



JOINT OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES

**Re: Shelter at 6144 SE Foster Road
Foster Area Business Association FAQ
Jan. 25, 2018**

1. How does this shelter fit into the City's investment strategy in this area (Council approved Foster Transportation and Streetscape project, Lents Town Center URA, and the Catalytic Investment Initiative)? Does the funding for the shelter include resources for safety and livability (litter removal, graffiti abatement and consistent community policing)?

The City is fully committed to the economic development of the area planned by Prosper Portland, including the planned improvements to the area's streetscape.

In addition, as areas develop, we also must integrate social services that meet the needs of those community members who are vulnerable. This shelter is part of a continuum of services meant to help your neighbors who feel left behind at a time when business revenues across the city are increasing.

The shelter will be programmed to help ensure that it is a good neighbor, and the shelter operators and guests will be proactive in working with neighbors to address any issues that arise in connection with your new neighbors. As we've added hundreds of beds of shelter capacity since late 2015, we've worked to improve the quality of the shelter we provide. The shelter will provide more of a residential feel than something institutional. We're committed to providing shelter that works not only for those who access it, but also for the surrounding community.

The shelter will be open 24 hours, offering people a bed as long as they need it, and run on a reservation-basis only, with no walk-up services. That reduces queuing by not having people lined up at night, like you might see at other facilities, and will eliminate the potential for large morning egresses with personal belongings in tow.

We help bring neighbors who need our assistance inside, and off the streets, where their camping might be causing livability impacts, connecting them to basic services that others may take for granted -- laundry, storage, showers -- as well as the support services needed to transition to permanent housing.

Given our experience with other shelters we don't expect there to be significant issues. But should issues arise, the provider, along with the Joint office of Homeless Services, the City and the County, will diligently respond. We expect our providers to maintain close, accessible relationships with all neighbors so they can respond to any issues that arise.

Since our meeting, we've also committed to creating a steering committee to help work through shelter programming, public safety and economic development. We'd like to invite your board to participate, along with immediate neighbors, other stakeholders, and representatives from surrounding neighborhood associations.

This group would convene regularly and actively shape how the shelter fits in with the surrounding neighborhood. As part our investment in that process, we will put an appropriate amount of funding in the shelter budget and ask the steering committee to plan how that funding can be used to proactively address concerns over street impacts.

2. What studies on the economic impact of this shelter on area businesses were completed? What feasibility studies and due diligence were done on this location? Will you make those studies publicly available? What are your estimates for impact on neighborhood businesses and how will you and JOHS mitigate them?

We have not dedicated any the finite and critical resources from our housing and homelessness services budgets, where we stretch our dollars to house or shelter tens of thousands of people a year, on specific

economic impact studies. But we are actively observing any community changes as we open shelters in neighborhoods.

Around the Willamette Center, which is the model we expect to follow for this shelter, we know that businesses have continued to move into the area and that lease-ups have not been hindered. Neighborhood leaders in Sellwood-Moreland, in a meeting with Foster-Powell neighbors as well as in a letter to Transition Projects, have not described harmful economic impacts on their neighborhood.

The studies we have seen that look at affordable housing and social services sites tended to hinge on how well a social services program was run. That's why we've been committed to improving the quality of the services we've been providing, alongside neighbors and community groups, using each new shelter or housing site as an opportunity to refine policies and practices based on the lessons we've learned.

If and when we do hear concerns near shelters, we address them and investigate them proactively, and then we make improvements. We believe we can improve conditions for businesses and neighbors, by helping people out of doorways and into shelters and connecting them with services. That's why we offer spaces for couples, pet owners, shift workers and others who've stayed outside historically because the shelters we'd offered hadn't worked for them. It's why we open year-round shelters that don't operate with a daily queue, forcing people to leave every morning with their belongings.

The residential-style system gives people a place to be during the day, with lockers to store belongings and courtyards to get air and tend to pets. We offer laundry, showers, a kitchen and restrooms. We offer case management, employment specialists, housing specialists, and wellness and addiction resources.

Though shelter guests have 24-hour access to the site if needed, shelters are operated with a curfew that requires most residents to be in by a certain time. After-curfew access requires working with staff on a case-by-case basis, often for guests who work swing and graveyard shifts, or who attend 12-step meetings.

We also work with businesses and neighbors to manage livability impacts by prioritizing beds for people they might refer to shelter who are camped or sleeping outside in the area already.

In this case, again, we're committing to convening a steering committee, with funding appropriated as part of the shelter budget, to help proactively address concerns around street impacts in the months before the shelter would open.

