

Homeless May Be Without A Home At NTC

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The Beacon

Public pressure is mounting on the Peninsula against transitional housing for the homeless on 35 acres available for residential development at the Naval Training Center (NTC).

After prolonged debate, the NTC Reuse Committee last week voted to recommend that only a minimum of 70 transitional homeless housing units be located at the base — markedly down from more than 2,000 units requested at its outset.

Originally, 2,200 units were proposed. Then it was in the range of 750 to 800, then down to 456 units, and we approved 75, noted Wayne Ruffesberger, an NTC Reuse Committee representative and

member of the Peninsula Community Planning Board. "I would expect, when the smoke clears a month from now when it comes before the (San Diego City) council, you won't even see 75 units on the base, possibly a lower number — and possibly none."

Second District City Councilman Byron Wear opposes homeless housing on the base for socio-economic reasons. "Locating any homeless housing at NTC is inappropriate land use," Wear said. "There is a \$35 million to \$70 million funding gap in (base) infrastructure — streets, sewers, rehabilitating buildings — improvements that need to be made."

"This is valuable waterfront property in San Diego. We see NTC, page 4

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need to maximize its potential so it can be of benefit to everyone — all of the city. Locating homeless housing just detracts from that value."

The case against placing the homeless in base housing is being overstated, said Paul Desrochers, NTC Reuse Committee member and executive director of the Community Development Commission in National City.

"I think the (Peninsula) community has overreacted," Desrochers said. "These are transitional homeless, not street people, people who want to be retrained for a new life, to get an educational opportunity. I don't think you're endangering the neighborhood at all. I don't think I'm being Pollyanna either."

There are four, multi-story military "hotels," or diamond-shaped barracks, within the base's residentially designated 35 acres which would be ideal for transitional homeless housing, Desrochers added.

"These (barracks) are less than five years old, nice and modern, and very suitable for transitional housing," he stated. "To duplicate that somewhere else in the city would be very costly. To tear those down would be an absolute crime."

23 May 1996