

City of Boise Shelter Better Task Force

Feasibility Criteria Q&A

During Week 2 of the Shelter Better Task Force, questions were collected from task force members regarding the feasibility criteria for the proposed emergency shelter. The questions have been recorded under each criterion listed below and answered by Our Path Home representatives. Questions are represented by Q and Comments are represented by C, while all answers provided by the Task Force planning team begin with A.

Feasibility Criteria #1: Shelter Design

Shelter design must be manageable for Interfaith Sanctuary's sustainable operational needs and business plan.

Q: *What does this mean in terms of size? Has IFS (Interfaith Sanctuary) determined what is currently manageable?*

A: Interfaith Sanctuary determined that the balance between the need for emergency shelter and their operational capacity was approximately 200 beds in a single location, given their current shelter guest count and routine requests for shelter beds, especially among unique household types (e.g., families, single dads). More information regarding projected need for beds was discussed in Week 4, and Interfaith Sanctuary's operational capacity was discussed in Week 5 of the Task Force.

Q: *Can we get a copy of the proposed plan, business plan, etc....?*

A: Interfaith Sanctuary presented their proposed shelter plan to the Task Force in Week 5. The materials and resources presented to the Task Force during the meeting will be provided to Task Force members online on the City of Boise website: <https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/mayor/shelter-better-task-force/>.

Q: *What are the operational needs and business plan?*

A: Interfaith Sanctuary presented their proposed shelter plan to the Task Force in Week 5. The materials and resources presented to the Task Force during the meeting will be provided to Task Force members online on the City of Boise website: <https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/mayor/shelter-better-task-force/>.

Q: *Should shelter design also focus on meeting the needs of its guests in a holistic and humanitarian way?*

A: Yes, Interfaith Sanctuary is a tenured emergency shelter operator with policies, procedures, and programs that meet the needs of guests. Interfaith Sanctuary

presented their proposed shelter plan to the Task Force in Week 5. The materials presented to the Task Force during the meeting will be provided to Task Force members and posted online on as additional resources on the Task Force webpage.

Q: Is concentration needed (Pros/Cons of one shelter)?

A: As described in the Corporation for Supportive Housing's Shelter Needs Analysis Presentation during Week 4, the three critical components of a successful emergency shelter are that it is low barrier, treats people with dignity, and creates exits to permanent solutions. The size of a shelter does not directly correlate with the success of a shelter, and there is no definitive answer in literature on the subject as to the right size of emergency shelter. In this instance, it is an operational requirement for Interfaith Sanctuary, as an independent non-profit service provider, that their emergency shelter operate from a single site location.

Q: Considering options outside of Interfaith operating model could lead to better shelter in Boise. Can we consider these, too? (e.g. expanding Permanent Supportive Housing or housing stock to reduce need for shelter, especially from long term users; move to scattered site model with smaller distributed shelters, etc...)

A: Our Path Home, the public-private partnership working to end homelessness in Ada County, is charged with leading strategic planning among more than 40 partners. As part of that scope, many different programs are managed as a continuum of care including outreach, engagement, and assessment; prevention and diversion; emergency shelter; rapid re-housing; and permanent supportive housing for those most in need.

Although the task force has engaged in homelessness response system learning to better understand the role of emergency shelter, the charge of the Task Force does not include making recommendations beyond a location for and services to accompany emergency shelter.

To that end, the components of Our Path Home's Permanent Supportive Housing work was included in the Corporation for Supportive Housing's shelter needs analysis from Week 4, in terms of projection of total inflow of new people experiencing homelessness and expansion of housing options for placement of people experiencing homelessness.

As demonstrated through the analysis, permanent supportive housing is not a replacement for the ongoing needs of the night-by-night crisis for which emergency shelter is the only right-sized investment.

Q: Can we address whether maintaining an increased private funding stream to support expanded shelter is sustainable? What if funds fall short?

A; Interfaith Sanctuary has successfully operated an emergency shelter in Boise for over a decade, including the management of a \$1.8 million annual budget and their donor relationships. In part, Interfaith Sanctuary's new proposal was based on their efforts to consolidate operations to further fiscally responsible outcomes.

