

THE BUCKMINSTER FULLER CHALLENGE

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Sheltering U.S. Persons Unsheltered: Creating Legally Conforming, Economically Sustainable Emergency and Transitional Shelter

By *World_Shelters*

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- [community and social systems](#)
- [shelter and built environment](#)
- [2010](#)

Bruce LeBel, Executive Director, World Shelters, a 501(c)3 non-profit and int'l NGO

Steven Elias, Co-Founder, World Shelters

The Team

Whose name (s) should be listed as winner(s) if your entry is selected?:

Bruce LeBel, Executive Director, World Shelters Steven Elias, Co-Founder, World Shelters

[Application Questions](#)

Summarize your Proposal:

World Shelters' mission is to provide temporary and transitional shelter for persons in need, including persons unsheltered in the U.S., a.k.a. "homeless". We have developed an economically sustainable, jurisdictionally conforming and technically unique design for emergency and transitional shelter that we propose to demonstrate in three jurisdictions in California.

Describe the critical need your solution addresses:

Over 750,000 people in the U.S. are without housing; in California over 170,000. Substantial discrimination against homeless persons prohibits implementation of many shelter programs, especially those intended for the neediest populations. The synergy of civil rights and design science offers a meaningful solution for emergency and transitional shelter by right.

Compare and contrast your initiative. **see full question below box:

Ontario, California's city-managed tent-based emergency shelter is on a city-owned parcel near the Ontario Airport. (http://www.dailybulletin.com/tentcity/ci_8674010). Jon Blickenstaff, Mayor of nearby La Verne told the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, "Establishing a facility like Tent City is ... an effort at a partial solution, but it also points to the need for services beyond just providing a place to pitch a tent."

Every community has a population of persons unsheltered. Ontario offers their site for a limited number of individuals who can demonstrate a history of Ontario residence. This local filter would fail a judicial challenge. The model is not replicable and not sustainable without government funding.

World Shelters will avoid problems inherent in the Ontario project by being legally conforming and financially self-sustaining, and by partnering with local social service agencies and other established programs.

Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson's Task Force Stepping Stone proposal (<http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/story/2227543.html>) is another similar initiative. However, this project is proposed for a site that requires waivers and conditional use variances and is facing strong community opposition. Our proposal will locate projects on parcels where we will not require waivers and conditional use variances and we are assured a permit under SB2.

Explain your initiative in more depth and its stage of development :

The opportunity is at hand to create sufficient shelter capacity for all persons unsheltered in every jurisdiction in California with legally conforming and economically self-sustaining programs affordable by those in need. California's Senate Bill 2 establishes civil rights, zoning and development standards that have not yet been effectively utilized to establish emergency and transitional shelter programs. World Shelters' initiative establishes successful emergency/transitional shelter demonstration projects in California. This will lead other states, towards replicating the civil rights model of zoning for emergency shelter by right to enable World Shelters and other providers to dramatically increase shelter capacity for persons unsheltered in every community in a legally conforming and economically sustainable manner.

The underlying principles that guide us in this strategy include:

- making each program financially self-sustaining, scalable and replicable;
- integrating and coordinating with local stakeholders;
- working to provide necessary complementary services;
- providing the means for individuals to take steps towards their personal preferred state;
- creating a ramp for our disadvantaged neighbors to step once again into the social and economic milieu.

Initial phases of our model have been proven and replicated at two different scales in two different locales (Ventura and Humboldt County). See <http://www.worldshelters.org>.

How does your strategy and approach respond creatively and comprehensively to key issues?

**see full question below box:

“Design science is more than the application of engineering and technology. It is more than a plan or a design. Design science means the total responsibility and capability for development, production, and distribution - of not just a product - but a total service system on a worldwide basis.” -RBF

World Shelters applies Fuller’s overarching principles of design science to create immediately achievable self-sustaining solutions for sheltering persons unsheltered in California and throughout the U.S.

