



**Health & Human Services Department**  
Dawn C. Stiles, Director

**Social Services Division**  
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## **Homeless Services Center: Answers to Public Hearing Questions**

### **Requests for Information**

- *Develop comprehensive list of all city owned property that should/could be considered for shelter location.*

This is under development.

- *If there are not any MOUs, provide letters of commitment from providers to deliver services at the new shelter location*

We cannot provide MOUs or letters of commitment until we have secured a location. An informational matrix on the service providers will be part of the September 11th HHS & PS meeting packet.

- *Show how building fits on proposed location*

The lot is about 30,000 square feet and the proposed building will be no more than 20,000 square feet; some adjustments will be made and there will be a need to reconfigure the parking on site.

- *Need an environmental assessment to determine impact on the neighborhood*

This will be completed as part of the site plan review process, following the recommendation of a site.

### **Questions**

- *Is the City subsidizing providers by providing transportation to a location where they are renting facilities rather than providing their services at new shelter?*

No.

- *Are members of the Homeless Task Force still involved in the effort with the City?  
What has been accomplished and what is left to accomplish?*

Yes. Retooling the emergency shelter system was a key finding of the task force report.

- *What will remain in Bayside when OSS moves to a new location?*

Existing programming will still remain, the only move will be the adult Emergency Shelter. The City's Family Shelter, General Assistance office, HIRE program and Rep Payee program will still exist in Bayside.

Additionally, these non-City Services are currently located in Bayside: Preble Street Resource Center, the Maine Med Learning Collaborative (medical case management and healthcare services), Greater Portland Health (physical healthcare, dental), Salvation Army (sober living program), The Opportunity Alliance (PATH, Crisis Services, Mental Health Case Management), Maine Behavioral Healthcare (Case Management, Clinical Counseling, Psychiatry, IOP), Community Policing, Goodwill (Employment Assistance), Teen Center (case management, street academy), Milestone (wet shelter for men, detox, HOME Team), Public Library, DHHS, Frannie Peabody Center (case management for HIV positive people, anonymous HIV and Hep C Testing), Pine Tree Legal, Portland HELP Center, St. Vincent's Church (soup kitchen), City of Portland Needle Exchange, Sexual Assault Response and Support Services.

- *How many homeless individuals use Labor Ready?*

50-60 unduplicated per month between People Ready and Complete Labor, based on self reporting for shelter GA applications.

- *Is there an equivalent company near the proposed location?*

Yes, there are staffing agencies within walking distance. Staff 207(190 Riverside St, Portland, ME 04103), Maine Staffing Group (91 Larrabee Rd, Westbrook, ME 04092) in addition to the 24-hour shuttle that will be available to take guests to and from work.

- *What are other opportunities for co-location?*

None identified, there are no other providers like the Barron Center.

- *Does it jeopardize the Barron Center's funding if they provide services to the shelter?*

No, the Homeless Services Center will operate independently of the Barron Center. The Barron Center is owned and operated by the City of Portland.

- *Will shelter guests go through a screening/metal detector? And please detail any other security measures that will be taken in and around the site.*

Yes, with a new design there will be a private and secure coordinated entry system with increased opportunity to conduct searches with wandering and metal detector use. A surveillance camera system will be included in the building design. Additionally, we will bring current OSS security to new location.

- *Why should City support 74% of shelter guests who are not from Portland?*

The City has a long standing commitment of not turning away anyone who presents in person for shelter. The State reimburses the City for 70% of the costs for GA eligible bed nights. Efforts have increased to hold surrounding municipalities accountable for the remaining 30% when it is determined that a guest had a previously established residence in another municipality. It is a complicated and cumbersome issue in terms of identifying if a municipality is financially responsible for the costs of an individual who enters our shelter system. The shelter guests are asked what municipality they are coming from and that is where we get statistical information about where our guests come from. However, an individual must have had an established residency in another municipality in order for us to bill for reimbursement. That is a high bar to meet and most of our guests do not meet the threshold of being a billable resident of another municipality. That being said, we will continue to attempt recovering costs whenever possible.