Q: Does IFS create a housing plan on day 1 with shelter guests? If so, what is an individualized plan?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary connects every guest experiencing literal homelessness with Our Path Home CONNECT, the centralized access point to the homeless services system. There, each person receives a housing assessment and is provided the guidance to navigate a housing plan with the collaborative support from partner agencies in Our Path Home's homelessness services network. Interfaith Sanctuary takes additional steps towards housing with shelter guests on an individualized basis, including helping shelter guests secure personal identification or assisting with the housing search process.

C: We should outline services needed in building.

Interfaith Sanctuary presented their proposed shelter plan to the Task Force in Week 5. The materials presented to the Task Force during the meeting will be provided to Task Force members and posted online as additional resources on the Task Force webpage.

C: Must be manageable for surrounding community; shouldn't concentrate those in need.

A: The goal of shelter is to move people into permanent housing to end their homelessness. Interfaith Sanctuary and Our Path Home partners work with shelter guests to identify housing solutions and the location in which that shelter guest is ultimately housed happens across the Treasure Valley.

A key consideration in the housing search process is the need to keep that household's natural and community supports accessible to them while preserving that household's right to choose where they live. This approach results in households moving out of the shelter and into various communities and neighborhoods across Ada County.

That said, Our Path Home's Supportive Housing Plan includes establishing a pipeline of supportive housing projects for development. This means that new projects akin to New Path Community Housing and Valor Pointe will be developed in Boise to help end homelessness for households currently in need of emergency shelter. If those developments are to be appropriately sited, close to transit and services, then neighborhoods with those amenities will continue to see development aimed at serving the needs of this population and moving our City forward on housing our most marginalized community members.

Feasibility Criteria #2: Site Development

Site development proposal must accommodate the needs of the night-by-night crisis in terms of the proposed size of the shelter (total beds) and the parcel's ability to support that (code compliance).

Q: Can we entertain creative approaches, multiple smaller shelters for example?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary has experience in the operation of multi-locational shelters. Their experience identified that this delivery model for shelter is cost-burdensome, logistically challenging for staffing, and limits access to services/programs for shelter guests. In keeping with feasibility criterion #1, shelter design, the proposal must be workable for Interfaith Sanctuary as an independent non-profit organization and the lead operator of low-barrier, Housing First-oriented emergency shelter in Boise. Additionally, the cost of land and the cost to staff and serve multiple locations puts the concept of multiple, smaller shelters in direct conflict with criterion #6, right-sized investment.

Q: What is the best data to determine this fit? (e.g. Current occupancy, projected/potential growth of people experiencing homelessness, current housing solutions in the works?)

A: The shelter needs analysis was presented to the Task Force on Week 4. For the analysis, data was evaluated from Our Path Home's Homeless Management Information System on shelter utilization over the past two years including: unique households entering shelter, unique households exiting shelter, number of households exiting into permanent housing, the average length of stay for all exits, median length of stay for all exits, average length of shelter stay for all stayers, median length of stay for all stayers. In addition, we reviewed Our Path Home's shelter capacity which includes the number of beds by shelter and by service population (adult only, families with children, unaccompanied youth).

Beyond shelter, the needs analysis covered projections looking into the future. These projections considered how the demand for shelter might increase due to population growth and the increased use of shelter by our unsheltered population. It also looked at how our need for shelter will be impacted by our progress toward housing people experiencing homelessness. As described in the presentation, the tool developed for this analysis will be retained by Our Path Home to be used in ongoing strategic planning.

Q: How to balance night-by-night needs within the greater context of the community and neighborhood in which the shelter may reside? Define night-by-night needs.

A: The night-by-night need is determined by the number of people seeking shelter on a given night compared to the number of available number shelter beds. The availability of beds is determined by the total number of beds and the household type that bed serves, in addition to considerations of barriers that prevent individuals from accessing those beds. Although vacancies may occur across the shelter system, those vacancies do not directly correlate with accessible system capacity. Information about low-barrier shelter was presented by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in Week 2, background was provided on the reasons people experiencing homelessness do not access shelter in Ada County for Week 4, and a shelter needs analysis was presented by the Corporation for Supportive Housing in Week 4.

