

County of Santa Clara

Office of Supportive Housing

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May 26, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
 Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive

From: Consuelo Hernandez, Director, Office of Supportive Housing (OSH)
 Carla Collins, Manager, Office of Gender Based Violence (GBV)

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Subject: Supportive Housing – Stakeholder Engagement

Under advisement from the January 14, 2020 (Item No. 26), Board of Supervisor's meeting, this memorandum responds to a request from Board President Chavez relating to the feasibility of including supportive housing for survivors of domestic violence (DV) in any possible future multi-family housing developments at the Civic Center.

The Office of Supportive Housing (OSH), the Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention (GBVP) and the Office of Women's Policy (OWP) convened meetings with key providers and stakeholders. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain feedback on feasibility, safety, essential amenities, and partnerships relating to providing supportive housing for survivors at the former San Jose City Hall site. The Administration used this opportunity to ask more broadly about other housing development sites funded by the County. Participants were asked the following three questions:

1. Is this feasible? Does it make sense to include DV survivors in the Civic Center Permanent Housing Plan?
2. Addressing the Concerns - Safety, Privacy, Access - What are the safety concerns? What are essential amenities & services for DV housing residents?
3. How do we best work together on this? What are the lessons learned from emergency shelter? Transitional housing? Rapid Rehousing? Rental Assistance programs?

Safety was the primary concern expressed by professionals and survivors alike. While the proposed site was praised for being near public transit, its location near the County's main jail was seen as a major concern. Participants expressed concerns that the site would be known as housing for survivors which would remove the perception of safety.

It was also noted that undocumented clients are fearful of the police and may not feel comfortable living in a location that is close to the Police Department. Appended to this report as Attachment A is a full summary report of the engagement approach, methods and summary of findings and Attachment B is a copy of the presentation materials used for the provider session.

Based on the feedback, the Administration does not recommend siting housing exclusively for survivors at the Civic Center. However, the Administration would: a) continue working with stakeholders to include some number of supportive housing units for survivors in future developments at the Civic Center; b) work with the DV Collaborative to identify other affordable housing developments that could include supportive housing units for survivors; and, c) collaborate with the DV Collaborative to determine if other sites might be suitable for siting housing exclusively for survivors. Finally, OSH will continue to engage with providers and survivors to work on incorporating certain general safety protocols and amenities at all County funded affordable and supportive housing sites.

Cc: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Marquez, Chief Operating Officer
James Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board
Ky Le, Deputy County Executive

Community Engagement: Exploring Permanent Housing for Survivors of Domestic Violence at the Former San Jose City Hall

Introduction

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. According to a 2018 report by the Office of Women's Policy (OWP), "Many women will go to great lengths to avoid the streets or shelter system, including staying in dangerous and unhealthy relationships or moving in with a partner, even when that situation is unsafe." The OWP report, which examined the intersection of gender and homelessness, also noted that women and men experience homelessness for different reasons, and among the women who were surveyed, more than half of them said they experienced violence, harassment or threats while living on the streets.

The four emergency shelter agencies, including Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI), Community Solutions, Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence and YWCA Silicon Valley, offer a combined 62 emergency beds for women and children fleeing violence in Santa Clara County. Additionally, these agencies house hundreds of individuals annually in motels if their emergency shelters are full or not the best solution for an individual. Yet more than 2,000 individuals are turned away due to lack of capacity every year. The system is simply overwhelmed by the need and the housing crisis. According to service providers, emergency shelters are being used more as transitional housing, with clients staying up to six months. Rapid Rehousing programs expect one to become responsible for partial rent after 90 days, but for many, this is not enough time to reach stabilization.

The County of Santa Clara has increased its support for the emergency domestic violence shelter agencies in the last two years. In 2019 funding for these four agencies grew to nearly \$2.4M allowing for more motel vouchers and case management services for those experiencing gender-based violence. Collaborative efforts have grown among the county departments, such as the Office of Supportive Housing, the Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention and the Social Services Agency, to leverage resources and meet emerging needs, especially as a response during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the goal of increasing access to safe and affordable housing for women and those fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence, the Board of Supervisors directed the Office of Supportive Housing to explore the use of the former City Hall facility as permanent housing for survivors of domestic violence. Recognizing that permanent solutions must be developed in partnership with survivors and those who serve them, staff hosted two focus groups. This report contains key findings and related recommendations from the focus groups with representatives from local domestic violence agencies and survivors of domestic violence.