3. Foster Area businesses are already burdened by a significant level of crime, with 1,504 offenses reported in our district (Foster-Powell/Mt. Scott) in the past year. In comparison, NE Broadway (Irvington, Grant Park and Sullivan's Gulch) had only 1,388 offenses over the same period. The Southwest Hills had less than 250. Has JOHS seen crime levels rise around shelters in other neighborhoods? What follow up can FABAs and district businesses expect if they report an increase in crime in the district? Will the number of police foot patrols be increased in the area?

We feel it's wholly inappropriate to conflate homelessness and crime. There isn't any data or objective evidence that shows crime increasing because of a shelter, separate from any citywide or neighborhood-level conversations about increases in crime overall. We also do not expect our shelters to lead to increased crime, as they bring people inside and into contact with services, and reduce the livability impacts of camping.

We're empowering the site's steering committee with a budget to help proactively address concerns over street impacts. We're also committed to taking action if those impacts materialize.

Crime and police staffing are citywide issues. The mayor's office last year added funding for additional officers, and the mayor is working to add funding this spring for additional Neighborhood Response Team officers, as well as new reach across the city for the police bureau's Service Coordination Team. That team focuses on chronic offenders who have multiple contacts with police, often for petty crimes and property crimes, while struggling with addiction, mental health issues or both. Alongside criminal justice interventions, the team

provides the wraparound supportive services those offenders might need to leave the streets, if that's where they are, and return to housing.

Guests or potential guests who engage in criminal behavior in or around the shelter will be actively excluded, with our providers working with law enforcement as necessary.

4. Many area businesses have expressed concern about needles and other biohazards keeping customers away. Will there be sharps containers or safe injection/safe consumption sites? What follow up can FABA and district businesses expect when they make a complaint about health/safety hazards?

The shelter will provide sharps containers so guests who use hypodermic needles for diabetes or other potential medical issues can safely dispose of those. In addition, we're working continually to help those who come to shelter with potential addiction issues to engage with the services they need to get healthy. Shelter residents also have access to restrooms 24 hours a day.

Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood leaders told neighbors at the Foster-Powell Neighborhood Association meeting Jan. 4 that their neighborhood has not seen an uptick in needles. That said, if neighbors around this shelter find they have a different experience, we're all committed to addressing it.

Transition Projects already attends neighborhood association meetings, and shelter staff provide numbers that community members can call with concerns 24 hours a day. Beyond shelter, the city has continued to invest more funding in cleanup programs that focus on campsites.

We also must note that our community is facing an opioid crisis that goes well beyond homelessness and also affects people in housing. Multnomah County has added drop sites for sharps in recent years and is working with the community to learn how additional containers would be best deployed.

5. The FAQ mentions that "[behavioral] expectations will be set in cooperation with the school and will be strictly enforced." How is the city reaching out to nearby schools and preschools (including FABA members Arleta Elementary, Green Tulip Peace and Nature School, Junior Achievement, Mt. Scott Learning Center, and Wild Lilac Community Development) to help set behavioral expectations? How will other district businesses that can expect an impact (including businesses that sell alcohol and businesses close to the shelter like 7-Eleven, Bar Carlo, Bar Maven, FoPo Tavern, Mac's Automotive, N.W.I.P.A., Starday Tavern, Tango Berretin, TVG Volvo, and others) be involved in setting appropriate behavioral expectations? What follow up can FABA and district businesses expect when behavioral expectations are not met?

People who cause problems outside the shelter won't be able to remain at the shelter. And beyond providing 24-hour contact information across our system, we've worked in specific ways at our shelters to ensure guests remain good neighbors.

At the Columbia Shelter, for example, guests were told they couldn't use the restroom at nearby My Father's Place if they weren't patrons. Additionally, the Columbia Shelter manager maintains consistent communication with My Father's Place to ensure that this issue and any others are addressed in a timely manner. We're working to hold one-on-one meetings with directly impacted neighbors, such as Mt. Scott Learning Center, to learn their concerns and the specific ways we can address them. We'll also invite them to sit on our steering committee, where they can shape programming decisions and plan how to spend the funding we'll provide to address street concerns. That invitation also will include a representative from FABA.

6. At the 12/18 community meeting, you brought up the possibility of designating the Foster shelter "High Barrier" as a way to mitigate potential disruptions in the heart of our business district. What changes are entailed in making the shelter "High Barrier," and how do you expect that to mitigate potential economic impact on the street? How will your office and JOHS ensure that Foster Area businesses remain involved in changes to the shelter plan?

When we talk about a “low barrier” shelter, it doesn’t mean a “no barrier” shelter or that we suspend expectations and consequences around a guest’s conduct, both inside and outside the facility.

