

**From:** Gail Bliss  
**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2016 2:56 PM  
**To:** Parks, Timothy  
**Subject:** Homeless Day Shelter comment for 12.12.16 hearing

Dear Mr. Parks and Planning Commission Members

The December 9 article in the Wisconsin State Journal announced the public hearing for the Day Shelter, and listed some of the 14 conditions the East Washington Business Coalition wanted to place on the shelter.

They compare this facility to the Occupy Madison encampment at the old Don Miller site. A much better comparison would be to the site run by Shine608, the year the Central Library was closed, in the 800 block of E. Washington.

As a regular volunteer at the Shine608 site, "loitering" and recreational activities were among the accepted and necessary purposes. People have to be somewhere. One purpose of a Day Shelter is giving homeless folks a safe place to be. The smoking area outside was well used. Folks watched TV, sat inside and talked, played with their children in a railed off family only area. There was a quiet space for reading/napping, a computer room for business and pleasure. Storage was inadequate, but even so greatly appreciated. There was food available. It was sometimes noisy & chaotic, but welcoming.

As for no "intermixing" with the Salvation Army Shelter - That is ridiculous. Couples without children are separated at night if they need to be in a shelter. Many choose to sleep out to avoid being separated. Being together is absolutely appropriate in the Day Shelter.

The 615 E Washington location is ideal for the families at the Salvation Army Shelter. I volunteer there for the breakfast shift most Sunday mornings. I hate having to send parents with small children out into the cold knowing that even on week days they have an hour to kill and 8/10th of a mile to walk with their kids. On winter Sundays the Library opens at 1 PM. Last winter there was a mother with infant twins; one went in a front pack and the other into the stroller. She had to make the babies take turns being warmed by her body heat! On days when the library isn't open I see families waiting for the bus to go to the Porchlight shelter. Checking the Madison Metro trip planning system, the options aren't all that good. The #6 picks up at 8:20, a block from the shelter. The families have to change buses at the square, (before getting warmed up from waiting for the first bus) or ride to the West Transfer Point to catch the #18 and still walk half a mile when they get off, after a trip lasting 75 minutes. I'm not sure what the kids do once they reach the Porchlight shelter.

The Shine608 shelter had an area for just families with children, where kids could play without being under foot. It wasn't perfect, somewhere for breastfeeding would have been nice, but I didn't hear any parents complaining. I am glad to see there will be indoor and outdoor space for families.

The proposal for "full security" which Brenda Konkel called "police officers on site with the authority to make arrests for violation of permit conditions ..." sounds to me like more attempts

to criminalize homelessness. The unarmed security guard on site during open hours seems like a wasted position, but if it makes it possible to finally get a Day Shelter in the downtown area, I'm for it.

I also concur with Konkel that overnight storage is a significant need for members of the homeless community. Lack of storage is one of the continuing issues at the Salvation Army shelter.

Please move the project forward expeditiously. Madison and Dane County need this day use facility. I want to see the remodeled facility open for the 2017-18 winter. We have been saying "next year" for too long!

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