

From: [Matt Gronow](#)
To: [Jalipa, Brent \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Chung, Lauren \(BOS\)](#); [Marie McKigney](#); [Andrea Gomez Pietrini](#); [Sherrill, Stephen \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: 1035 Van Ness and Swords to Plowshares
Date: Wednesday, December 3, 2025 7:24:03 AM

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Good morning Brent,

Lauren Chung, advised me to sending me these question to you as the clerk of the Budget and Finance Committee, as I am unable to attend to today's meeting.

As a member of the local community and resident of the Van Ness and Myrtle St, I and my fellow residents have a number of questions and concerns about the Swords to Ploughshares funding application with the city for the 1035 Van Ness Project and its impact to local community.

We appreciate and support the need for more housing, particularly for veterans. However, we in this community face a number of day to day issues: open drug use and trade; encampments and homelessness; defection and street cleanliness; and the low occupation of commercial shop fronts and activation of the Van Ness Corridor. A supportive housing project for recovering people with drug addiction and mental health issues does not seem in the collective best interest.

It is felt that the City, its committees or departments are not collectively nor critically thinking of consequences, these applications for funding have on the community; not its boarder needs. There is a rush to gain funding and push through a narrow focused project with public money.

Below is the email with questions sent to:

- 1/. Omar Masry with the Mayor's Office on Homelessness; (Sent Aug 21, 2025)
- 2/. Steven Culbertson of Swords to Ploughshares; applicant. (Sent Oct 6 & 23, 2025)

And, via Lauren Chung, email Nov 28, 2025.

3/. Further Questions and observations for the City/Committee

I respectfully submit these questions and background to the committee for consideration and response.

Sincerely,
Matt

Matt Gronow
628-202-4939

Begin forwarded message:

From: Matt Gronow <matt@mattgronow.com>
Date: November 28, 2025 at 01:51:21 PST
To: lauren.l.chung@sfgov.org
Cc: Andrea Gomez Pietrini <agpietrini@gmail.com>, Marie Mckigney <marie.mckigney@gmail.com>, Stephen.Sherrill@sfgov.org
Subject: Fwd: 1035 Van Ness and Swords to Plowshares

Hi Lauren,

I trust you had a great Thanksgiving. I am writing to connect with you and Supervisor Stephen Sherrill following the community meeting with Swords to Ploughshares and the 1035 Van Ness Project. We were pleased to meet you both at the meeting.

Within this email are:

- A series of emails with Steven Culberston of StP and Omar Masry of the Mayor's Office of Homelessness (see below the threads and timeline);
- A series of questions, following the community meeting we both attended.

Emails:

Omar put Steven and me in contact, as I had numerous questions and concerns about the project and the city. Before the community meeting, Omar has kept us informed of the City meeting schedule. There is a Budget and Finance Committee Meeting on December 3rd, which I am no longer able to attend to ask the committee questions about this project. I would appreciate any assistance in submitting or asking these questions of the committee.

I understand, if approved, that the project will then go full board of supervisors meeting.

3/. Further Questions and observations for the City/Committee:

Following the community meeting, my questions include to the committee and board of supervisors are:

1. ****Use of the Building / Alternative Models**** (We are a progressive city that can create new ideas and ways to support people's needs in contributing to the city).

* Has the City considered using this building for below-market workforce housing (e.g., nurses, doctors, EMTs who fly in/out for shifts)?

* This could support essential workers and strengthen the neighborhood. Such

that they do not have to drive in and out for 2+ hours.

This seems like a tick one box approach to a homeless issue with supportive housing and not the real needs of the community plus the issues we face in the immediate area.

2. ****Public Accountability and Process****

- * This project uses taxpayer (city and state) funds. Why was it pushed through under a sense of urgency without broader community consultation?

- * The City and P&S focused almost exclusively on operations *inside* the building, without adequate consideration of impacts *outside* the building.

3. ****Preparedness and Knowledge Gaps****

- * City staff were unable to answer several basic questions and repeatedly deferred to P&S.

- * Why wasn't there a clearer, more informed response plan for community concerns?

4. ****Operational Policies****

- * What is the ****Good Neighbor Policy****, and what are the consequences if it is not followed?

- * What is the ****eviction policy**** for residents who violate rules or create safety issues?

- * What ****risk assessments**** have been conducted for likely incidents in and around the site?

- * Training staff to respond is reactive — what preventive measures will be in place?