It means we’re trying to remove the obstacles that keep people who want to come inside from coming inside. That means they can bring their pets, sleep next to their partners instead of splitting up, or safely store their belongings. Guests know they need to honor the opportunity for shelter or risk losing it.

We don’t require guests to participate in mandated sobriety or religious programming. But that doesn’t mean we don’t immediately work with them on getting clean and sober. For most people struggling with addiction, that’s an essential element of the work they must do to leave homelessness.

The reality is those who come inside at our low-barrier facilities, whether they serve women, families, men or couples, are making an effort to change their lives and are ready to be held accountable. They’re ready to be done. But that journey looks different for everyone, and not having mandates allows providers to flexibly offer services in a way that works best for each guest.

Some shelters require sobriety and commitments to specific programs, and that works for some guests. But it’s not worked for everyone, and it’s been a barrier for those who otherwise might have come inside and had the stability they might have needed to start working on their addiction or other medical issues.

The fact that sobriety is not a precondition for shelter also does not mean that all residents are using substances. It does not mean that those who might be struggling with addictions would be allowed to use on-site or near the shelter. Nor does it mean that they won’t be subject to criminal sanction if they engage in illegal activity in connection with their addiction.

Relatedly, some community members have understood “low-barrier” to mean that individuals who come to the shelter are not screened out based on their criminal history, and those community members have suggested that having a low-barrier shelter, in turn, presents a greater risk than having a higher-barrier shelter. That is not true. In fact, criminal history screening is not part of any of our publicly funded shelters, whether they are low-barrier or not.

If a resident is on parole or probation, parole and probation officers, as they do throughout our community, enforce supervision terms. That includes requirements that they not be engaged in any illegal activity, and, if applicable, that they not reside in certain areas or within a certain distance from schools or child care centers. Anyone who resides in our shelters is expected, just like any other community member, to obey the law. And if they do not, they are subject to arrest and prosecution just like any other community member.

The reason our community, like communities around the country, have moved toward opening “low-barrier” shelter is to reduce the number of people, especially people with significant disabling conditions, who are living entirely unsheltered and often disconnected from services. This is a better outcome for those individuals, as well as for the larger community that is otherwise affected by increased camping activity.

Last year, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness featured our community’s low-barrier strategy in a report on a national best practices. The federal report said the approach helps “to make emergency shelter work better for people who have historically avoided shelter” and would otherwise be sleeping outside in our neighborhoods, in tents or vehicles.

These shelters provide the stability that comes with knowing there’s a place to sleep, store one’s things and take a shower. That stability means someone can make appointments for services and work with case managers and employment specialists. And then return to housing. It’s hard to take those next steps without that basic stability. And we’re working to bring that to as many people as we can.

7. Will you provide more data around crime statistics before/after shelters in other areas have opened, data on where exactly in SE most homeless people are and data on whether or not temporary low barrier shelters work towards ending homelessness as opposed to permanent housing?

As we wrote above, it's inappropriate to conflate homelessness and crime on any level, and there isn't any data or objective evidence that shows crime increasing because of a shelter, separate from any citywide or neighborhood-level conversations about increases in crime overall.

As for where people in Southeast Portland are experiencing homelessness, beyond the data contained in the Point in Time Count, the city's One Point of Contact tracks campsite cleanup requests. But that snapshot data may not show every campsite, including sites that are low-profile or small. Nor will it show individuals or people doubled up without homes of their own.

At the Jan. 9 meeting, Transition Projects said it helped 1,100 people into housing last year, with more than 85 percent housed a year after their subsidy ends. That work fits within a communitywide investment in and strategy for reducing homelessness, led by tens of millions of dollars in new services investments since 2015.

Overall, partners in the Joint Office of Homeless Service helped a record 4,889 people out of homelessness and into housing last fiscal year, nearly 2,000 more people than providers helped three years before.

That investment in housing is happening alongside our community's push to expand shelter. Our shelters also saw record access last fiscal year -- more than 8,500 people, up from more than 4,000 three years before -- as our community continues to face a housing crisis that's punishing families, seniors, people of color and people with disabilities in particular.

Overall last fiscal year, our providers helped nearly 30,000 people stay housed, regain housing or find safety off the streets in a shelter.

That work is still not enough. Though we saw fewer people sleeping unsheltered in our last count, and more people sleeping in shelter than outside for the first time, the number of people experiencing homelessness overall still increased. That increase was much smaller than what other West Coast communities have seen. But it's still evidence we all need to continue pushing for solutions together.