

Locating a Permanent Location for the Proposed Men's Shelter

2002 Zeier Road does not meet our needs

Goals

- Close proximity to the Beacon Day center in order to eliminate barriers to access
- Close proximity to downtown where many vital resources are currently available
- Close proximity to public transportation
- Access to case workers who can help facilitate access to employment and housing providers (The Beacon provides)
- Provide a viable path to building a purpose-built shelter

Key Factors

- Men Experiencing Homelessness have been sheltered in downtown churches for 30+ years. The City and County need to build a permanent emergency men's shelter.
- Previous years discussions about building a permanent shelter have been focused within 1.5 miles of the capital square.
- Current proposal is only accommodating the purchase and remodel of an overnight shelter with an estimated opening date of October 2022. This will create barriers to access between the day center and this location.
- 2002 Zeier Rd is located 6 miles from the Beacon Day center.
- Revitalization of the Greater East Towne area is vital to future tax base revenue that supports critical services.

1st Street Temporary Shelter Success

Prior to becoming an alder, I met with Preston, who has been the director of the shelter for over 11 years. He said that the last several months have been the most successful he has seen since he started. I asked him what changed? He stated that the first street location made a very big difference for three reasons.

1) The facility is large. They can intake residents inside the building instead of them having to wait outside, especially during inclement weather. The space is also large enough to have a separate area where individuals can safely detox. They are also able to accommodate individuals who have increased anxiety when surrounded by people, they have beds that are spaced out and separated.

2) The location is downtown. Many residents are familiar with the downtown area and being close to the Beacon day center as well as other resources contributed to this more recent success. It is critical that there is close proximity to the Beacon to eliminate barriers to access. Even taking a bus can be a barrier for some.

3) Funding for case workers. Recent funding changes due to the pandemic have allowed them to increase their case workers. These workers are critical to the goal of long-term housing. These workers can build relationships and help the residents apply for housing as well as employment opportunities. They are a vital component to the success of our goals. They could use several more case workers, but the improvement in the well-being of the residents has been significant.

Other Location Options – Former Hooper Location

There were several locations identified on the original list and many were ruled out due to the timing of availability. One location that was not on the original list is the former Hooper location on Pennsylvania Avenue which is available, fits our timeline and the sellers are interested. This location was introduced by President Abbas at the March 30 council meeting since it does check all the boxes that would be needed for an ideal location to build the permanent shelter. In addition, this location is within blocks of the Beacon day center and will give us the time needed to develop the property in stages as the current plan states. This location could be remodeled for an overnight shelter first to meet our timeline to open so that work on the Public Market can start. We then have the time to build out the following phases of the plan which will get us to the fully operational, purpose-built shelter. We can ensure that we provide not only an emergency shelter, but a pathway to long-term housing that facilitates the needs of each individual along the way.

East Towne Area Decline and Future Revitalization

This area has been struggling for a number of years as several of the anchor tenants in the mall have gone out of business (Sears, Boston Store, Gordmans). A few more are at high risk with JC Penny declaring bankruptcy last year and Brew Flix expecting permanently lower attendance of 25% going forward. Smaller tenants have also continued to disappear with many of those locations continuing to remain empty. CBL Properties has stated that many tenants are on the fence with regards to renewal, so the situation is very tenuous.

City planners have been working on the Greater East Towne Area revitalization plan over the past year. They conducted several public and community engagements and have worked with many business owners who have been interested in helping revitalize this area. One of the big success stories has been the Global Market which fills the former Baby's R Us location. This market has dozens of minority small business owners who operate their stores within the market. The owners of the market talk about how supportive the city was to help them get this location launched. Their investors believed in the revitalization plan for this area and took a chance by investing here.

Throughout all the community outreach and focus on this area, the placement of a permanent men's shelter in this area was not in the plan. Many of these businesses and residents were very surprised when this was announced in January 2021. There is the potential for over \$1B in development growth in the Greater East Towne area which will generate tens of millions in tax

base. This revenue will be critical as we navigate a long path toward economic recovery from the devastating the pandemic. There are developers who are interested in building in this area, including a \$100M investment which you may have seen in the news. Some of these developers are also interesting in bringing a mix of housing, including more affordable units. One developer has an entire division that has built tens of thousands of affordable units and is interested in building here as well. Building these affordable units require investment and that investment is strengthened by building a mix of several types of housing. This \$100M development would help kick off many additional investments in this area.

These investors have seen the potential of this area, but they are also watching to see how we are going to support the growth in this area. Studies have shown that when there is a high collective efficacy* in an area, it facilitates healthy growth, conversely when an area is depressed and there little collective efficacy, it continues to spiral in a negative direction. Having positive growth of small businesses, new housing units and recreation areas are what fosters a higher collective efficacy. The Greater East Towne plan is a move in the right direction, and we will need to continue to support existing businesses as well as foster an environment that will attract new housing developments and small businesses.

I believe we have the collective will to build out this purpose-built shelter over the next several years and ensure that our vulnerable residents experiencing homelessness will have access to a facility that will get them on the path to long term housing. I believe it is our responsibility to ensure that this done correctly from the start to ensure future success.

**Collective efficacy: refers to the level of mutual trust and cohesion among residents and their willingness to work toward the common good [and] is related to the structural characteristics of the neighborhood.*

Thank you,

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