

Joint Office of Homeless Services | City of Portland | Multnomah County

Creston-Kenilworth Q&A

Re: Shelter at 6144 SE Foster Road

Jan. 22, 2018

1. How will the shelter be funded? Will any money come from the Lents Urban Renewal fund?

The shelter will be funded with general fund resources through the Joint Office of Homeless Services. Those funds come from the general operating budgets of the City of Portland and Multnomah County.

2. Please outline the decision making process for choosing this site, specifically addressing these issues:

a) Was the community engaged in searching for possible shelter locations? Why/why not?

In 2016, as we answered community concerns about our homelessness and housing crisis with a significant expansion of shelter capacity, we sent out an RFI, or a request for information, asking the public to help us identify, or submit, suitable sites for review.

We also began working with our own real estate experts, private brokers, and property owners that approached us to identify potential shelter sites. Those efforts turned up long lists of sites, but very few remained viable as we evaluated their suitability for shelter use. We're continually searching and visiting sites to see if they're a good fit or not.

Through that process, we've been able to add more than 600 year-round shelter beds in our community, doubling our capacity. Last year, for the first time, our count of people experiencing homelessness in Multnomah County found more people sleeping in shelter than outside.

We reduced unsheltered homelessness among families and also saw a larger share of chronically homeless and disabled neighbors in shelter. Unlike other West Coast cities, we actually saw our count of unsheltered neighbors drop. But even with that progress, more than 1,600 people remain outside, and unsheltered homelessness remains a crisis in our community.

The Foster site came to us through a real estate search led by county staff. Once we reached an agreement with the property owner that meant a lease was likely, we notified the public and began holding community meetings months before the shelter would open this fall.

b) What facts demonstrate that this location is appropriate for a homeless shelter? Were these facts made public before the decision was made to choose this location?

Sites that allow shelter by right, with adequate room for night-time sleeping space and daytime activities and services, along with the ability to create protected outdoor areas, are difficult to find. This location, with more than 13,000 square feet, meets those criteria.

The building is also large enough for us to add services on-site, including food, hygiene, storage, computers, and a variety of social services. Those services will be available only for guests with reserved beds. No walk-in services will be provided. Though the site is accessible to its reserved guests 24 hours to accommodate shift workers or residents with class schedules, most shelter guests will be subject to a general nighttime curfew.

We shared our criteria for sites and our plans for which populations we'd prioritize as part of our request for information in June 2016. Those priority populations include:

- Women and children, especially those fleeing domestic violence situations;
- Adult men and women who are disabled, Veterans, or over the age of 55;
- Unaccompanied adult women;
- Adult women in couples;
- People living with severe and persistent mental illness; and
- People of color

Our criteria for the RFI include:

- Proximity to transit
- Favorable zoning designations
- Buildings that include or be renovated to include ADA accessibility, sufficient bathrooms and kitchens, and minimum life safety requirements

We sent neighborhood leaders an FAQ listing some of the Foster site's advantages on Dec. 14, before the Dec. 18 community forum. We heard neighbors wanted more specificity, so we've expanded our FAQ and shared a more extensive list of the criteria we applied and included information generally on how we select shelter sites.

c) Describe why this site was determined to be advantageous for its proximity to transit and job opportunities.

The site is adjacent to two major bus lines that offer frequent service, and it's a short walk away from others. Amenities such as a worksource center, a community center, Portland Community College, a library, and a wide range of retail services on 82nd Avenue are a short walk or bus ride away. Officials at SE Works, for example, have already reached out to offer their support and their interest in working together on programming.

d) How was the proximity to schools and day care facilities taken into account in the decision, especially considering that the shelter will allow people with criminal backgrounds including assault and sex crimes?

The city and county operate social services throughout the community, and many, for years, have been close to schools and other sites where children are present, including day cares, parks, and community centers.

We should be clear, however: If an individual's criminal history precludes them from being within a certain distance from a school, then they wouldn't be allowed to live at this shelter. Parole and probation officers, as they do throughout our community, enforce supervision terms that set those boundaries. And they will arrest those who violate them, whether they live in shelter, are camping outside or living in homes of their own.

While we cannot foreclose having homeless services near these uses, we can and do work to make sure those services are a good neighbor to all adjacent neighbors and uses.

That's why we're committed to convening a steering committee, made up of neighbors and other stakeholders, to directly shape not only how the shelter works and provides services, but also how it's integrated into the community around it.

In general, people with criminal histories can't be excluded from public accommodations, no matter where they are in the community. The difference, in a supportive social services environment, is that they can be connected with services and offered the help and community they need to be successful on their own once more.

e) Why are you seeking public input now? What specific decisions can the public be a part of?

It will be many months before the shelter opens. We want members of our steering committee to meet regularly and work through, directly shaping, issues around shelter programming, ongoing communications, how to help engage people already homeless in the neighborhood, site development and, more broadly, economic development and public safety.

We will also meet with neighbors one-on-one or in other public meetings to provide updates, in addition to maintaining a project page at athomeforeveryone.net/foster and a listserv with more than 300 addresses currently.

3. Were any zoning laws waived or modified for this shelter?

No. This shelter is allowed by right and does not fall under the housing emergency.

4. The Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood is one of the densest neighborhoods in Portland. In addition to this 100-bed shelter, the city is also planning to build a new 200-300 unit apartment complex at SE 30th and Powell where no residences existed before. Concurrently, private developers are adding density (e.g. lot splitting & new apartment complexes). What plans does the city have to offset this increase in population density in our neighborhood?

The city of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability conducts regular assessments of neighborhoods to ensure transportation infrastructure and services such as trash pickup are keeping pace with development. Transportation needs reviews, however, are triggered any time an affordable housing development advances through the pipeline. City officials also are working on plans to improve trash and recycling collection in high-traffic areas.

5. In the past 6 months, the neighborhood association has heard plans for a temporary winter shelter that will eventually become a 200-300 unit affordable housing complex on SE Powell (by the Portland Housing Bureau), a private developer who is planning affordable single-room occupancy units in cooperation with Street Roots (by Guerrilla Development), and now a 100-bed shelter. This feels like a rapid uptick in services within a small area. What coordination is there between the city, county, and private developers to ensure that new services are located where they are needed while avoiding over concentration in any one neighborhood?

It's important to clarify two points: There are no plans to open a shelter in the Safari site as it waits to become affordable housing. In addition, the Guerrilla Development project isn't a social services site. It plans to offer below-market-rate rents at a time when neighbors are being priced out of our communities as wages fail to keep pace with surging housing costs.

Partners in the A Home for Everyone initiative to end homelessness, representing government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, faith groups and housing providers, work together in monthly meetings to coordinate on a shared strategy. That strategy works to keep people from losing their housing if we can, put them back into housing quickly if we can't, or if needed, provide them a safe place off the street in a shelter. Partners are helping nearly 30,000 people a year.

That strategy also holds to the principle of bringing services to places where there's a demonstrated need. We know there's a significant share of unsheltered neighbors in East and Southeast Portland, which is why we've looked to bring services to those neighborhoods. But we've also brought services to people in need in every part of Portland.

This winter, Northwest Portland's Congregation Beth Israel is hosting a family shelter. The county opened a winter shelter in the Mead Building downtown. The Kenton Women's Village opened last year in North Portland. A former motel in Southwest Portland, on Barbur, will offer transitional housing and shelter for people with mental illness. And we're still working with a property owner on a shelter Old Town Chinatown. Those projects add up to hundreds of beds.