



40 Prado

SAN LUIS OBISPO'S HOMELESS SERVICE CENTER - A CASE STUDY

California Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA)
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Background Info and Context

San Luis Obispo County is located along California's Central Coast and has a population of 270,000. Like most of Coastal California, real estate prices are climbing and home affordability is a growing concern for low- and moderate-income residents. Last year, the city of San Luis Obispo was ranked the sixth most unaffordable place to live in the United States¹. These conditions have raised concerns about homelessness in the region. A Point-in-Time study conducted in 2015 counted 1,515 homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo, with 87% of those individuals unsheltered.

Homelessness has been a priority for community leaders for years. In 2008-2009, the County and City of San Luis Obispo adopted a ten-year goal of ending homelessness. More than 100 community members and local leaders participated in the process to develop a plan that focused on housing, available services, and other homelessness prevention measures. Core to this strategy was the development of regional, one-stop homeless service centers.

Upon adoption of the plan in 2009, the County selected **the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)** as fiscal agent and future operator of a new, one-stop homelessness center to be constructed in the city of San Luis Obispo.

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)

CAPSLO is the agency designated by California's Department of Community Services and Development as the county's Community Action Agency (CAA), one in a national network of more than 1,100 such agencies that offer Head Start, family support, shelter services, veterans support, weatherization, health education, and more for disadvantaged individuals and families. CAAs are required to have a tri-partied board of directors, with one third community representatives, one third government representatives, and one third business representatives. CAPSLO is an independent nonprofit organization and has a long track record of serving disadvantaged county residents and the broader San Luis Obispo community.

Homelessness in the San Luis Obispo region became a city and county issue as early as 1987. The county sheriff's office often would pick up homeless individuals throughout the county and house them in trailers. It became apparent that there was no entity able to address the growing problem. In 1989, CAPSLO (then known as the San Luis Obispo Economic Opportunity Commission) formed a partnership with the City of San Luis Obispo and the County of San Luis Obispo. With strong leadership, capacity, and a commitment to serving the lowest of the low-income individuals and families, CAPSLO became the lead agency in addressing homelessness in the region. In subsequent years, CAPSLO cultivated relationships with other social service providers, a broad coalition representing the local faith community, and local government to become a nationally-recognized leader in assisting individuals and families facing homelessness.

¹ Sandra Duerr. "SLO County is sixth most unaffordable place to live in the U.S." *The Tribune*, June 26, 2016. <http://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/article86153657.html>

CAPSLO's current leadership team has decades of experience in community development. This project is currently overseen by senior leadership, including:

- Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg, CAPSLO's executive director for more than thirty years, has grown the organization into the second largest community action agency in the state of California. Her advocacy and commitment throughout her career on behalf of underserved individuals and families in San Luis Obispo was critical in establishing CAPSLO as a leader in addressing homelessness.
- James Famalette, CAPSLO's chief operating officer, was formerly CEO of Gottschalks Inc., a national department store. He maintains a very active role in this project's development. His private sector real estate expertise has proven critical in managing day-to-day project activities for CAPSLO's new homelessness service center and shelter.
- Grace McIntosh, CAPSLO's Deputy Director, was former head of San Luis Obispo Red Cross and has significant experience in managing social services programs. Grace has developed innovative programs to be located at 40 Prado that will meet the comprehensive needs of the homeless participants.

Addressing homelessness has been a core part of CAPSLO's mission since its inception. Among other services, CAPSLO has operated two shelter facilities in San Luis Obispo -- the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter and the Prado Day Center.



CAPSLO currently operates two facilities to serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter (left) is open every night and offers 50+ beds year-round. The Prado Day Center (right) serves 100+ individuals during the day. While both facilities provide invaluable services to the SLO community, they are aging and require repairs and modern updates. Further, the Prado Day Center must find a new site due to expansion of a neighboring water treatment facility.

- **The Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter** (night shelter) opened in 1989, provides 50 beds nightly, year-round. An additional 25 to 35 beds are added through the Interfaith Coalition for the homeless "overflow" shelter program, which is operated by one host church each month. The shelter provides more than 25,000 shelter nights each year and offers meals, showers, mail, phone and message services, information and referrals, and access to case management.