Summary of Findings

Overall, it was the goal of the focus groups to obtain feedback on feasibility, safety, essential amenities, and partnership relating to providing permanent housing for survivors at the former city hall site.

Safety was the primary concern expressed by professionals and survivors. While the proposed site was praised for being near public transit, its location near the County's main jail was seen as a major concern. It was noted that undocumented clients are fearful of the police and may not feel comfortable living in a location that is close to the police department. Additionally, the high level of defendant activity in the area was a concern. Examples of heightened security measures that survivors felt were essential included security gates, security guards, safe

and adequate parking in close proximity. Finally, to preserve privacy and safety, the space should not be advertised as a home for survivors of domestic violence.

For the proposed site to work for survivors of domestic violence, survivor participants noted essentials relating to the well-being of the children. First, the site should be close schools and should have a safe place dedicated to recreational activities. Accessibility to childcare—either on site or close by—and grocery stores were also mentioned as priorities. Finally, they also noted the need for a computer lab for students and adults alike.

Both providers and survivors agreed that permanent housing options for domestic violence survivors should be prioritized, while noting several challenges. For example, having mixed populations (survivors and non-survivors) brings safety concerns, while having only survivors in a development allows them to support each other. Other recommendations included having a set aside for survivors of domestic violence and having smaller scattered locations with a mixture of family and single units throughout the county.

Methods

Conveners and Engagement Design

The Office of Supportive Housing worked in partnership with the Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention, the Office of Women's Policy and Destination:Home to host two focus groups: one with survivors of domestic violence and one with local agencies that serve them.

Recruitment

It was a priority to work with trusted organizations with strong community connections and trauma-informed and survivor-centered principles. The long-standing relationships with the local domestic violence shelter agencies was critical to securing participation. The local domestic violence agencies agreed to participate in a focus group and outreach to survivors. All participants with lived experience received a \$30 stipend for their time. Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence secured Spanish and Vietnamese translators so that language would not be a barrier.

Focus Group Participants

Leadership from Organizations that Serve Survivors

To gain the perspective from those who work directly with survivors, staff engaged local domestic violence shelter agencies and the Victim Services Unit of Santa Clara County. The meeting took place on June 25, 2020 with a total of 13 individuals from the Victim Services, Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, YWCA Silicon Valley, Women SV, and Asian Americans for Community Involvement.

- 7 County staff/conveners
- 6 Service providers

Focus Group with Survivors of Domestic Violence

It was important to capture the voice of those with lived experience to weigh in on safety concerns, required amenities and feasibility. With the outreach assistance from local service providers, 28 participants joined the focus group on July.

- 4 county reps
- 4 DV agency reps
- 2 translators (Spanish and Vietnamese)
- 28 survivor participants

Data Collection

Following an overview of the proposed project by the Office of Supportive Housing, the discussion was guided by three questions around feasibility, safety, essential amenities, and partnership.

Feasibility

- It is not safe for survivors to be in close proximity to the jails.
- Having mixed populations (survivors and non-survivors) brings safety concerns while having only survivors there allows them to support each other.
- Undocumented clients are fearful of police. Wondering how safe folks would feel being that it's close to police department.
- There is a lot of defendant activity in this area. Running into defendants is an issue.
- A mixture of both families and singles is best. If it happens, there should be a set aside
- In general, all buildings should be designed with safety in mind. Examples: good lighting, cameras, parking

Safety and Essential Amenities

- Accessibility to public transit and work opportunities is an advantage.
- Near good schools
- A safe space dedicated for recreational activities/equipment for kids
- Childcare that is close or inside
- Security- gate, security guards, safe and adequate parking lot based on the number of units
- Essential grocery options near by
- Two-bedroom housing
- A computer lab
- Privacy- Space should not be marketed or advertised as a DV home.
- Have support folks, like a DV Advocate,
- Childcare and play area
- Meeting spaces that are private
- Community space
- Computer lab for employment skill building and job search
- Private confidential offices
- Quiet wellness spaces.
- Community garden space.
- Onsite or near social supports and community resources
- Behavioral health services need to be on site.

