter and are therefore more difficult to locate for case management.

Allowing clients to stay in shelter until housed would improve their standard of living and potentially reduce City staff time spent re-enrolling clients on the wait list. Clients with stable temporary housing would be more able to retain a job and focus energy on achieving other self-sufficiency goals.

Yet guaranteeing long-term shelter beds to clients would raise equity concerns. The wait list guarantees that the 2,100 clients who are trying to access shelter can spend about half their time in one of the City’s 1,200 adult shelter beds. Given the limited availability of housing exits, allowing the 1,200 currently sheltered clients to remain in place until housed effectively means most will be in shelter indefinitely, leaving the 875 people on the wait list on the street with no other option for City-funded temporary shelter. Long periods of living on the street lead to poor health outcomes and other ill effects.

As an immediate implementation strategy, clients who are in a priority group for housing could be guaranteed a shelter bed until housed. Case managers would then be better able to support them in their preparations to enter housing.

In the long-term, the City would need to increase both shelter capacity and permanent supportive housing exits, so that the supply of shelter beds meets the demand for them on the street and a steady stream of clients are able to move from shelter beds to housing. Note: The City likely needs to add more than 875 additional shelter beds to meet demand. If clients were able to stay in shelter until housed, demand for shelter would likely increase. The 2015 point-in-time homeless count identified 3,500 unsheltered homeless individuals in San Francisco.

Stay with Partner

Tier	MEDIUM
Shelter staff priority	7
Investments	Recurring \$ Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
Dormitories are all mixed-gender, and Navigation Center clients can request beds next to a partner of any gender.	<p>All shelters segregate clients by gender. Some only accept one gender, while others house both men and women in separate rooms. Jazzie’s Place has a shared room for men, women, and gender nonconforming clients.</p> <p>Shelters do not have control over bed reservations, and CHANGES does not allow clients to request to be placed with a partner. To be placed together, partners must coordinate their registration on the waiting list and hope for two openings at the same shelter (and repeat this process every 120 days).</p>

Both shelter and Navigation Center staff have reported that relationship conflicts pose a challenge – couples that enter together may fight, and they may request to be moved apart during their stay. Small shelters with higher staffing ratios might be better equipped to host couples and deal with potential conflict. Counseling for homeless couples could support stability and minimize conflict while in shelter.

Safely accommodating mixed-gender living situations would require higher staffing ratios for additional supervision. The City should investigate an ideal staffing mix to ensure safety. Shelters that currently serve a single gender would require investment in additional bathrooms, showers, and private spaces to accommodate mixed-gender couples.

Ideally, the shelter reservation system would accommodate requests for two people to shelter together. Additional investigation is needed to determine the feasibility of making these modifications to CHANGES.

24-Hour Operation

Tier	MEDIUM
Shelter staff priority	2
Investments	Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
The Navigation Center remains open and accessible to clients all day.	Three shelters representing about half of the City’s shelter beds are available to clients around the clock (Next Door, Sanctuary, and Lark Inn). At other shelters, clients must leave around 7 a.m. Many of these clients stay off the street by occupying chairs at a Resource Center until the shelter opens again in the evening.

Most City shelters close during the day, forcing clients onto the street from approximately 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Clients must either bring possessions with them or lose access to them until the evening. Three shelters share space with nonprofits or churches that use the space during the day. However, two shelters, MSC-South and Hospitality House, currently operate only at night but could be expanded to 24-hour access with additional staffing.

24-hour status	Shelters	Beds
Open 24-hours	ECS – Next Door	334
	ECS – Sanctuary	200
	Lark Inn	40
Could remain open 24-hours with additional staffing	MSC-South	340
	Hospitality House	30
Shared space	A Woman’s Place	11
	Dolores Street – Santa Maria / Santa Martha / Jazzie’s Place	80
	Dolores Street – Santa Ana	28
	Providence/Providence Women’s	140

The Controller’s Office asked staff at MSC-South, the City’s largest shelter, for an estimate of positions needed to expand to 24-hour services. MSC-South staff identified 17 new daily positions that would be needed; scaling up for seven days per week yields 23.8 FTE at a cost of approximately \$1.1 million, based on St. Vincent de Paul’s current shelter contract.

Position title	Additional FTE needed	Cost (incl. benefits)
Shift Supervisor	2.8	\$ 148,873
Program Aides	11.2	\$ 435,722
Supportive Services	2.8	\$ 160,722
Maintenance	2.8	\$ 109,805
Food Services	4.2	\$ 272,901
TOTAL	23.8	\$ 1,128,023

The table at left does not include the cost of 2.8 FTE of contracted security guards or non-salary costs, such as increased utilities, supplies, meals, and laundry. MSC-South is currently contracted for 75 FTE for a total annual salary cost of \$3,230,000 (including benefits).

Meals on Demand

Tier	MEDIUM
Shelter staff priority	*
Investments	Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Ready-to-eat meals are provided by Meals on Wheels at a cost of \$5.15 per meal. Clients may microwave a tray of food at any time. The kitchen is accessible 24-hours a day.</p>	<p>HSA funds meals in shelters at approximately \$1 per meal, though shelters may supplement this funding from other sources. Group meals prepared on site are likely more cost effective than single serving meals. Because of limited funding, shelters often shop for food at the food bank and are limited to items being sold there.</p> <p>No shelter provides meals on demand. Most shelters in shared spaces only have time to serve dinner, as all clients must vacate the space by 7:00 am, leaving no time to serve and clean up a hot breakfast.</p>

* This category was not presented to shelter staff for ranking.