- **The Prado Day Center** (day center) opened in 1997 and houses up to 100 homeless individuals during the day. It served more than 1,400 individuals in 2016 alone. On-site meals are served by the People's Kitchen, a partnering nonprofit organization. Showers, laundry, and other vital services are available, as well as employment assistance, housing referrals, social services, and activities for children.

While these facilities continue to operate, the buildings have been in daily, heavy use for decades and increasing maintenance costs are a challenge. The Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter is comprised of portable buildings that are not intended for heavy, long-term use. The Prado Day Center will need a new location as the city plans to expand a neighboring wastewater treatment facility in the coming years. Further, with separate locations for day and night services, resources and staff are split between two sites. It became clear that a single, full-service facility would not only more efficiently meet community needs, but would also allow CAPSLO to consolidate resources and expand supportive services.

The city and county also recognized the need for a new facility and selected CAPSLO as the fiscal agent and operator of a future homeless service center. CAPSLO initiated an intensive community planning process to locate a site and develop a vision for a new facility.

Development Process



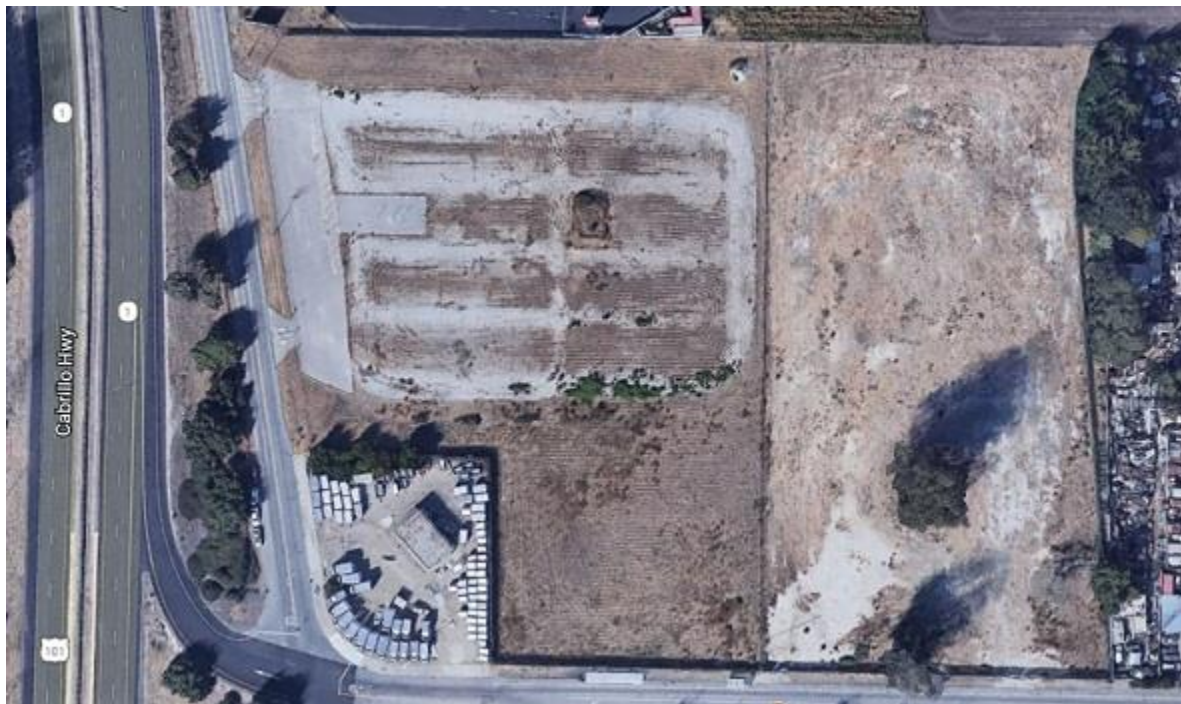
First site: CAPSLO initially secured a 1.1-acre site on county-owned land to construct a two-level facility. However, CAPSLO later agreed to find a new site due to local opposition.