Partnership

- Income limits should reflect our standard of living in San Jose.
- Rental assistance programs need to be more flexible because most landlords do not accept payments from third parties.
- More transitional housing that is available to clients for more than 90 days is needed.
- Emergency and Transitional housing do not help mothers with teens.
- U-visa recipients do not qualify for Section 8

Domestic Violence Agencies Consortium: Permanent DV Housing Roundtable

Thursday, June 25, 2020

1 pm - 2:30 pm

Zoom Call

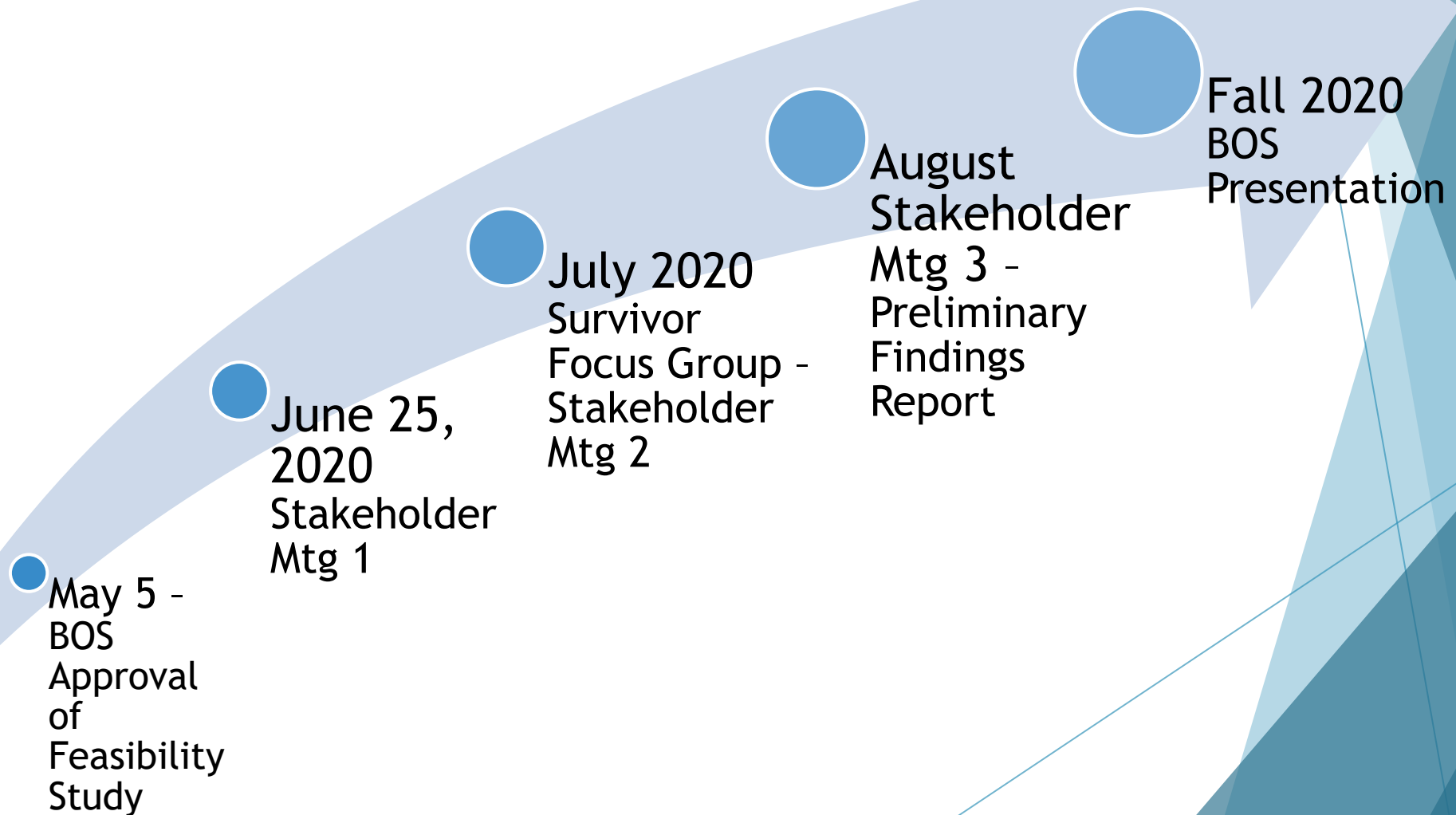
Welcome and Introductions

Agenda

1. Welcoming and Introductions:
 - ▶ Carla Collins, Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention
 - ▶ Consuelo Hernandez, Office of Supportive Housing
 - ▶ Collaboration of Partners -
 - ▶ Chad Bojorquez, Destination Home
 - ▶ Protima Pandey, Office of Women's Policy
 - ▶ Group Introductions
2. Civic Center Update
3. DVAC Feedback
4. Closing and Next Steps

Phase 1 Timeline

This entire project and approval process expected to be 3 - 4 years



Housing for survivors of domestic violence

What type of service enriched housing can we offer survivors of domestic violence?