C: I don't understand what this is trying to say.

A: The recommendation for a shelter location must be able to accommodate the total number of beds needed while also complying with City of Boise code.

Feasibility Criteria #3: Proximity to Services

The proposed location needs to be in close proximity to services for those experiencing homelessness or be along transit routes that easily connect community members to services.

Q: How does this (does this?) incorporate the needs for EMS, fire, other emergency services?

A: Presentations from Our Path Home OUTREACH and the Boise Police Department in Week 4 demonstrated that emergency services are prepared to adapt to any shift in location for the emergency shelter and allocate resources at the scale necessary to respond to any calls for service. For emergency service responses, Our Path Home will continue to collaborate with its outreach partners including the Our Path Home OUTREACH team, Boise Police Department, DHW's Mobile Crisis Unit, Ada County Paramedics, and others to proactively plan for delivery of emergency services.

Q: Can we better understand what these services are? What services are these and where are they located? Which services are most important? Which services are used most often?

A: There are two types of services that are important to consider for accessibility in shelter siting: community services and homeless services. Combined these services are part of any siting work for an emergency shelter and should be evaluated for any potential site.

Community services include access to grocery stores, banks, employment, community centers (e.g., libraries and parks), health clinics, and access to public transit. By nature, these should be accessible in proximity to the shelter so that shelter guests can easily integrate their daily lives into the surrounding community.

Homeless services are primarily provided for within the shelter, meaning that these services are either provided by Interfaith Sanctuary or a partner who delivers services at the shelter. In instances where shelter guests need transportation that public transport cannot accommodate, it has been Interfaith Sanctuary's operating model to provide transportation necessary to connect guests to homeless services.

Q: Has there been research on what the most successful proximity is? How does public transport impact this? Is walkable more helpful than bus?

A: Households needs for transportation and walkability are unique whether you are housed or experiencing homelessness. Primary reasons that public transport is key for households experiencing homelessness include that 33% of individuals experiencing homelessness are employed, public transit provides a means for moving additional individuals toward employment opportunities, and some of the individuals served by emergency shelter are medically fragile and have significant mobility needs. Not unlike any other resident of the City, including those who are housed, convenience, cost (to include time), and the public transport schedule are factors households consider as they navigate their daily needs.

Q: What services will Interfaith Sanctuary provide? What is being duplicated?

Interfaith Sanctuary, currently and within this proposal, will continue providing the Our Path Home a low-barrier and Housing First-oriented shelter that serves a variety of household types, including families. Interfaith Sanctuary presented their proposed shelter plan to the Task Force in Week 5. The materials presented to the Task Force during the meeting will be provided to Task Force members and posted online on as additional resources on the Task Force webpage.

Q: What are the services at or near the proposed location?

A: Note: our interpretation of this question is the original siting proposal of the Interfaith Sanctuary relocation to State Street.

Community Services - The State Street location is near public transit routes, grocery stores (Albertson's and Tom's Fruit Stand), community gathering centers (Collister Library, Willow Lane Park, Veteran's Park), banks (Chase Bank and Wells Fargo), the greenbelt as an alternative method of transportation, and other services that allow for self-sufficiency. This location is also near both hospitals which are better served with appropriate, nearby places to discharge.

Homeless Services - The State Street location provides sufficient space at 33,000 square feet to provide onsite homeless services in collaboration with network providers across the Our Path Home partnership. Additionally, the proposal also provides space for medical services, pre-school, and other services/programs that IFS plan on offering within the shelter that will be provided in more detail during Week 5.

