

Activists ask county to let homeless keep camping at Stockton Boulevard site



January 29, 2019 | Sacramento Bee, The (CA)
Author: Theresa Clift | Page: 3A | Section: News
669 Words

Homeless activists are urging county and Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority officials to let homeless people keep camping at a vacant site along Stockton Boulevard, as long as they keep it clean.

The camp, nestled between an oil-change business and a used car lot near the corner of Fruitridge Road, has been vacant since 2010, when the San Juan Motel was demolished.

Public records indicate the site is owned by SHRA. Agency officials did not immediately return a request for comment.

On Wednesday afternoon, crews from Humboldt Fence Co. appeared to be drilling holes in the ground.

James Lee "Faygo" Clark, a homeless activist, said officials should let the people continue to camp at the site until construction starts at the site, as long as they keep it clean.

Recently, a dumpster was placed near the site and now it is full of trash, Clark said.

"We've got a shelter crisis going on here," Clark said. "Here we are in the middle of winter with people just trying to survive."

The Sacramento City Council declared a "shelter crisis" in November, which began Dec. 1 and is set to end March 1. The declaration indicates there are typically not enough shelter beds for all homeless people in the city on any given night.

It's not clear how long the people will be allowed to keep camping at the site. Some said they heard they have to leave by Wednesday.

"We're not just going in there and saying 'you guys have to leave,' but there will be a time when they have to leave," said Sgt. Shaun Hampton, Sacramento County Sheriff's department spokesman.

Hampton did not know when their deadline would be to move, he said.

The sheriff's department has been connecting the people with services that provide housing, food and other needs, Hampton said.

Dennis Jackson was staying at the city's triage shelter in north Sacramento, but there was no room for his fiancée, so he started staying at the encampment with her, he said.

"I couldn't stand seeing her out here in the cold with me in the warmth with my feet up," said Jackson, who became homeless in 2014 when his apartment changed hands. "They need to open more shelters."

Shelters have become a pressing issue in Sacramento. When it opened a year ago, the Railroad Drive triage shelter had 200 beds, using bunk beds to maximize space. The shelter recently cut its capacity to 100 beds because it was unsafe for many people to sleep on the top bunks due to seizures and other medical issues, city officials said.

Mayor Darrell Steinberg has asked all eight council members to find spaces for homeless shelters in each district. Councilman Jay Schenirer is proposing a site at the Florin light rail station parking lot, about 4 miles from the homeless encampment.

Asked if he and his fiancée would stay in the shelter if it opens, Jackson responded, "of course."

Patricia Houlden, who has been camping at the site on and off for four years, said she feels safer there than sleeping in more public places. The tent she shares with her boyfriend sits toward the back of the lot, against a patch of trees.

"I'm not directly on the street sidewalks like I've been before, so I don't have to worry about as much," said Houlden, 40, of south Sacramento. "People driving by in cars, they throw things at you, all kinds of ridiculous, immature behaviors."

Annette Mancilla, who has been staying at the site for about a year, said the activists' help has lifted spirits around the camp.

"Just a little bit of help gives us hope," said Mancilla, 48, of Sacramento, while raking up trash Monday afternoon. "The help is giving them an encouragement to do better."

- **CITATION(AGLC STYLE)**

Theresa Clift, Staff Writer, 'Activists ask county to let homeless keep camping at Stockton Boulevard site', *Sacramento Bee, The* (online), 29 Jan 2019 3A <<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/171448ABCAFC7060>>

Caption:

Autumn Payne apayne@sacbee.com

Lucille Mendez sits Monday with her dog, Pappas, in a homeless encampment on Stockton Boulevard that is drawing complaints from nearby businesses. The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority

owns the property.

Autumn Payne apayne@sacbee.com

A tent stands near holes SHRA was digging Monday to install a fence to keep people off its property.

- **CITATION(AGLC STYLE)**

Theresa Clift, Staff Writer, 'Activists ask county to let homeless keep camping at Stockton Boulevard site', *Sacramento Bee*, *The* (online), 29 Jan 2019 3A <<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/171448ABCAFC7060>>

© Copyright (c) 2019 The Sacramento Bee