



Land Use & Environment Committee

Discussion of Low Barrier Shelter Potential Locations and Siting Criteria

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Agenda Item:

Discussion of Low Barrier Shelter Potential Locations and Siting Criteria

Issue:

Where is the optimal location for a proposed low barrier shelter in Olympia?

City Manager's Recommendation:

Receive a briefing on potential locations for a proposed low barrier shelter in Olympia, and discuss criteria for site selection.

Staff Contact:

M. Anna Schlecht, Housing Program Manager, 360.753.8183

Presenter(s):

M. Anna Schlecht, Housing Program Manager
Brian Wilson, Downtown Liaison

Background and Analysis:

The Thurston County Homeless Coordinator's first annual report identified five gaps in the homeless services system, including the need for a low-barrier shelter serving single adults. Low barrier shelter is an emerging homeless shelter model defined as *shelter that is operated with the little or no barrier for entry*. As a service model, low-barrier shelters are client-based, not agency-based, and focus predominantly on the needs of homeless people as they present rather than focusing on agency threshold standards that homeless people have to meet before gaining access to a bed for the night.

Interfaith Works (IFW) and other community partners have developed a proposal for the County HOME Consortium to create a facility that offers low barrier shelter serving up to 40 people in the downtown urban hub of Olympia. Additionally, this proposal also includes a 24 hour drop in center with public latrines and social services.

On March 12, 2013, the Council allocated \$35,000 to aid in the creation of a low barrier shelter. IFW has received a conditional approval for \$175,000 in funding from the County if they work with City of Olympia Officials to identify an appropriate location. The first two potential locations that were considered by IFW were rejected following objections from surrounding property owners, businesses and other stakeholders.

On July 9, 2013 Council directed staff to work with the County Homeless Coordinator and other County officials to identify an appropriate location. In preparation for this effort, City staff developed a matrix of potential locations annotated with a short list of amenities, challenges and access to public transportation.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The location of a low barrier shelter may have real or perceived negative impacts on the surrounding business or residential neighbors. These concerns focus on the potential for a low barrier shelter becoming a magnet for large numbers of street dependent people to loiter in the immediate area and engage in negative behaviors.

Options:

Receive a briefing on potential locations for a proposed low barrier shelter in Olympia, and discuss criteria for site selection.

Financial Impact:

The City Council has offered up to \$35,000 in Council Goal funds to assist in the creation of a low barrier shelter.