- *Why does the 2017 operating budget list "0" for safety line item?*

The line was zeroed out because it went from contracted services to in-house staffing and is included in the personnel line item.

- *Will we continue to explore other locations for new shelter? And/or, what is the city's plan if the council doesn't approve this site? Do we have a backup or next steps?*

We have made our best staff recommendation. If the Council does not approve this recommendation, we will look to their reason and direction for next steps.

- *What is our plan to decrease the number of individuals needing shelter?*

Continued focus on the Long Term Stayer initiative, coordinated entry, enhancing services through on site partnerships, housing and employment placements, Housing First programs.

- *What is our plan for relocating the 10% of troublemakers?*

Shelter staff work hard to identify other shelter locations, make referrals to hospitals, and crisis programs for those in need.

- *If we need an overflow space, where will we be able to provide one?*

It has always been in the plans for any facility to include a flexible space that *could be used for overflow if needed.*

- *What happens to people who are turned away or prohibited from coming into the shelter?*

As they currently do staff will work to identify alternative options, although turning guests away is rare.

- *Where will they go?*

Other shelters based on various eligibility.

- *How will they be supervised?*

Shelter staff will coordinate transportation and warm hand-offs. (See attached Shelter restriction policy)

- *What is the response time from police to Preble St? What is the response time to Brighton Ave?*

The response time is based on how close the nearest responding officer is located at the time the request is made. In addition, the priority level of the call based on emergency. For example: medical call, fights, harassment issues, etc. Each neighborhood has patrolling officers assigned and the response time would not be based on the time it takes to travel from 109 Middle Street, Police Headquarters.

- *Why don't we build beside Preble St in the public garage?*

For one, we do not control that site. Additionally, there are many benefits in breaking up the concentration of services. There are also environmental concerns, service expenses, and building costs.

- *How much have we received in billing other municipalities for their community members who have stayed in the Portland shelter?*

We have recently began billing and have invoiced roughly \$1,000.00 in bed night costs so far. We continue to process clients' eligibility regarding a municipality of responsibility. We have been paid roughly \$150 so far by three communities.

- *When shelter guests are encountered in a neighbor's yard what will be the response time for the police?*

See above for response times. A 24-hour hotline will be available to the public. Additionally, see the attached good-neighbor policy.

- *How will the neighborhood benefit from the relocation of the shelter to this neighborhood?*

Increased access to a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center health clinic, a community policing office, and volunteer opportunities.

- *How will this relocation reduce the opioid problem?*

The opioid epidemic is a many layered problem that grips our community, state and country and requires a multifaceted approach to solve. The relocation of the shelter will not be a cure all, but it will give those struggling safe access to treatment, including on-site substance-use treatment.

- *How will this relocation benefit the homeless population?*

The proposed new model for providing emergency shelter and wrap-around services in and of itself will be a major benefit to those experiencing homelessness. Individuals will be afforded a safer, more respectable space, more comfortable sleeping quarters on beds as opposed to mats on the floor, increased access to services, including health care, substance use treatment, mental health care, case management, housing services, employment services and more.

- *How will this relocation improve the economic impact on the area?*

Increased workforce for local business and increased business for businesses.

- *Why isn't Housing First part of the recommendation?*

Housing First projects are extremely important, however this proposal concentrates on improving adult emergency shelter operations as the first step in getting people back on their feet. The City is certainly in support of Housing First programs as recommended by the 2012 Task Force. Shelter Housing Staff embrace the Housing First approach.

- *Why weren't details shared with the community?*

Details regarding a proposed site location were shared with our partners and the community at large as soon as staff had a recommendation to make to the HHS Committee. We continue to remain open to sharing as new developments arise. All details have been shared through three HHS & PS committee meetings and two zoning committee meetings and voted on in one Council meeting. Minutes and materials are available on [portlandmaine.gov](http://portlandmaine.gov). There is a significant amount of public process that remains before any final decisions are made.

- *How will we address campers?*

Street Outreach staff are coordinating with Portland Trails and the Parks and Rec department to organize a more enhanced trails monitoring effort both at Evergreen Cemetery and the Fore River Sanctuary.