5. ****Neighborhood Impact****

- * Why concentrate vulnerable populations in an area already struggling to recover?

- * How does this project align with the City's goals for revitalizing Van Ness, especially with nearby stores closed and economic activity declining?

- * why is there not an application for a change of business use and community notification period?

6. **Resident Support and Financial Viability**

- * How many residents are currently working, and what are their income ranges?

- * In a high-cost area, how far does VA or other assistance actually go, and how is it typically spent?

The VA hospital, while on the bus line is still 4 miles away, at Land's End VA Hospital.

- * One hot meal per day was mentioned — how does this meet real cost-of-living needs?

- * What is the funding model for services **beyond five years**?

7. **Long-Term Planning**

- * What is the City's plan for the nearby Monarch Hotel and other large SRO/shelter sites?

- * Why is this area becoming a concentration point for supportive housing?

- * With an aging Vietnam-era veteran population, what happens in 5–10 years as demographics shift? Will younger, higher-needs cohorts move in?

8. **Property Ownership** and Project Costs

- * Who holds the title to the building?

I have personal knowledge of this project:

For comparison, the 1699 Market Street initial construction budget for 160 market and below market, 1 & 2 bedroom apartments with full amenities and car parking was \$69,000,000.00 + owner costs (architect, engineering, permitting and land lease etc.) The avg. apartment cost was \$431,000. Or **approx. \$330-\$660/sqft**

1035 Van Ness, with its existing 120 Retirement Studios is **\$300-\$330,000** per studio or **\$750-1100.00/sqft**. (I can expand on this in more detail also)

The mayor has had great success in delivering below-market housing in his private/not-for-profit life, meeting key KPIs. This does not seem like a great investment. When it only increases the existing community numbers from StP's financial district property of 74 residents, to 120, or 46 residents once the community is relocated and new residents selected.

This all feels very rushed and not thought out, to meet the California government's funding bricks and mortar homeless housing initiative and Prop 1; together with a distressed property coming on the market.

Finally, I would like to ask for a public records disclosure of the funding model and procedures to ensure that the correct processes and diligence have been provided for. As I was initially told that a CEQA exception allowed for non-community engagement, however, the city's initial bridge funding and other sources may make certain exceptions ineligible.

I thank you and Stephen's time. As he said at the meeting, our community is just in a period of recovery, and commercial occupancy rates on the Van Ness Corridor are low. The city has let down the community before. We live with day-to-day issues of homelessness, drug addiction, and street cleanliness. Any support with critically assessing and addressing these conflicting interests and our immediate needs is extremely welcome.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Matt

Matt Gronow
248 Myrtle St
628 202 4939

2/.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Matt Gronow** <matt@mattgronow.com>
Date: Thu, Oct 23, 2025 at 1:45 AM
Subject: Re: 1035 Van Ness and Swords to Plowshares
To: Steven Culbertson <steven.culbertson@stp-sf.org>
Cc: Tramecia Garner <tgarner@stp-sf.org>, Elena Kim <elena.kim@stp-sf.org>, Masry, Omar (MYR) <omar.masry@sfgov.org>, Marie McKigney <marie.mckigney@gmail.com>, Andrea Gomez Pietrini <agpietrini@gmail.com>

2/.

Hi Steve,

Thank you again for your email. We appreciate the opportunity to review and respond to the information shared regarding Swords to Plowshares' plans, management model, and program offering.

While we fully support the mission of caring for and housing veterans, we would

like to raise the following concerns and request further clarification:

1. Project Intent and Planning

The acquisition of 1035 Van Ness appears to be an opportunistic purchase rather than the result of a comprehensive and strategic development plan. This raises questions about long-term suitability and the due diligence undertaken for this location before the acquisition.

2. Building Suitability and Code Compliance

The building in question is a former assisted living facility for the elderly and, by current standards, does not meet existing code requirements. Approval appears to have been granted based on a requested exemption by Swords to Plowshares, citing operational and financial constraints. This is concerning, especially given the significant public investment of over \$37.5 million+ in state funds and bridging loans. It is difficult to reconcile this level of investment with a facility that does not meet modern safety, design, and habitability standards, particularly for a vulnerable population.

The investment also equates to approximately \$300,000 plus per unit, which further underscores the need for transparency regarding how public resources are being used to ensure long-term quality and safety.