Q: Can we consider alternate options such as a private shuttle which SLC implements?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary and Our Path Home partners have agreed to deliver necessary services to shelter guests onsite to the degree possible. In instances where shelter guests need transportation that public transit cannot support to access community or homeless services, it has been Interfaith Sanctuary's operating model to provide the transportation necessary. In that vein, Interfaith has provided shuttle services in the past

depending on the needs of shelter guests. The cost for developing a shuttle system that replicates a service already provided through public transit is ill-advised in an already resource-constrained system that needs to prioritize housing.

Further, conceptually, a private shuttle would only be required if the siting of the shelter is incongruent with access to either community services, homeless services, or both. The issue is this premise moves against best practices for siting shelter. Public transit is a community service that is vital for shelter guests. Providing a duplicative service rather than siting a shelter along existing community resources is not only more costly but can lead to the otherization of people experiencing homelessness. That is, to suggest that public transit is not an appropriate resource for those experiencing homelessness to use for accessing and participating in community creates harm.

Q: Where would those transit routes be that would easily provide that access?

A: Public transit routes should be within walking distance to the shelter. To meet shelter guest needs, the siting should prioritize proximity to routes that provide more frequent service, run on extended hours, and provide uncomplicated routes to employment centers and other community services.

C: Transit should connect to needed destination conveniently.

A: Yes, please see the answer to the question above for more information on transit routes and the importance of their accessibility and proximity to uncomplicated bus routes that connect people to community and employment services.

Feasibility Criteria #4: Land Availability

The proposed location needs to be on land owned by the City of Boise, Interfaith Sanctuary, another partner agency, or available for purchase.

Q: With land prices going up, is a new purchase really an option?

A: We are currently evaluating all available land for purchase in the City of Boise with a brokerage firm in addition to considering land currently owned by the City of Boise, Interfaith Sanctuary, and other Our Path Home partners. New purchase also includes a compounding factor of delay, which can increase the total project costs of the relocation of an emergency shelter. The Task Force will receive a presentation on this land and building scan from TOK Brokerage Firm and the City of Boise in Week 6. This question demonstrates why this criterion in particular will be useful as the Task Force evaluates all potential parcels for the proposal by taking into account the real cost of the land, including a purchase price.

Q: Are there any other City owned properties, other than the Salvation Army building?

A: Yes, the Task Force will receive a presentation on the performed land and building scan from TOK Brokerage Firm and City of Boise in Week 6.

Q: The building has already been purchased by Interfaith Sanctuary, yes?

A: Yes, Interfaith Sanctuary owns the old Salvation Army building on State Street, which is the original proposal for siting the new emergency shelter.

Q: With only one location?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary has experience in the operation of multi-locational shelters. Their experience identified that this delivery model for shelter is cost-burdensome, logistically challenging for staffing, and limits access to services/programs for shelter guests. In keeping with feasibility criteria #1, shelter design, the proposal must be workable for Interfaith Sanctuary as an independent non-profit organization and the lead operator of low-barrier, housing first emergency shelter in Boise. Additionally, the cost of land puts the concept of multiple, smaller shelters in direct conflict with criteria #6, right-sized investment.

Q: Will there be a map provided with alternate locations that currently meet this criteria?

A: Yes, the Task Force will receive a presentation on the performed land and building scan from TOK Brokerage Firm and City of Boise in Week 6. These alternate locations, along with shelter sites recommended by the Task Force, will be evaluated through the lens of the feasibility criteria.

Feasibility Criteria #5: Timeline Driven

The proposed location needs to be available to develop/redevelop in a timely manner to ensure that Our Path Home is able to respond to the night-by-night crisis.

Q: What is the timeline? Are there proposed dates? Need specifics and what has to be done by when.

A: Timing is fluid because of the factors outlined below, but the issue is urgent. A crisis exists tonight.

Emergency Shelter (146 beds) - Interfaith Sanctuary has sold their original building and has a leaseback option for their current building for 12 months beginning in March 2021. Interfaith Sanctuary could be offered a conditional 6-month extension to be added onto the 12 months, for a final 18-month timeline from March 2021. The specific timeline for project completion will be dependent on the proposed shelter site.

Emergency Shelter Hotel (142 beds) - Interfaith Sanctuary has been managing an emergency shelter at a hotel as part of Our Path Home's emergency response to COVID-19.