In 2010, a development group was formed to lead the new service center effort. The group consisted of key CAPSLO staff, community members, representatives from the County and City

of San Luis Obispo, social service professionals, architects, and planners. The group's first task was to explore and evaluate potential sites for the facility. Various sites across San Luis Obispo were considered and studied and a pre-campaign feasibility study was conducted in late 2010.

In 2011, a 1.1-acre site on county-owned land was identified and selected. CAPSLO began leasing the site in April 2011 and hired a local architecture firm, Garcia Architecture and Design, to design a two-level, 25,000 square foot facility with a construction budget of approximately \$7 million. Preliminary plans were approved and the development team began to raise funds. CAPSLO was awarded a \$1 million grant from the State Office of Housing and Community Development for construction.

Once public hearings on the new facility started, however, community opposition began to surface and contentious disagreements among community members, business owners, and government officials began to go public. By mid-2012, opposition from neighbors and business owners had grown into a vocal and public campaign against the project. In response to the neighborhood opposition, CAPSLO put the project on hold in late 2012. By 2013, the development team began a new search for an alternate site.



Second site: CAPSLO will develop the facility on 3.2 acres of this 9.7-acre site, located less than a block from the Prado Day Center. The site will be shared with a future Regional Transit Authority facility.

In 2014, CAPSLO and the development team located an alternative site, which would be shared with a planned Regional Transit Authority (RTA) facility. CAPSLO's relationships with local policymakers helped not only to identify the site, but also move agreements along quickly. CAPSLO and RTA formed an MOU to purchase 3.2 acres of the full 9.7-acre site for \$750,000. Jointly Purchased 9.7 acres for \$2.250 million and CAPSLO's share \$750k for 3.2 acres

The second site has already proven to be a more appropriate location than the first. The substantially larger acreage will accommodate a single-story facility. This allows for better circulation and segregation of on-site uses and services. Further, the upcoming transit center will provide ample access for shelter clientele. And finally, the new site attracted little opposition from neighboring property owners.

With a new site identified, a new nonprofit organization, the Homeless Foundation of SLO, was established to support the effort. The group, led by well-respected members of the local community, began working closely with local media, government officials, and prominent community members to fundraise and build support for the project. The Foundation merged with the existing Friends of the Prado Day Center, a group of dedicated supporters of CAPSLO's work for years. Working in coordination with CAPSLO and local government, they secured the services of a public relations firm and a fundraising consultant to develop messaging and guide the capital campaign.

Within months, the development team secured several high-level donations and public endorsements, even from previously oppositional community members. The team's work to engage local leaders, maintain open dialogue with the community, and work with PR and fundraising professionals proved critical to moving the project forward. The Foundation and CAPSLO prioritized face-to-face meetings with community members and potential donors, rather than holding public meetings. This proved far more successful in building political and financial support for the project.

The development team was also able to keep the previously-awarded \$1 million in state funds for the project despite the change in the project's location. Initially intended for construction, the development team used the funds for acquisition of the second site. Key state policymakers, aware of the region's needs and CAPSLO's trusted role in the community, advocated for the flexibility. The development team also secured new grants from both the City and County of San Luis Obispo.

In July 2014, CAPSLO purchased the 3.2-acre site. The project architect redesigned the facility from its initial two-story concept to a single-story, 20,000 square foot building. Logistically, this proved to be a better solution, as the single-story facility will allow more flexibility for staff and easier access to both the day and night shelters on site.

While some additional costs were needed for environmental, soil, and engineering analysis, as well as extensive site work to meet flood zone building codes, the City of San Luis Obispo assisted by expediting some regulatory and permit processes. It also waived some fees in exchange for a road easement around the edge of the site.

By the end of 2016, the Foundation had raised more than \$2.6 million in donations, in addition to previously secured public funds. Construction began on the new facility, to be known as 40 Prado, in early June of 2017 with a ceremonial groundbreaking in November 2016. 40 Prado is scheduled to open in May 2018.