Our strategy is to demonstrate and replicate an emergency/transitional shelter model with adequate capacity for “shelter with dignity and hot showers” integrated with necessary complementary health and social services. This model conforms to each jurisdiction’s zoning, development standards and building codes. The enabling context begins in California with parcels zoned for emergency shelter as a principally permitted use, combined with ultra-low cost shelter affordable on a nightly/weekly/monthly basis by those who need the services. Program design includes partnering with local agencies to provide services that meet the diverse needs of these populations. Economically, the low cost of our unique hard-panel structures offers shelter that residents can afford; also the jurisdiction’s expenses will reduce substantially. Ecologically, U-Dome panels are fully recyclable and each program reduces the environmental impacts of ad hoc encampments. We are certified by Green America’s Green Business Network. Technologically, these shelters are uniquely efficient, low-cost, easily built, and portable. They are fire-retardant, with high wind strength and insulation/snow load winterization (http://worldshelters.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/U-Dome200_5mm_Struct...).

This breakthrough strategy leads to the preferred state of having adequate shelter capacity for homeless persons in California and other states. The model redefines the equation of providing shelter programs for U.S. homeless by the synergy of 1) sidestepping the NIMBY’s by being legal and conforming with all jurisdictional requirements while 2) being paid for by the residents who use the services.

Describe your implementation plan. **see full question below box:

2010:

- Expand current demonstration projects in Ventura and Humboldt County, California.
- Proceed with anticipated project in Sacramento, California.
- Conduct outreach to jurisdictions throughout California, prioritizing the most effective opportunities for the next scalable and replicable projects.
- Gain further adoption of our shelter program by established local agencies.
- Site control is the gating item in each jurisdiction, on a parcel zoned for emergency shelter as a principally permitted use.

2011:

- Expand to additional city and county jurisdictions in California with projects moving forward in six additional jurisdictions and developing relationships for projects with another 12 jurisdictions for the coming year.
- Outreach to agencies and politicians in other states regarding the social benefits of providing

emergency shelter, and regarding the civil right for emergency shelter as a principally permitted use with the objective of having additional state legislatures pass legislation equivalent to California's 2007 Senate Bill 2.

2012:

- This year we plan for 12 additional projects in California and six projects in other states with further efforts and progress moving forward the legislative agenda to establish emergency shelter by right in the other 49 states.

Provide details regarding the team and/or partners you have assembled. **see full question below box:

Executive Director Bruce LeBel is also President of ProStar Software (www.prostar-software.com). Bruce has been a leader in providing temporary and transitional shelter for 33 years. Board President Roger James is Managing Director of Gelinas James, Inc. with over 20 years of Organization Development consulting experience. Board Secretary Ellen LeBel is an MFT, human rights activist, and artist. Tina MacKenzie is past CEO of Six Rivers Planned Parenthood. Allan Katz is former Executive Director of the Community Health Alliance of Humboldt-Del Norte.

Community Partners:

Sacramento: Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness, Golden Rule Enterprises, Loaves and Fishes, Francis House, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, other community stakeholders

Humboldt County: Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition, Humboldt All-Faith Partnership, North Coast Resource Center, Food for People, other community stakeholders
Ventura: Turning Point Foundation, United Way, City of Ventura, Ventura Regional Rotary Clubs, other community stakeholders

Production: Production tooling and manufacturing capacity (through Numatech West and international partners) for unlimited rapid production.

External validation:

River Haven in Ventura is a subject of the upcoming SHELTER movie

(<http://sheltermovie.wordpress.com/>), by DocuCinema.

For a complete list of links to recent press coverage, see our website (<http://worldshelters.org/in-the-news>).

Autumn 2009 Newsletter:

(<http://bit.ly/1MxT6a>)

What are the primary obstacles :

The primary obstacles to our initiative are:

1. Having the seed capital to further our demonstration projects in Ventura and Humboldt County, and for our planned project for Sacramento.
2. Capital for further outreach and promotion of this model to jurisdictions throughout California, and for the political actions required to replicate the SB2 model in other states.

