



Save FamiliesFirst

November 11, 2016

Dear Sir,

Please join our effort to save the FamiliesFirst campus on Fifth Street just east of Pole Line Road. A rezoning application pending with the City of Davis, if approved, will allow the five-story Sterling Apartment complex (including a 7-level parking garage) to be built on this site.

The Fifth Street Sterling Apartment construction would begin by bulldozing the entire beautiful and very functional FamiliesFirst complex. The 6.5-acre complex includes offices, a school, gymnasium, residential cottages, playground, art studio, cafeteria and many mature trees. This would all be gone.

Our City Council will respond if they know there is citywide support for saving this beautiful, multiuse site for current needs and for the benefit of future generations.

Attachment B provides more information about the history of the FamiliesFirst campus, reflections about the future use of the facility, and thoughts about strategies for success.

We need your help. Please join the Rancho Yolo Community, your fellow elected officials, and community members in saving the FamiliesFirst Campus. I am happy to meet and discuss this request with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,
Mary Jo Bryan
mjbryan6642@gmail.com

Concerned Citizens of Davis
Endorsements on Attachment A

Attachment A

Endorsements

The following supporters believe that saving the FamiliesFirst campus at 2100 Fifth Street in Davis merits collaborative and extraordinary efforts by our state, county and local officials.

We urge you to work together to secure this property for the current and future residents of the City of Davis and Yolo County.

HELEN THOMSON

Yolo County Board of Supervisors, Davis School Board, and California State Assemblywoman

BETSY MARCHAND

Former Yolo County Supervisor 4 District

DELAINE EASTIN

California Superintendent of Schools (Ret.)

MAYNARD SKINNER

Former Davis Mayor and Councilmember

ANN EVANS

Former Mayor and Davis City Councilmember

JERRY ADLER

Former Mayor and Davis City Councilmember

RICHARD HOLDSTOCK

Former Davis Councilmember

MIKE CORBETT

Former Davis Mayor and Councilmember

DEBORAH NICHOLS POULOS

Former Mayor Pro Tem and City Council Member

Attachment B

Save FamiliesFirst

The Davis FamiliesFirst facility, currently owned by the non-profit EMQ FamiliesFirst, was created as a residential treatment center for at-risk children. The facility was closed in June 2013 due to the agency's failure to insure the personal rights and safety of the children in their care. After numerous violations were cited and over three hundred police responses reported, EMQ FamiliesFirst was charged with lack of supervision and inadequate staffing. The State Department of Social Services revoked the group home's license and county funding was terminated.

In 2000 the purchase of the FamiliesFirst site and all improvements were financed with public bonds through the California Health Facilities Financing Authority (CHFFA) at a subsidized interest rate well below market value, saving the borrower (FamiliesFirst) millions of dollars.



According to a letter from Kathryn Meier McCarty, Chief Administrative Officer/General Council for EMQ FamiliesFirst, "FamiliesFirst merged with Eastfield Ming Quong (EMQ) in January 2009. EMQ also held a 1997 CHFFA bond that was secured by its properties in the Bay Area. In 2011, the merged corporation – FamiliesFirst, Inc., dba EMQ FamiliesFirst – paid off the two bonds through a refinance of the debt. In the course of that transaction, the remaining balances of the two bonds were combined and a new single bond was issued. The agency was not required to secure the new bond with any real property, so the Davis campus is no longer encumbered by any bond. Today the total bond balance is around \$9M."

According to the terms of the CHFFA Revenue Bond Financing Program in 2011, "Collectively the Project and all facilities are or will be ... used in connection with its mobile crisis, in and out-patient mental health, therapeutic behavioral, addiction prevention and crisis nursery services."

However, now EMQ wants to pay off its debt to the State of California by the sale of this land and the developer wants to demolish this well-designed, useful facility.

What would Davis be like today if its citizens had not worked together to turn down a proposed multi-story commercial development to save our Central Park? Now Central Park is home to the world-renowned Farmers' Market, Picnic in the Park, a children's playground, the Hattie Weber Museum and the U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame.