3. Design and Environment

The building lacks adequate open and communal space as defined in the code. This is acknowledged in the planning approval letter, again due to cost limitations. Moreover, the absence of nearby green/public space, and the lack of detail about employment support or integration into the wider community,

suggests a narrow programmatic approach focused only on internal activities, catered meals, and appointments. That keeps residents in the building or on the streets outside. How will S&P guarantee that there will be no Residents loitering around the building?

This approach risks isolating residents rather than supporting their reintegration into the broader community. Could you please clarify the percentage of elder residents, and what age Swords considers “elderly”?

4. Environmental and Regulatory Concerns

The combination of state funding and bridging loans does not necessarily exempt the project from CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) review or broader public notification requirements. We would appreciate clarification on how these regulatory obligations are being addressed.

5. Quoted Scope of Services

Who are your more vulnerable residents? Could you expand on the Residents with specific 'serious mental illness or substance diagnosis'? We would like to understand what this looks like (day in their life), or how it may impact our streets.

As referenced in the Budget and Finance Committee meeting materials, page 3, lines 3–5 state:

“WHEREAS, Upon completion of the rehabilitation, the Property would provide approximately 124 units of permanent supportive housing to serve homeless veterans with either serious mental illness or substance use disorder diagnosis.”

This document raises the client group numerous times throughout the 200

page package. However, it is not raised with us. This underlines the need for a location and facility that can offer a safe, dignified, and supportive environment for all residents.

Plus transparency and trust with the city and local community.

6. Location and Resident Considerations

1035 Van Ness borders the Tenderloin, an area known for high levels of drug use and sales (ie Monarch Hotel). There has been no mention in your communication of whether prospective residents are in recovery from substance use or how this proximity to such an environment will be managed. This concern is heightened by past public commentary, including a 2017 interview with a resident of your Financial District PSH project, in which he appreciated the separation from the Tenderloin.

7. Transparency and Communication

The public notification currently consists of a small letter-sized “poster” in the window, which does not clearly communicate the scope of the project, nor does it indicate that residents may have a history of substance use or mental health challenges. Transparency with the local community is vital for building trust and cooperation. This area does carry its weight with support the unhoused and mentally ill.

In conclusion, while we remain supportive of your mission and efforts to serve our veteran population, we question the long-term value and suitability of investing such significant public resources into a facility that appears structurally and contextually ill-suited to meet the intended goals. With patience and prudence, a purpose-built, code-compliant facility—located in a more appropriate neighborhood with out the proximity to risk —would better serve the dignity, safety, and recovery of veteran residents.

We suggest that the next steps include a community call or forum to address these concerns transparently. In the meantime, we will be raising these and related issues with the City and the Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,

Matt

Matt Gronow | 628 202 4939 | matt@mattgronow.com

On Oct 6, 2025, at 20:40, Andrea Gomez Pietrini
<agpietrini@gmail.com> wrote:

Thank you so much for sending this, Steven!
We will review and get back to you.

Thanks again,
Andrea

On Mon, Oct 6, 2025 at 8:18 AM Steven Culbertson
<steven.culbertson@stp-sf.org> wrote:

Good afternoon Andrea and Matt,

First, I want to apologize for the delay in responding to your thoughtful message and concerns. I appreciate the opportunity to provide clarity about Swords to Plowshares and our plans for 1035 Van Ness.

I serve as the Deputy Director of Housing and Development for Swords to Plowshares. For over 50 years, Swords has provided housing, health, legal, and employment support for veterans in San Francisco and Oakland. We have operated affordable veteran housing for 25 years and currently oversee more than 500 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for veterans.

While we're aware of neighborhood concerns that may arise with some shelters, we would note that Swords does not operate any "Shelters." Shelters are temporary housing for folks coming directly from the streets. It is important to emphasize that PSH is not a shelter or transitional housing. All residents sign leases, pay rent, and live independently in their own apartments. PSH provides stability and dignity for residents, not temporary beds or short-term shelter stays. At 1035 Van Ness, veterans will live independently while also having access to a range of supports.

We understand the concerns about safety, cleanliness, and neighborhood impacts. Our 25 years of operating veteran PSH in San Francisco demonstrate that when housing is paired with intensive supports, veterans thrive, and neighborhoods remain safe and stable. Swords does not operate a property management-only model like many housing providers with more limited resources. In partnership with on-site VA social workers, Swords maintains a case management ratio of 1:25 minimum at all of our PSH sites, not including property management staff and additional support staff who provide enhanced care to our seniors and more vulnerable residents.