Financing

Source	Land	Soft Costs	Site & Building	Total
<i>State</i>	\$ 749,943	-	\$ 250,052	\$ 999,995
<i>Local Government</i>	-	\$ 262,000	\$ 713,000	\$ 975,000
<i>In-Kind</i>		\$ 300,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 400,000
<i>FHLB/AHP</i>	-	-	\$ 700,000	\$ 700,000
<i>Foundation</i>	-	\$ 101,450	\$2,625,295	\$2,726,745
<i>CAPSLO</i>		\$ 449,500	\$ 376,379	\$ 825,879
Total	\$ 749,943	\$ 1,317,676	\$4,560,000	\$ 6,627,619

Table 1: Overview of financing for the development of 40 Prado

Total development cost of 40 Prado is \$6,627,619, with sources and uses reflected in the table above. The sources of financing for this project were:

1. Emergency Housing and Assistance Program Capital Development (EHAPCD): \$999,995
 - a. EHAPCD is a state grant program. Initially awarded to the proposed project on the first site, special permission was required to change the use of funds from construction (first site) to acquisition (second site). Due to the changes in site and project, the original grant was extended for two years (two one-year extensions).
2. CAPSLO Funds: \$825,879
3. Local Government: \$975,000
4. SLO Homeless Foundation (capital campaign): \$2,726,745
5. Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) Affordable Housing Program (AHP) Grant: \$700,000
 - a. If the project team applies for and secures New Markets Tax Credits, it will supplant the \$700,000 FHLB AHP grant with \$1,000,000 in NMTC equity.
6. Donations (In-Kind), Shelter Sale: \$400,000

Initial Site Negotiations

The original owners of the site asked for \$3.5 million for the 10-acre second site. The site is in a flood plain and power lines impact part of the site. The site is also in an Airport Land Use zone, due to its proximity to the San Luis Obispo Airport. These issues had to be reviewed and resolved before proceeding with the project. In the end, CAPSLO negotiated the land price down to \$2.25 million and formed a partnership with the Regional Transit Authority to purchase the land and sub-divide with RTA for a new RTA facility.

Construction Financing

The project requires construction loans financed against the remaining donor pledges made to the SLO Homeless Foundation. The San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund, a locally-based community development financial institution (CDFI) will provide a loan of \$600,000 at 2% interest, along with a construction loan from a local bank of \$1,000,000 at 3.5%. The remaining funds will be from the original sources noted above.

Financing Gap

In July 2017, the CAPSLO team learned that they did not receive the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program (AHP) award, leaving a \$700,000 funding gap. CAPSLO has been advised to re-apply for the grant in 2018 with additional criteria boosting the scoring grade for the project. The development team also consulted with the California Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA) to identify alternative sources to complete the project. CCEDA, a statewide Community Economic Development (CED) association, is funded by the State of California through the Community Service and Development Department to provide CED technical assistance.

CCEDA consulted with CAPSLO and researched the viability of New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) in this project to fill the \$700,000 gap as a contingency plan to AHP funds. NMTCs are a federal tax credit program, awarded by the Department of Treasury to eligible financial institutions. These institutions subsequently allocate NMTCs to local commercial and community facility projects that create new jobs and revitalize local economies. Once allocated, NMTCs are sold to private sector tax credit investors, which generates equity for the project. The equity in most projects from NMTCs is generally around 25% of the eligible development costs (hard cost expenses).

Potential for New Markets Tax Credits

The New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) program is administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. The NMTC program incentivizes investment in distressed communities by allowing private investors to receive federal tax credits in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries, known as Community Development Entities (CDEs). NMTC awards are highly competitive and difficult to obtain. While they are not feasible for every project, they can be an important tool to fill financing gaps late in the development process. To be eligible for NMTC funding, the project must meet several requirements, including:

1. The project must be located in an eligible census tract.
2. The eligible basis (expenses eligible for funding under the NMTC program) must be more than \$5-6 million.
3. If construction has already begun, expenses are eligible for NMTC funding only if they occur within 24 months of an NMTC agreement.
4. Financial institutions receive NMTC awards, and this recipient financial institution must be interested in allocating credits to the specific project.