The primary obstacles faced by shelter providers are local zoning ordinances and "NIMBYs" ("Not in my backyard"). However, California's SB2 mandates that every jurisdiction zones for

emergency shelter by right. Proposals that conform to zoning, development standards and building codes must be permitted per SB2. Our proposal thus avoids the typical obstacles of zoning and NIMBYs.

Reliance on government and foundation grants by most shelter programs creates risk of program termination when that funding reduces. Our proposal is an economically self-sustaining low-cost program funded by revenue from the recipients of the services.

What range of funding is needed to bring your project to fruition. **see full question below box:

The trim-tab function that requires initial capital is for project realization with established agencies in at least two of the three above jurisdictions, with seed funds to jointly:

- secure site control through minimum three-year leases, and
- procure and install site improvements necessary to conform with the development standards specified in the jurisdiction's housing element update (e.g. fencing, parking, sanitation, common areas)

This initiative is by definition self-sustaining, but requires \$100K to launch. The objective is to implement demonstration projects that are so low-cost in start-up capital required and ongoing expense budgets that the required revenue for sustainability can derive from nightly, weekly, and monthly payment by the residents themselves. We have thus far provided hard-panel flame retardant shelter with dignity, at a cost equivalent to under \$2 per person per day.

We will be actively pursuing regionally-based grants from foundations that provide funding in our target jurisdictions.

[Reference 1 \(required\)](#)

Please enter the name and contact information for a reference who has a thorough knowledge of your solution and is able to vouch for the integrity and credibility of your submission.

In the event your entry is advanced by the jury, your reference may be contacted.

Full Name:

Clyde Reynolds

Title:

Executive Director

Business (if applicable):

Turning Point Foundation

Mailing Address:

1065 East Main Street

City:

Ventura

State:

CA

Postal Code:

93002

Country:

United States of America

Daytime Phone Number:

805-652-0596

Relationship to Project:

World Shelters partnered with the Turning Point Foundation to upgrade the shelters at the River Haven transitional housing community from tents to 19 U-Domes.

[Reference 2 \(required\)](#)

Please enter the name and contact information for a reference who has a thorough knowledge of your solution and is able to vouch for the integrity and credibility of your submission.

In the event your entry is advanced by the jury, your reference may be contacted.

Full Name:

Michael Twombly

Title:

Director

Business (if applicable):

Humboldt All-Faith Partnership

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 181

City:

Bayside

State:

CA

Postal Code:

95521

Country:

United States of America

Daytime Telephone:

707-362-6860

Relationship to Project:

World Shelters is partnering with the Humboldt All-Faith Partnership at the Arcata Night Shelter site and has installed five U-Domes for residents of the shelter during their upcoming renovations.

[Images](#)

Image 1:



Attribution (1):

photo by Connie Campbell

Caption (1):

River Haven 2 transitional shelter program - U-Dome120 by World Shelters

Image 2:



Attribution (2):

photo by Connie Campbell

Caption (2):

five of 19 U-Domes at River Haven 2, Ventura CA

Image 3:



Attribution (3):

photo by World Shelters

Caption (3):

Youth group among 200 volunteers at River Haven 2 assembling 19 U-Domes on 9/26/09

Image 4:



Caption (4):
Arcata Night Shelter volunteers assemble five U-Dome120's on 10/26/09
Attribution (4):
photo by World Shelters
Image 5:



Attribution (5):
photo by World Shelters
Caption (5):
River Haven 1 before re-build with U-Domes

Image 6:



Caption (6):
River Haven 2, Ventura CA panorama of World Shelters U-Domes

Attribution (6):
photo by World Shelters
Featured Image:
Image 2

Video:



Click the link below to view the 1:44 min video on youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RT6X6i74tB8>

Source URL (retrieved on *Oct 30 2009 - 19:37*): <http://challenge.bfi.org/application/sheltering-us-persons-unsheltered-creating-legally-conforming-economically-sustainable-e>