- a. Temporary Shelter, Transitional Housing and Permanent Housing
- b. Preferences for DV survivors and the ability to move them from one development to another development.
 - i. Strong protections against discrimination in housing policies that promote transfers to safe housing
 - i. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
- c. Protection from discrimination due to domestic violence
- d. Options for permanent, affordable, and quality housing
- e. Avenues for economic stability (i.e. job protections, benefits, fair pay, child-care, and individual development accounts.

Civic Center Site



Civic Center Site

- ▶ Affordable and Supportive Housing
- ▶ Workforce housing, IPV housing
- ▶ 260-670 units
- ▶ Campus includes office, residential services
- ▶ Planning currently underway



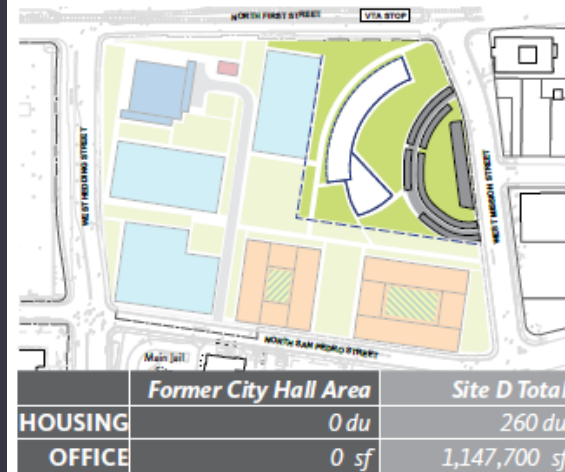
Housing Feasibility Study

Considerations

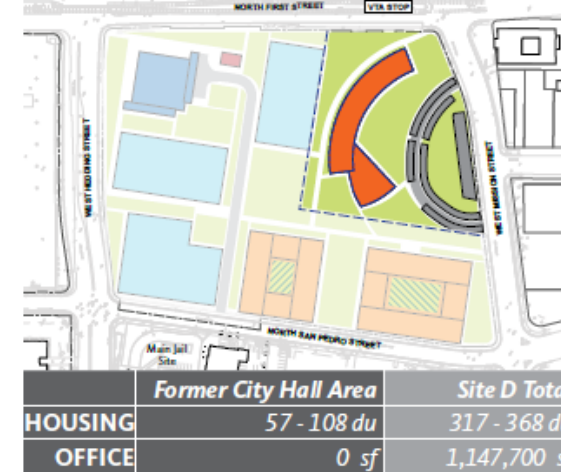
- ▶ Shape of the Parcel
- ▶ Easements (Utility, Stormwater, Cell Tower)
- ▶ Building Height Restrictions
- ▶ Soil Conditions
- ▶ Transportation Management Demand (TDM)