The project must be in an eligible census tract (number 1 above), which is also assessed by degree of distress. Highly distressed or severely impacted census tracts have a higher percentage of individuals living below the poverty line, and are preferred by most tax credit investors. There are, however, special circumstances which will qualify tracts as highly distressed (more information on this can be found on the Treasury's website)². There are also qualifiers based on who the project primarily benefits (if it benefits very low-income populations). Organizations (developers) must identify CDEs willing to make a case to their investors for commitment to a CED project.

Even if a project meets the first three requirements, the final hurdle (number 4 above) simply cannot be controlled by a nonprofit developer. The NMTC-awarded financial institution has full discretion in the projects it wishes to support. Therefore, the project team will seek other public and private resources to fill the project financing gap while exploring NMTC potential.

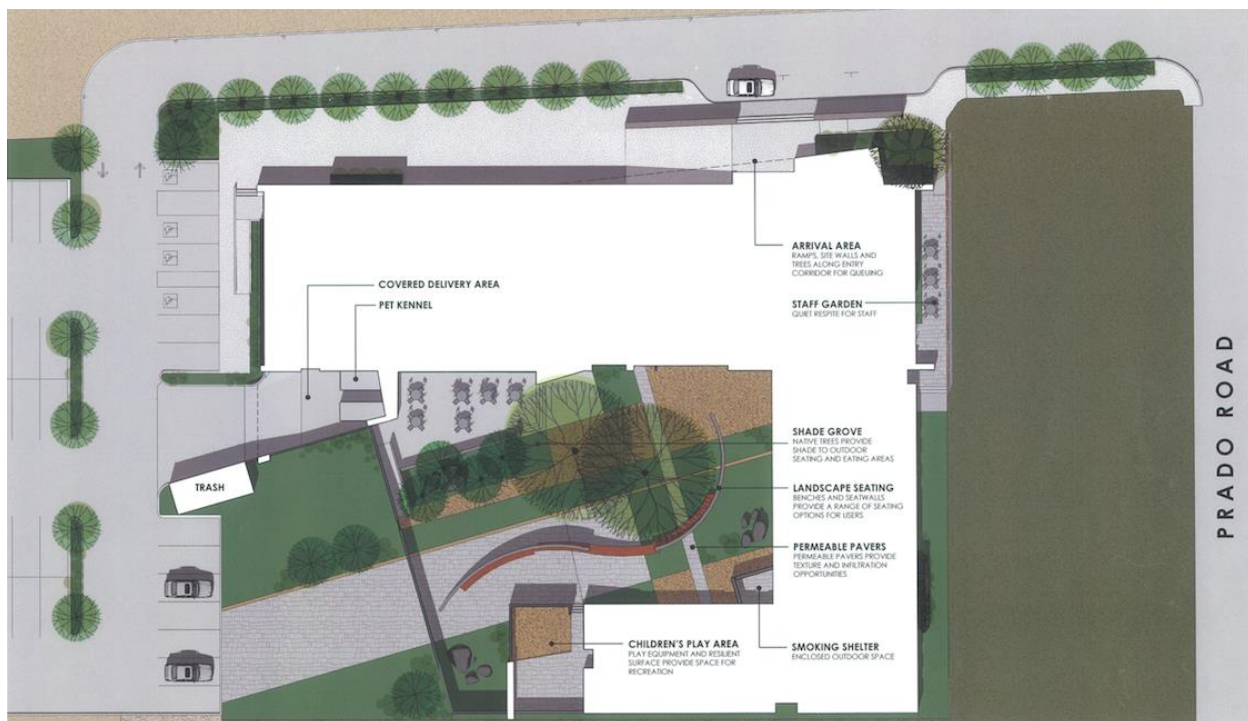
If awarded, the project's initial project budget would be adjusted to incorporate additional equity, since an NMTC award would exceed the \$700,000 AHP gap. With a conservative estimate of \$1 million generated by NMTCs, the development costs would increase to \$6,927,619. This equity would cover the loss of the \$700,000 FHLB AHP grant, and the surplus funds could allow for additional investments and amenities at 40 Prado. CAPSLO is exploring the possible addition of solar power generation (i.e. roof solar panel system) if additional funds are awarded. This added upfront cost, financed with NMTCs, could substantially reduce 40 Prado's operating expenses into the future.