- *Why didn't we consider site when we initially rezoned?*

We did not look at sites during the rezoning process; we looked at general zoning districts. This site rose to the top while considering sites. Given the existing and historic uses on the site, there is some question as to whether the existing R-5 zoning is appropriate.

- *What outreach has been done with Barron Center family members?*

Letters were mailed and we held face to face meetings.

- *Why are we increasing the number of beds at the shelter?*

We are not increasing but rather consolidating current shelter and overflow numbers.

- *Could we have bullet points about what is not working vs what will change with the move?*

What is not working: Physical layout (dorms), bed configuration (mats vs cots), current location, current courtyard space, close proximity to too many other service providers, the need for guests to travel to Preble Street three times a day for meals, lack of control of surrounding areas, insufficient restroom facilities, lack of meeting space/offices, insufficient space for check in/line management, lack of security cameras, parking, logistics of setting up overflow.

What will change: We feel that each of the above listed points regarding what is not working will be remedied by building the Homeless Services Center at the recommended location. The new location, structure and model will alleviate each of these issues and provide our guests with more dignity and safety.

- *How many beds does the largest shelter in Cambridge have?*

109

- *How can we assure residents they will be safe and that we're not just moving the problem?*

The City is committed to the safety of all residents and will continue to explore all options to provide best service possible. The new model for providing services will lend itself toward ensuring issues are not wholly transferred.

- *Will there be a loss of green space on the Barron Center campus? How much? Can we avoid that?*

Those details have not been worked out yet, but we envision a well-manicured and landscaped Homeless Services Center.

- *How will other communities help to share the burden of cost/care?*

The City agrees that providing services is a regional issue. We will continue our coordinated entry billing system for shelter services and look forward to future discussions at leadership levels, including with GPCOG and the State.

- *Are pregnant women sent to the family shelter or would they be accommodated in this one?*

They would be served in this one as we currently serve pregnant women.

### **Answers to emailed questions:**

Cecelia Smith:

- *Name, location (physical address), and contact person, of shelters you visited in the Boston area;*

CASPAR, Father Bill's Place

- *Estimated number of people the new shelter will employ;*

Approximately 50-70 depending on number of per diems (expectation is we would use fewer).

- *The article on the BDN states that the City estimates that the new facility will save about \$500,000 from the Oxford Street shelter's \$3.5 million annual budget. Please provide details of what was included in this estimate.*

The savings is based on elimination of contract costs and a decrease in staffing because a single-story shelter plan reduces the staffing needs.

- *Are there any deed restrictions to the current property?*

There are no deed restrictions.

Melanie Caldwell:

- *As parents of a future Rowe (formerly Hall) school student one of our primary concerns is around the safety of the students and staff at the school. Have there been any impact studies reviewed by the City as to what effect putting a homeless shelter in close proximity to an elementary school has on both the school and the shelter? If so, what lessons learned can be taken from other locations where this has been implemented?*

There are currently numerous schools in close proximity to the current Oxford Street Shelter as well as the Family Shelter being located directly across the street: Baxter Academy: 316, Portland High School: 793, Youth and Family Outreach Max of 68, Bayside Learning Community Max of 48.

- *What is the city's long term goal for this location in regards to the space and services? Is there a future growth forecast in place in which this facility will be built to accommodate?*

As the goal is to continually work to reduce the need for homeless shelter space, the idea would be that the space could continue to be a service center for those who need services in the community. If populations increase, we could convert single level beds to bunk beds to accommodate the increased bed needs as well incorporating a flexible space in the dorm section of the new center.

- *It was mentioned several times that shelters and neighborhoods can be good neighbors. If a study or example could be provided of this it may help current residents come around more to the idea. Are there such examples that could be presented to the public?*

There are many shelters located in many neighborhoods in Portland. Each have a relationship with the neighbors that strive to be cooperative and collaborative in nature. We currently work closely with the Bayside Neighborhood Association to work through any issues that arise, and we believe they would testify to the quick responsiveness that shelter staff provide.

- *The proposed plan seems to rely heavily on the local bus system. Was there another location that would have worked just as well that was not located on a bus line?*

No, this location works for many reasons beyond it being located on a bus line.