Meals on demand cost substantially more than group meals prepared on site. When shelters have curfews, clients without a late pass are by necessity in the shelter at dinnertime and will not miss meals.

Shifting existing congregate meals to on-demand would also affect the necessary level of kitchen staffing. However, meals on demand could augment existing congregate meals in several ways:

- Shelters could provide a limited number of meals on demand to clients who miss congregate meal times.
- Meals on demand could be a good lunch option for 24-hour shelters with fewer clients on site during the middle of the day. None of these shelters currently serve lunch.
- Shelters with shared space often lack the facilities or time to prepare breakfast. With sufficient funding, grab-and-go food (e.g., fruit, granola bars) could be made available at all times with little need for additional kitchen facilities or staff.

Storage for Possessions

Tier	LOW
Shelter staff priority	-6
Investments	Recurring \$

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Navigation Center clients have lockers in each dormitory for small possessions; large possessions may be stored in one of several shipping crates on site. When Public Works staff clear an encampment, they transport the belongings of any client coming to the Navigation Center.</p>	<p>Clients have limited storage space on-site, usually only a large drawer. Additional possessions may be stored at a facility on Jones Street, which has limited hours. This single facility is often at capacity.</p> <p>Because clients are forced to leave shelter at the end of their reservation, many keep enough possessions to survive on the street until they get off the waiting list again.</p>

Shelter spaces have limited capacity for storage. Adding on-site storage would require repurposing existing space, for example, by reducing the number of beds.

Shelter staff reported that they have many needs for additional space, and storage is low on their priority list; however, additional off-site storage in neighborhoods where clients stay would be welcome. The City could consider renting facilities in several neighborhoods throughout San Francisco (e.g., District 10) rather than relying on a single facility in the Tenderloin.

When the Controller’s Office surveyed Navigation Center clients about barriers to shelter use, no client cited possessions as a barrier.

Allow Pets

Tier	LOW
Shelter staff priority	-3
Investments	One-time \$
	Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Clients can enter with pets. Pets have outdoor space, and case managers connect clients' pets to services (e.g., support animal certification).</p>	<p>Next Door and MSC-South accept pets, and all shelters accept service animals to the best of their ability. Some other shelters accept pets on a case-by-case basis. Shelters lack outdoor space for pets and they must generally stay near the client's bed, though Next Door has limited kennel space. Shelter case management does not provide pet services.</p>

Some shelters could accept limited numbers of pets with a simple policy change, while others might require construction of kennel space. However, a significant number of shelter beds are already open to clients with pets, and infrastructure dollars are likely best spent elsewhere. Case management support for pet-related services (i.e., service animal documentation) is important for final housing placement but less critical for clients who won't be housed immediately.

The City could investigate one-time system upgrades to the shelter reservation system to capture when a client has a pet and appropriately refer them to pet-friendly shelters. This may require a new field be added and a new question be asked by 311 operators.

Homeward Bound Beds

Tier	LOW
Shelter staff priority	-26
Investments	Policy change

What the Navigation Center does	What shelters do
<p>Five of the Navigation Center’s 75 beds are set aside for Homeward Bound clients. Homeward Bound staff work to contact the client’s family and secure a bus ticket. Bus company rules require the client to be clean and presentable with belongings packed securely. A typical client stays at the Navigation Center for one or two nights to clean up, downsize belongings, and contact family.</p>	<p>The Homeward Bound program does not have any bed space in the shelter system. However, shelter staff noted that because Homeward Bound staff outreach to shelter clients, many Homeward Bound clients already have a shelter bed.</p>

Homeward Bound beds could be located anywhere. Navigation Center beds are the City’s most expensive temporary housing resource, and moving Homeward Bound beds to shelter would free Navigation Center space for clients who need intensive case management.

However, shelter staff members strongly opposed using the shelter system to support Homeward Bound due to concerns about the program’s efficacy. According to one shelter director: “People should not be told to leave San Francisco because they can’t afford to live here.”

City staff also noted that shelters cannot currently provide clients access to meals, laundry, and showers on demand, as is possible at the Navigation Center. Such services might need to be added to make shelters useful for short-term Homeward Bound placements.

APPENDIX A: CASE MANAGEMENT IN SHELTER

Program	Employed by ¹⁰	FTE	Salary cost (incl. benefits)	What does the program do?
SF START	Episcopal Community Services, under contract from DPH	10	\$573,199	The roving medical social workers on the Shelter Treatment Access and Resource Team assist clients at multiple shelter locations with planning, connection to resources, and goal setting for medical needs.
Coordinated Entry	Episcopal Community Services, under contract from DPH	4.0	\$246,505	The Coordinated Entry team, based at Next Door, helps clients at multiple shelter locations complete the coordinated assessment, for placement in federally funded Continuum of Care housing.
HSA-funded shelter staff	Shelter providers, under contract from HSA	9.85	\$544,084	HSA funds shelter staff to provide case management or similar services under a variety of job titles, including Information and Resource Specialists. Generally these staff cannot follow clients beyond the shelter where they are located.
Emergency Solutions Grant	Shelter providers, under contract from the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development	6.10	\$312,389	MOHCD administers this federal grant, which funds full or partial case management positions at most adult shelters in San Francisco.
TOTAL		29.95	\$1,676,176	

¹⁰ Contract management and amounts are based on FY15-16 agreements with departments and providers. Most contracted services listed will transition to DSHS in FY16-17. SF START will remain a DPH-contracted program for Medi-Cal billing purposes.