² New Markets Tax Credits, CDFI Fund, U.S. Treasury. <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx>

Architectural Renderings



Rendering of 40 Prado, CAPSLO's Homeless Service Center



Exterior Plan of 40 Prado

[11]

Key Lessons

Organizational Alignment, Commitment, and Flexibility

Strong organizational alignment, commitment, and flexibility are critical in completing real estate projects. While CED projects offer considerable benefits, they are also incredibly complex, with many variables, risks, obstacles, and regulations to navigate. They also take time. CAPSLO's project will be completed more than a decade after initial approvals, and five years after securing the site.

To best manage these challenges, stable, invested leadership is critical. CAPSLO's seasoned leaders, including CEO Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg and COO Jim Famalette, managed the project both internally and externally, and both played key roles in shepherding this project to success. Ms. Steinberg was deeply involved with the formation of the project as early as 1989 and established strong partnerships between CAPSLO and the City, County, community members, and business organizations. Her tenacity as the leader of CAPSLO continues to move the project forward by creating partnerships needed to overcome financing and development challenges. Mr. Famalette's extensive private sector real estate experience was also a timely addition, as the project was entering the financing and development phase.

Beyond leadership roles, staff and/or consultants with political, real estate, and finance experience are also important to manage day-to-day activities, such as contracts, public relations, and legal issues during the development process. Organizations must consider the financial and staffing investment needed to take on real estate projects. CAPSLO strategically expanded its project team to bring expertise in to address specific and technical challenges.

Cultivating external leadership is also important. CAPSLO's strategy to build a cross-discipline core development team and a supporting fundraising and community relations nonprofit organization helped to keep lines of communication open among key stakeholders while ensuring that expertise was always accessible. This process brought in business leaders, public relations and fundraising expertise, and other experienced professionals, including an architect with experience in designing community-serving projects.

Support of the Board of Directors

CED projects require commitment at every level of an organization. Support of the board of directors is critical. While every organization is different, in most cases, clear communication and transparency with board members not only streamlines decision-making, but also empowers members to become stronger supporters by making important connections or helping the staff with specific issues.

From top to bottom, CAPSLO's board, management, and staff are committed to the belief that the needs of people must always come first. All levels of the organization work toward meeting those needs, especially for the lowest-income families and individuals. The organizational

alignment has empowered CAPSLO to take a measured risk on a very challenging project – both with its use as a homeless service center as well as its size as a \$6-7 million facility.

CAPSLO's tri-partite board structure of community/business, government, and low-income representatives also represent the key partnerships and expertise needed for a CED project of this scale. The diverse skillset represented on the board provided CAPSLO with an invested network of leaders and professionals that actively supported the project. In many instances, board members or the institutions they represented became partners in the project.

Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Through CED projects, nonprofit organizations have an opportunity to grow and greatly expand their impact. Further, these projects can attract new funding sources and create new community assets. When conditions are right, capable organizations should consider an entrepreneurial approach to serving community.

Real estate and development projects, however, do carry risk and only organizations with a firm understanding of a project's cost and risk exposure should proceed. Organizations would also be wise to have contingency funds accessible to insulate the organization if delays or unforeseen challenges arise.

CAPSLO's entrepreneurial style and stable financial position allowed its leadership to take a measurable risk to complete this project and expand the agency's overall capacity. CAPSLO, under current its current leadership, has embraced opportunity in recent years, increasing its budget from \$56 million in 2010 to \$75 million in 2017. Today, it is the second largest community action agency in the state. Its growth has allowed it to consider new opportunities, including more CED projects. Organizations must understand risk, but should also be open to exploring entrepreneurial opportunities, especially if a need will be met and the project is financially and operationally feasible.