At 1035 Van Ness, we will offer:

- 24/7 staffing and front desk coverage to ensure safety,

stability, and immediate response to any issues.

- On-site case managers, mental health clinicians, and peer specialists to provide individualized and group support, in partnership with the San Francisco VA Medical Center.
- In-home support, including help with keeping apartments clean for senior and disabled residents. Hoarding and habitability are taken seriously, and we have protocols in place to address these issues when they arise.
- Transportation assistance to help residents attend medical appointments, shopping, and community activities.
- Daily meals provided by partners such as Project Open Hand and Centro Latino.
- Community organizers and peer support who foster resident engagement, host events, and create a sense of belonging, as well as provide support for health navigation and connection to critical supports.
- Dedicated janitorial staff to maintain common areas, assist with upkeep, and ensure cleanliness inside and outside the building.

The goal is not only to provide housing, but to ensure veterans—many of whom are seniors—can age in place with dignity, stability, and community. Yes, PSH residents are folks with histories of homelessness. However, unlike most new PSH sites that become home to newly unhoused individuals, 1035 Van Ness will be a relocation for veterans who have been off the streets longer and have had the support they need to gain support and life skills to achieve housing stability.

This site offers a significant upgrade from some of our current facilities. The building was originally designed as a senior living facility, making it especially suitable for our veteran residents, most of whom are older adults.

We recognize your concerns regarding community input and the rapid pace at which this project has moved forward. The opportunity to purchase the building started in January 2025, when the building was entering bankruptcy. The purchase went through in July 2025 after months of work to secure funds for the purchase and planned renovations. We will secure building permits to correct

some previous issues and will also be making some capital improvements. The building currently has green space for residents in three locations, a dining space and commercial kitchen to supply food for the residents, as well as many gathering spaces within the building for support groups, community engagement. The facility already offers ample community space, and additional planned capital improvements will further enhance the space for residents.

Compared to our existing site, which literally shares a wall with a bar and is situated in the financial district, 1035 Van Ness provides a more dignified, safer, and better-suited residential setting for veterans. While close to the Tenderloin, the building is not located within it. Its design and condition represent a substantial improvement and will provide a higher quality of life for residents.

As the Project has been ministerially approved by SF Planning (link to Planning Approval Letter), by utilizing State Law AB 2162 (for affordable housing), no mailed neighbor notification or pre-application community meeting is required. Proposition I notification, in the form of a poster, at the front of the property has been completed.

We take neighborhood concerns seriously. At all of our existing PSH sites, we maintain ongoing relationships with nearby residents and businesses. We intend to do the same here and will hold a community meeting at 1035 Van Ness soon to ensure dialogue and transparency. Flyers and outreach will be shared broadly once the date is set.

We are committed to ensuring 1035 Van Ness not only provides a dignified home for veterans but also becomes a valued part of the community. I look forward to continued engagement with you and your neighbors.

Sincerely, Steve Culbertson

Steve Culbertson
Deputy Director of Residential Programs and Housing Development
Swords to Plowshares
1060 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
steven.culbertson@stp-sf.org
(415) 509-7470

I use the pronouns he, him, his

1/.

This is the initial email to Omar Masry following a one on one call. He put us in contact with StPs for a response to our questions. (Steven was about to go on holiday at the time).

From: Andrea Gomez Pietrini <agpietrini@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2025 1:55 PM

To: Masry, Omar (MYR) <omar.masry@sfgov.org>

Subject: URGENT Concerns and Questions | PSH at 1035 Van Ness Avenue

Dear Mr. Masry,

As a resident of the neighborhood surrounding 1035 Van Ness Avenue, I am writing to express concerns regarding the City's proposal to convert a former senior living facility into Permanent Supportive Housing. The project would house 124 formerly homeless veterans with behavioral health needs, including serious mental illness and substance use disorders, as described in the SF.gov Meeting Agenda. While I fully support the City's broader mission to provide stable housing and comprehensive services for vulnerable populations, I believe this specific proposal raises several important concerns that deserve greater transparency and thoughtful consideration.

I would like to address a few key topics:

1. Lack of Community Input and Impact Transparency

To date, there appears to have been no outreach or engagement with residents

or local businesses. When a business changes use or undergoes renovations, the City typically requires formal notification and community input, including letter drops to neighbors.