We did it once and we can do it again!

Options for Social Programs

Instead of the economically and environmentally irresponsible destruction of FamiliesFirst, the campus could become a valued Davis location for a multitude of social services.

Yolo Adult Day Health Center

The FamiliesFirst gymnasium, dining and kitchen facilities could accommodate this program, which is looking for a secondary site in Davis. The Davis Adult Day Center intends to be self-supporting with clients paying a fee.



Currently, Davis residents who attend the Yolo Adult Day Center program must travel to Woodland. The bus that transports the participants makes a number of stops en route, so some may travel nearly two hours to get to the site. This creates an excessive burden for these seniors, many of whom are frail or suffering from dementia.

A Davis Adult Day Care program would be a beneficial resource for the members of our aging population. With the proximity of senior complexes such as Rancho Yolo,

The Carlton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Walnut Terrace, and Davisville Apartments, the FamiliesFirst complex would be an ideal location for an adult day health center.

Transitional Housing

Empower Yolo in Woodland helps women and children fleeing domestic violence with a 35-bed facility with an average stay of 98 days. They regularly turn prospective clients away because the facility cannot find enough transition housing for those who are ready to take the next step to safely become part of the community.

In the Spring 2016 issue of the Yolo County Food Bank newsletter, an elderly lady remarks that she's been homeless for two years and hopes to get an apartment. She said that staying warm and wondering where she'll get her next meal doesn't allow the peace of mind to get a good rest and, "If I could just get a place to live, even for a few weeks, I could work on getting a job."

A Davis Enterprise article in February 2016 featured Yolo Crisis Nursery. One young father called the agency, distraught because the temperature was dropping and his family was going to have to spend the night in their car. The dad had lost his job and then they lost their home. Their 5-year-old son was able to stay at the nursery until the family could find housing. The adults were given vouchers for temporary motel rooms.

A portion of the living quarters at FamiliesFirst could become transitional housing for a variety of folks who are trying to get back on their feet.

Other Community Organizations

A senior education organization has expressed an interest in classroom space with parking and accessibility. The FamiliesFirst two-story classroom building with elevator access could be utilized by this group and many community organizations and programs.

An auxiliary mental health Wellness Center (social activities, peer counselors and support, and professional staff), similar to the one located in Woodland at the County Mental Health office, could be located on this site. The Yolo Community Care Continuum helps those with mental illnesses by providing a number of services and could benefit with extra space.



The Veterans' Administration advisors who now meet clients at the Senior Center could have an office in the complex to help veterans, especially those who need housing and special services.

The campus administrative offices and a large meeting room might prove to be a perfect extension for city, county and/or school offices and programs or to meet the needs of local non-profit organizations.

Strategies

Government officials, social organizations, private entities and interested individuals could form a Save FamiliesFirst Coalition to determine the best use of the facilities and identify potential funding sources. Our local elected leaders have said that neither the city nor the county has the resources to purchase this property outright. They should work with the State of California to evaluate the possibility any of the following actions:

- Transfer a portion of the \$9 million bond indebtedness from EMQ to the county and/or city in exchange for EMQ transferring title to the 2100 5th Street property to the county/city.
- Stipulate that EMQ rent the Families First facilities to Yolo County agencies/non-profits. Rental income could provide EMQ the means to pay down their \$9 million State bond.
- The State could allocate the funding for improvements that were designated but not built for the Davis FamiliesFirst. These funds could then be used to retrofit the facilities for future occupants, especially if the bond indebtedness was transferred to the County.
- Rewrite the bond to separate the amount allocated for other EMQ facilities and the amount designated for the Davis campus with the unused funds attached.

If the City adheres to the zoning restrictions for that area, no large residential development can be built. And the Council must demonstrate that the public interest **REQUIRES** such a change of zoning to make that change. A genuine need for social services has not gone away. Rather, this need has actually expanded, and students' needs should not preclude the needs of a class of people in the city/county that is not being served.