Finally, among the most important factors to understand before taking on a project of this scale is the environment and support of the immediate community. CAPSLO's engagement with the people, businesses, and leaders of SLO, along with its decades of trust earned from years serving the community, were critical to the success of the project. Unexpected challenges in the development process were much easier to tackle with such a broad base of support that included many local professionals, each with their own relationships and expertise.

Community Outreach

Some CED projects, such as homeless shelters and service centers, tend to raise concerns among nearby residents and business owners. While this is always a difficult challenge to overcome, community outreach and transparency are critical to understand and prepare for these challenges early in the development process.

While the first site was derailed by politics and local opposition, engagement with the nonprofit Friends of Prado Day Center and subsequent formation of the Homeless Foundation of SLO

proved critical in moving the project forward at the second site. The foundation, strategically formed to engage the community, was composed of respected community leaders, local government officials, and prominent business owners. Working with veteran CAPSLO staff and board members, the Foundation ensured that the project was understood by the community early in the process. Foundation members conducted many face-to-face meetings with local stakeholders, which proved immensely helpful not only in building support, but also in fundraising for 40 Prado.

Political Engagement and Support

Relationships with key government decision makers are critical to the success of most CED projects. This is especially true for projects that require public sector funding and regulatory review. For more than 30 years, CAPSLO leadership has cultivated strong relationships with the city and county of San Luis Obispo, as well as with policymakers at the state level.

The development team, including CAPSLO leadership and members of the Foundation board, kept political leadership in the loop, which directly benefitted the project. Strong relationships and support from state elected officials, for example, allowed the development team to extend an initial \$999,995 state grant several times. The state also allowed for a change the project site from the first site to the second. None of this would have been possible without engaging political leadership.

Locally, CAPSLO and the Foundation ensured regular communication between the development team, community members, and local government officials. As the project moved forward, the city offered its support by assembling an internal “SWAT team” to guide the project. The city designated a single point of contact to efficiently work directly with the development team on a variety of issues.

By engaging local government early in the process, and by maintaining regular contact with key government staff, the development team was more flexible and could fast-track permits, streamline regulatory reviews, and waive fees to move the effort forward. For these types of projects, communication with government is essential, as many potential problems that arise during a long development process can be easier to face with the support of policymakers.

Consult the Experts

It is worthwhile to consult with staff and volunteers during the planning process, especially those that will eventually work at the facility. Their expertise is an invaluable resource to ensure any potential issues – safety, logistics, accessibility, and more – are identified and addressed early in the project’s design phase.

The initially proposed homeless services center was designed as a two-story facility, with one floor dedicated to day use and the other overnight services. When the project moved to the second site, the development team actively reached out to current homeless services staff with years of experience serving individuals and families. Staff assisted in design, layout, and logistics. During these conversations, the development team found that the two-story option

would have presented logistical and security challenges for shelter staff, and that the one-story concept was a much more effective solution for delivery of services. Homeless services staff also weighed in on parking, security, kitchens, and even pet storage facilities, to ensure a much more efficient, accommodating, and staff-friendly facility.

CAPSLO also benefitted greatly from the Homeless Foundation of SLO's fundraising expertise. Community Action regulations can be obstacles for fundraising. The Foundation, however, played a much more influential role in soliciting high-level gifts and holding one-on-one fundraising meetings with donors. The Foundation's fundraising expertise guided the capital campaign and allowed CAPSLO to participate in fundraising. This coordination proved invaluable to the project's success.

Garcia Architecture and Design, based in San Luis Obispo, joined the development team early in the process. The firm provided architectural renderings and design ideas for both the initial site and the current project. They worked closely with the homeless services staff to ensure maximum functionality while making a very strong architectural statement -- that homeless service centers do not need to look like temporary trailers.

Finally, with support from the State of California's Community Services and Development Division, the California Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA) is providing development assistance to Community Action Agencies (like CAPSLO) throughout the state. CCEDA is assisting CAPSLO in structuring the project's financing, and locating community development funding resources to complete and augment the shelter's services.