Site Alternatives Evaluated

1A. No Project with Housing + Office

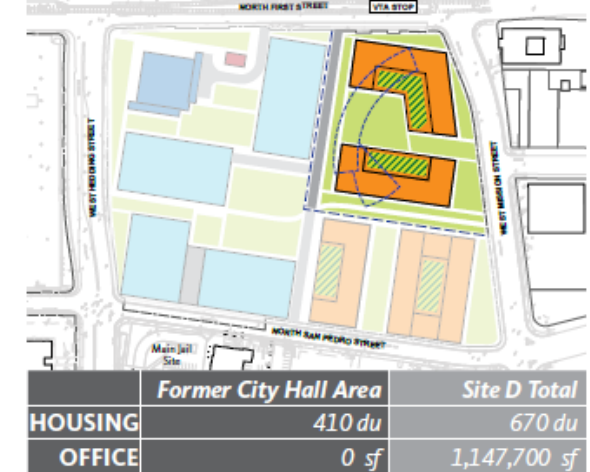


2. Adaptive Reuse as Housing

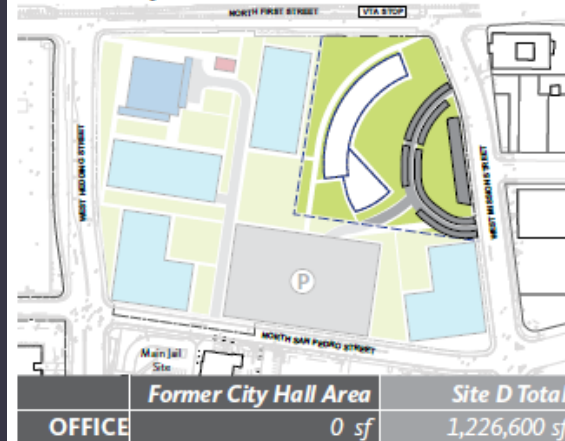


* Two schemes were considered - 57 large units and 108 small units

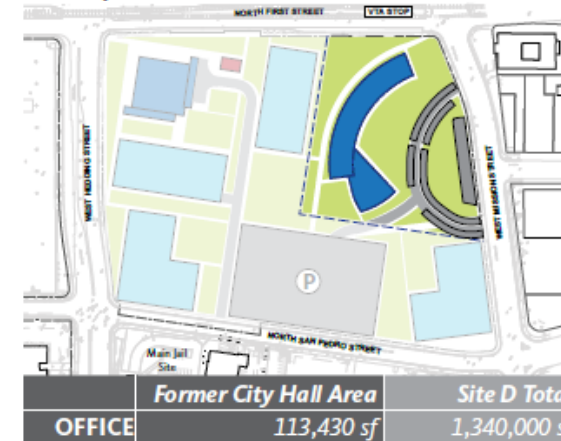
3. Comparison with Maximized Housing



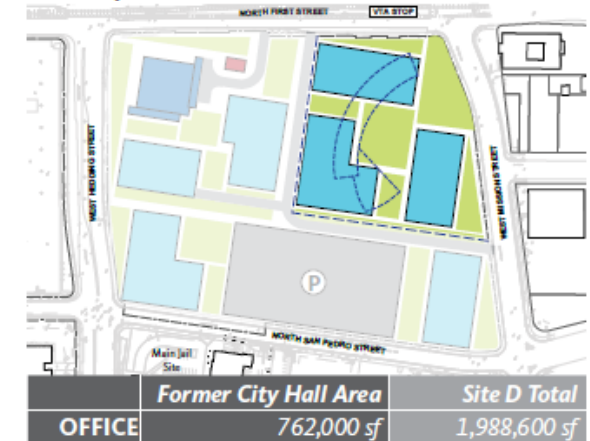
1B. No Project with Office

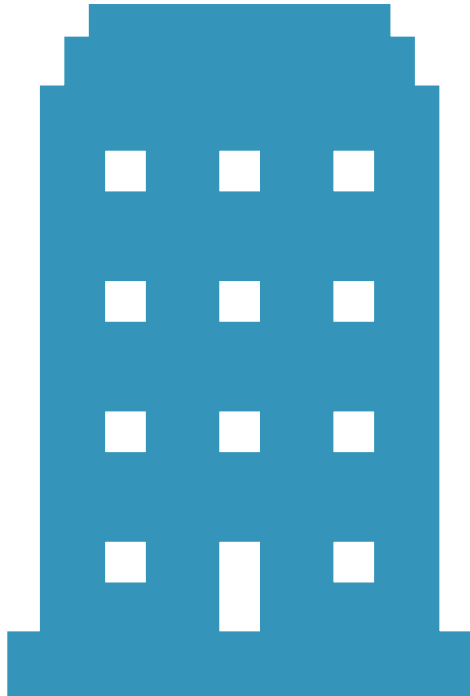


4. Adaptive Reuse as Office



5. Comparison with Maximized Office





Question 1: Is this feasible?

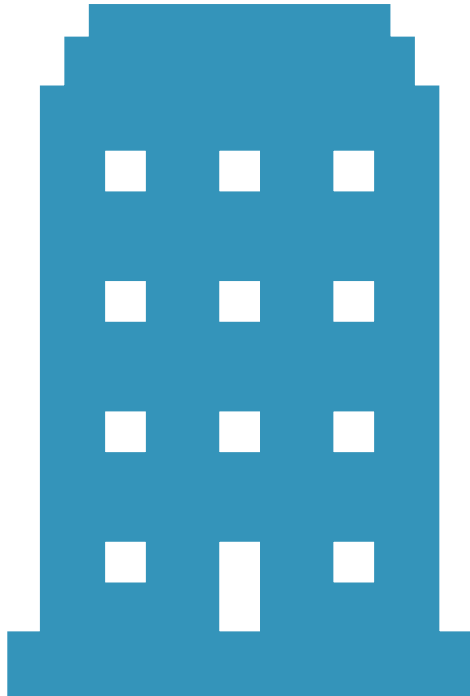
Does it make sense to include DV survivors in the Civic Center Permanent Housing Plan?