Has the City or the applicant conducted a comprehensive assessment of how this facility may impact the surrounding community—particularly in terms of public safety, cleanliness, local business viability, tourism, transit congestion, existing shelter density (550+ beds already), and homeowner/renter property values and misaligned tax burdens?

2. Programs, Structure, and Oversight

The City's meeting notes state that residents will have "serious mental illness or substance use disorder" (Item #5), raising questions about how this facility will differ operationally from a traditional shelter. What structured programs, such as mental health care, job training, life skills, and recreational activities, will be in place to support residents' long-term recovery and prevent disengagement or loitering?

Will the facility include safeguards to ensure residents are engaged and supported throughout the day, rather than left without structure or purpose?

3. Location Suitability

Why was this particular location, adjacent to known high-risk areas such as the Tenderloin, selected for this project? Were alternative, less burdened neighborhoods evaluated?

This area already faces challenges with open-air drug use, homelessness, and crime. Placing vulnerable individuals here without robust safeguards may expose them to relapse triggers and harmful influences, including proximity to facilities like the Monarch Hotel and the Nextdoor Shelter.

I came across a 2014 KQED article "[Video: San Francisco Homeless Veterans Get Permanent Place to Live](#)", discussing the Stanford Hotel, the current residence of many veterans planned to relocate: "Cook said it's also important that 250 Kearny is located outside the Tenderloin, where drugs and violence are rampant. "A lot of veterans, including myself, we may have problems with

different chemicals. By being outside, it gives you a better chance at staying clean.”

Why is this principle not being respected or considered in the current proposal for 1035 Van Ness, which is adjacent to high-risk areas known for open drug use and violence?

Additionally, the apparent lack of recreational facilities, green spaces, or adequately sized communal areas raises concerns about the feasibility of delivering effective onsite programming / healthy outlets for residents. Without these critical amenities, there is a real risk that residents will overflow into surrounding streets and public spaces, potentially affecting neighborhood dynamics and safety.

4. Security, Cleanliness and Staffing

Will there be 24/7 security both inside and outside the facility? What will be the ratio of staff to residents, and will case managers and mental health professionals be available at all times? What safety protocols will be in place both inside and outside to respond to emergencies, prevent loitering, and ensure the safety of residents and neighbors? Lastly, how will cleanliness and facility upkeep be managed daily on the adjacent sidewalks and public areas?

5. Property Values, Taxation and Business Financial Impact

Has the City conducted any impact assessments on the financial implications for nearby properties? If a decline in value occurs, will the City offer any financial relief, such as tax abatements or offsets, for affected residents, HOAs, or small businesses? Given the behavioral health needs of the future residents and the facility’s proximity to areas with high rates of loitering and drug activity, the surrounding neighborhood may face increased safety concerns and reputational risks that could drive down property demand and diminish commercial activity.

These concerns stand in stark contrast to the Mayor’s stated goal of revitalizing Van Ness Avenue into a thriving, safe, and economically vibrant corridor. Introducing a high-density shelter-like site in a heavily burdened area (550+ beds in the Geary st area), without clear plans for security, programming, or

neighborhood safeguards risks undermining that vision. Has the City evaluated how this project aligns with broader revitalization efforts? And will it commit to monitoring business and residential impacts over time, with meaningful mitigation strategies in place to support those affected?

I respectfully urge your office to advocate for greater transparency and community engagement around this project. This includes holding a dedicated public meeting, sharing detailed operational plans, and considering potential mitigations for nearby residents and property owners. In support of this request, I have included a list of specific questions and concerns in the attached PDF, which hopefully will guide a more informed and inclusive process.

We strongly urge/encourage that no further housing without a full program be added to our neighborhood without careful planning and safeguards. The current proposal appears to lack essential infrastructure such as adequately sized communal areas, green space, or recreational facilities, which are critical for supporting residents' wellbeing and reducing idle time. Without these, there is a heightened risk that residents will not only spill into surrounding streets, but also increase the residents' exposure to harmful influences, including the accessibility of illicit substances from nearby facilities such as the Monarch Hotel (Geary st) and the Nextdoor Shelter (Geary + Polk st)

Thank you for your service and attention to this matter. We are confident that with a thoughtful and inclusive approach, it is possible to meet the city's housing goals while maintaining the stability and safety of our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Andrea Gomez Pietrini

248 Myrtle St, San Francisco, 94109

(628) 202 - 4885