There are additional factors to consider when identifying a timeline for any proposals. The timelines for each of these factors will vary significantly, making estimations not helpful. The key piece of this feasibility criterion is that Interfaith must be able to move forward immediately:

Purchase/Swap: Identification of a new location will result in the need to either purchase the land or negotiate a land swap with the owner.

Design: Any new location will require design support from an architectural firm

Conditional Use Permit: A process that will be required for the siting of this shelter, wherever the proposal is sited, **which can take between 2-3 months**; if an appeal is filed that extends the process to **between 4-5 months**.

Construction/Remodel: Complicated by the availability of materials in a development heavy local market and global supply chains impacted by COVID-19.

Q: What is the timeline in question? Are interim solutions available to bridge the gap? (e.g. Boise Rescue Mission absorbing folks, continuing hotel rental, etc...?)

A: Please see the answer to the question above for information of the timeline. The Boise Rescue Mission is not an option for absorbing the overflow guests that currently reside at Interfaith Sanctuary (both in the current, congregate shelter or at the hotel Interfaith is currently operating for families, medically fragile, and COVID-19+), based on the Boise Rescue Mission's bed count capacity/household type served and programmatic requirements. The hotel is secured through emergency funding provided by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is limited in both amount and time.

C: I don't understand how Our Path Home is responding nightly to a crisis.

A: The crisis is that people without a home need shelter. Therefore, every night, Our Path Home, by way of its emergency shelters, responds to a crisis. This night-by-night crisis is defined by the number of people seeking shelter. Our Path Home, in collaboration with IFS and over 40 partner agencies, respond to this night-by-night crisis by providing emergency shelter – out of the weather, in a bed, and with a meal.

Feasibility Criteria #6: Right-Sized Investment

The cost of the proposed project needs to preserve Our Path Home's ability to invest in housing first solutions that end homelessness, not just manage it.

Q: What is the cost of the project?

A: The proposal for the State Street location project total was \$4.9 million; \$2.4 million for completed purchase of building, additional \$2.5+ million for remodel based on the fluctuating, increased price of materials.

Q: How will we get more investment? There is a funding shortage for the size of the problem.

A: This project is one in a larger portfolio of work within Our Path Home's homelessness response system. For this project, Interfaith Sanctuary has secured the necessary financing and has an internal capital fundraising plan to support the proposed new building. Operationally, Interfaith Sanctuary has an annual budget to sustain the proposed emergency shelter indefinitely. Because this proposed project is financed, Our Path Home has increased flexibility to use its resources on supportive housing.

Our Path Home manages the strategy for funding decisions across the rest of the homelessness response system in partnership with the larger collaborative: balancing the needs of people experiencing literal homelessness and people at risk for or currently experiencing housing insecurity.

Q: The prior proposal reflected an expansion of the number of emergency shelter beds in Boise. To effectively use more beds, can Boise commit to bringing on the equivalent number of additional affordable housing units per month?

A: The proposal is not an expansion of the number beds in Boise. The prior Interfaith Sanctuary proposal submitted for a planning and zoning hearing specified 200 beds in the new structure's design. Currently, Interfaith Sanctuary operates two overnight emergency shelter locations. The emergency shelter has 146 beds and the hotel shelter has 142 beds, for a total of 288 beds. Therefore, the original proposal represents a 31% reduction from IFS's current bed capacity.

Notwithstanding, the City of Boise is working alongside Our Path Home and other housing partners to develop a strategic plan to address affordable housing at all levels. The scale of the issue is beyond the scope of this Task Force and includes far more ambitious targets for affordable housing, including supportive housing for those experiencing literally homelessness, than is requested in this answer.

Q: Will the investment include projected costs of fully supporting shelter operations in years to come?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary has been a successful and independent non-profit servicing households experiencing homelessness for more than a decade with their own funding sources. For this project, Interfaith Sanctuary has secured the necessary financing and has an internal capital fundraising plan to support the proposed new building. Operationally, Interfaith Sanctuary has an annual budget to sustain the proposed emergency shelter indefinitely.