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Question 2: Addressing the Concerns - Safety, Privacy, Access

What are the safety concerns?
What are essential amenities &
services for DV housing residents?

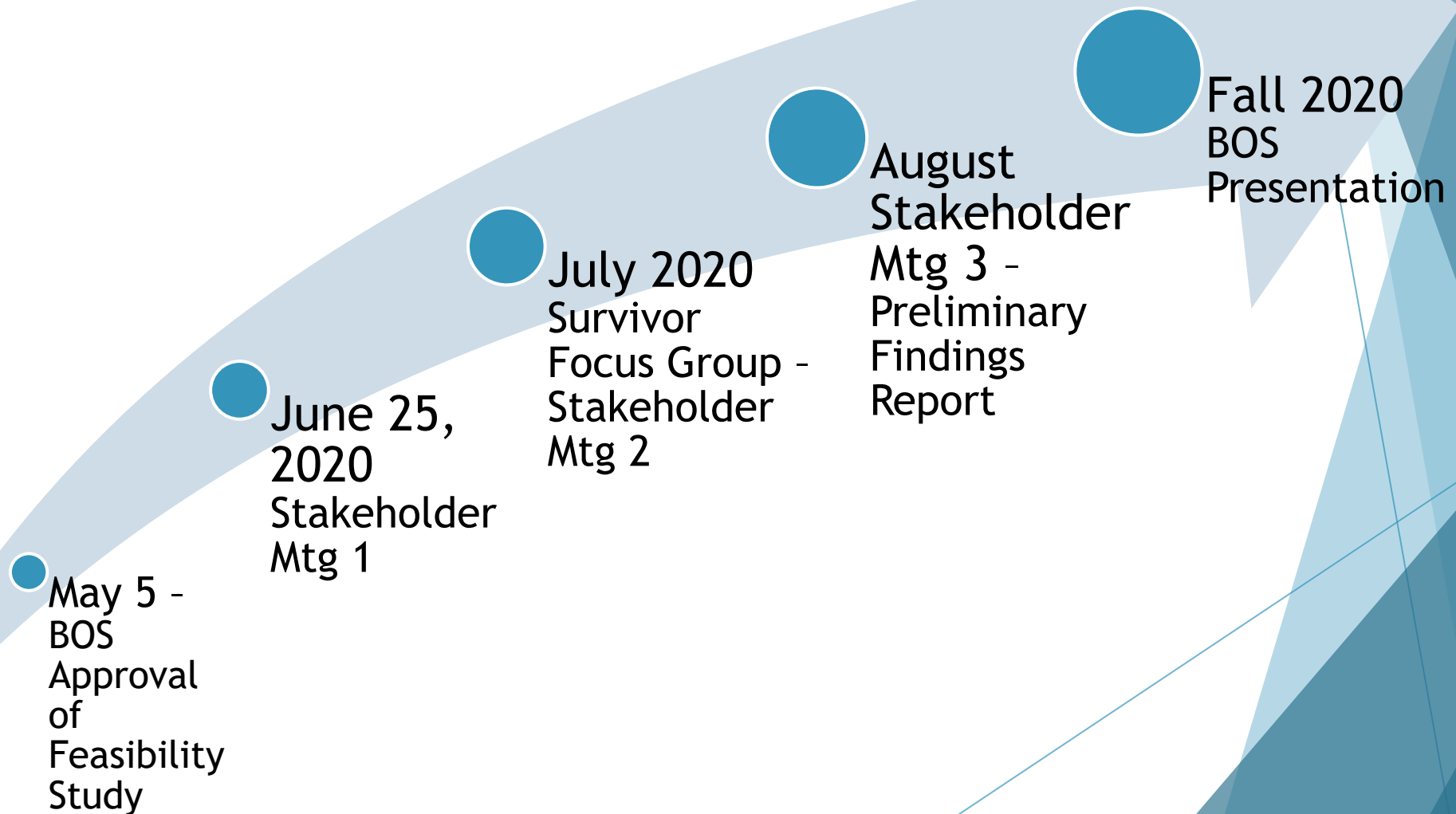


Question 3: How do we best work together on this?

What are the lessons learned from emergency shelter? Transitional housing? Rapid Rehousing? Rental Assistance programs?

Phase 1 Timeline

This entire project and approval process expected to be 3 - 4 years



Project Milestones

Feasibility Study

- CEQA Analysis
- Stakeholder Input

BOS Approval

Next housing phases listed

- Stakeholder Input



Summary and Q&A