Interviewees

Elizabeth “Biz” Steinberg
Chief Executive Officer, CAPSLO

Jim Famalette
Chief Operating Officer, CAPSLO

John Spatafore
Chair, SLO Homeless Foundation

Roy Rawlings
Chair, Friends of Prado Day Center

Shawn Ison
Homeless Services Manager, Prado Day Center

George Garcia
Architect, Garcia Architecture and Design

Katie Lichtig
City Manager, City of San Luis Obispo

Greg Hermann
Analyst, City of San Luis Obispo

Jerry Rioux
Executive Director, SLO Housing Trust Fund

Appendix: Op-Ed by John Spatafore, Chair of the Homeless Foundation of SLO

What made SLO's new homeless services center a reality? We all did

BY JOHN A. SPATAORE
OCTOBER 24, 2017 2:41 PM

40 Prado is a consolidated center that will provide services to children, families and adults who are temporarily homeless. There will be temporary shelter with separate living quarters for families with children, men, and women. There will be case management coordinating after school programs for children; job training with placement assistance; medical care on a regular basis; and in certain situations, recuperative care for the medically fragile. Construction began earlier this year and completion is anticipated in the summer of 2018.

Why has this happened here when so many communities struggle to provide even basic services?

This happened here because of the compassion and character of our community. Over \$3.7 million, approximately 80 percent, of the funds needed for the project came from individual contributions. The remainder came from our city, county and state governments.

Communities throughout California and the rest of the country are struggling to address the many issues related to those who find themselves homeless. We did it. The people of San Luis Obispo County accomplished this because we are committed to addressing this issue, not ignoring it.

40 Prado is unique, not only because of the breadth and depth of its programs, but because it happened at all.

There was, for example, a dinner conversation with a friend of mine who thought this location would be perfect for the consolidated center.

There was the individual who flew, at his own expense, to Phoenix and met with the president of AMERCO, U-Haul's parent corporation, who held an option to buy the 10-acre plot where the center is now being constructed. After this meeting, U-Haul decided to delay exercising their option to purchase. As a result, the owners of the property offered it to the Regional Transit Authority and Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo for a purchase price \$1 million less than the asking price of \$3.2 million.

There were the people who met with property owners near 40 Prado and with city and county officials to discuss this project, answer questions and develop a working relationship to further its success.

There were those from Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo who met and developed positive relationships with other nonprofits, Community Health Center and our two local hospitals to create programs that would be critical to providing much-needed services to those families and individuals who would come to 40 Prado and begin the process of achieving stability in their lives.

There were those members of the Homeless Foundation of San Luis Obispo County Board who, through their years of service in the community, developed support for this project throughout the county. Each member of this board has deep and meaningful connections in their respective fields which created instant credibility for this project.

There were countless presentations at our local places of worship, social clubs and civic groups where the reception was always warm and genuine, allowing us to discuss the project, answer questions and solicit support. These opportunities created new and stronger relationships throughout our communities for the community that would be served at 40 Prado.

There was a community outreach plan developed by Barnett Cox and Associates involving local radio stations, KSBY and The Tribune newspaper. Donations spiked when The Tribune wrote supportive editorials and media outlets presented a concerted campaign to promote the project. There is no way to downplay the importance of our local newspaper, television station and multiple radio stations in the success that 40 Prado represents.

The magic of crowdsourcing allowed us to reach countless others beyond our community. A family in Oregon sent a check for \$500 because their four children asked them to forgo Christmas presents and donate to this project instead.

Donations of all amounts were made, including a \$10 check from a woman in our county who wrote, "I was recently homeless but am now living in my own place. I can only send this small amount, but will send more when I can." There were countless other examples of this indomitable spirit.

We should all recognize what we have accomplished together and continue working to support the programs and services at 40 Prado.

I am proud to be part of our community and will always cherish the compassion and character we share.

John A. Spatafore is president of the Homeless Foundation of San Luis Obispo County.

From: The Tribune of San Luis Obispo

<http://www.sanluisobispo.com/opinion/readers-opinion/article180678896.html>