Q: Are the cost of operations considered in this proposal? Based on solution?

A: Interfaith Sanctuary has been a successful and independent non-profit servicing households experiencing homelessness for more than a decade with their own funding sources. For this project, Interfaith Sanctuary has secured the necessary financing and has an internal capital fundraising plan to support the proposed new building. Operationally, Interfaith Sanctuary has an annual budget to sustain the proposed emergency shelter indefinitely.

Q: Can we entertain other funding models involving broader partners, gov'ts, etc...?

A: For this project to develop a new emergency shelter to replace Interfaith Sanctuary's current operations, Interfaith Sanctuary has secured the necessary financing and has an internal capital fundraising plan to support the proposed new building. Operationally, Interfaith Sanctuary has an annual budget to sustain the proposed emergency shelter indefinitely. The funding models for this project have been pre-developed by Interfaith Sanctuary in collaboration with their independent Board of Directors. Because this proposed project is financed, Our Path Home has increased flexibility to use its resources on supportive housing. However, if a siting recommendation concludes with another location that requires new funding, then Interfaith Sanctuary and the City of Boise will work in partnership with Our Path Home on the recommendation.

Q: Will Our Path Home be contributing private and/or federal or city/state funding?

A: Today, Our Path Home has not provided any financial contribution to the project. If a siting recommendation concludes with another location that requires new funding, then Interfaith Sanctuary and the City of Boise will work in partnership with Our Path Home on the recommendation, including the funding options available.

C: We should not build more permanent emergency shelter space than needed long term.

A: Yes, not only does the current project proposal reduce the total number of beds operated by Interfaith Sanctuary, the shelter needs analysis presentation from Week 4 illustrated that the proposed shelter is sized appropriately based on the projected populations of need within the Ada County.

Additional Questions

Q: Can we utilize the tons of empty commercial buildings? For shelters and resources?

A: Commercial real estate is highly competitive and cost-prohibitive in the current market. As part of the City of Boise's work for this Task Force, a commercial real estate brokerage firm completed a scan of all available real estate including off-market opportunities for potential siting of the emergency shelter. The result of that scan will be presented to the Task Force in Week 6.

Q: There has been a lot of talk about impacts (Pros and Cons) about the shelter location on State St. How are those impacts being addressed?

A: This Task Force has been comprised to involve community members and include their perspectives on the impacts of the shelter location on State St, including neighborhood leadership that has publicly opposed the siting of the shelter on State St. The neighborhood leadership Task Force members have been invited to present their concerns on the siting of shelter in general and specific to the State Street location to the Task Force on Week 6. They will be supported by the professional facilitator with in an additional two-hour session to workshop their concerns and prepare their presentation. Additionally, community perspectives are being addressed and included in a public engagement interview process that has sent invitations to more than 30 community members representing unique constituencies, as requested by the Task Force. The compilation of those interviews that will be provided to the Task Force in Week 6 and included in the final recommendation.

Q: Why do the success criteria not include any metrics regarding surrounding land use, appropriate site selection, and public service availability?

A: The criteria incorporate land use through the requirement of code compliance in criteria #2, site development, and public service availability and access to services in criteria #3. Appropriate site selection encompasses the criteria as a package and cover the spectrum of needs for siting a successful emergency shelter.

C: Neighborhood impacts need to be identified and addressed if possible.

A: This Task Force has been comprised to involve community members and include their perspectives on the impacts of the shelter location on State St, including neighborhood leadership that has publicly opposed the siting of the shelter on State St. The neighborhood leadership Task Force members have been invited to present their concerns on the siting of shelter in general and specific to the State Street location to the Task Force on Week 6. They will be supported by the professional facilitator with in an additional two-hour session to workshop their concerns and prepare their presentation. Additionally, community perspectives are being addressed and included in a public engagement interview process that has sent invitations to more than 30 community members representing unique constituencies, as requested by the Task Force. The compilation of those interviews that will be provided to the Task Force in Week 6 and included in the final recommendation.