

Elmwood Avenue Emergency Shelter Community – Management Plan

I. Background

The City of Burlington is supporting the development and operation of a temporary low-barrier emergency shelter. The number of people experiencing houselessness and housing insecurity continues to be almost triple pre-pandemic levels. In addition, households experiencing houselessness face increased barriers to accessing emergency housing programs due to decreased flexibility of eligibility requirements as we move past the crisis phase of the pandemic.

On February 7th, 2022 City Council approved the release of \$2.975M in ARPA funds for the specific purpose of addressing and ameliorating houselessness in the City of Burlington for the procurement of modular shelters and the creation of a temporary supportive emergency shelter option, the Elmwood Shelter Community. This creative approach to providing emergency shelter has proven effective in acting as a bridge to permanent housing in cities across the United States and is a rapid and cost-effective tool for sheltering the most vulnerable during a challenging time. Individual shelter units offer privacy and safety, and alleviate concerns around the public health impacts of traditional congregate shelter during the extended pandemic.

II. Site Description

The Shelter Community will be operated at the current [City-Owned Parking Lot](#) on Elmwood Avenue. The City, as the sponsor of the project, will partner with a non-profit experienced in the provision of low-barrier, site-based trauma-informed support (Operating Partner). Case management services and therapeutic support will be available onsite (via MOUs with local service providers) and will be responsive to the needs of the Shelter Community, resulting in a deeply service enriched environment.

The Shelter Community will provide temporary accommodation for a maximum of 35 adults with thirty (30) sixty-four (64) square foot heated units. At minimum, four (4) of these units will be fully ADA accessible; five (5) units will have the ability to accommodate double occupancy when/if necessary.

The site will include a modular structure that will house six (6) toilet/sink/shower compartments and laundry facilities connected to public water and sanitary sewer services. Suitable lighting and electricity will be provided to each of the 30 shelters and WIFI will be available throughout the site. Trash receptacles, covered, secure bike storage, and picnic tables will be onsite. Waste and snow removal as well as routine maintenance will be provided as well.

The City will also procure a modular structure to serve as the common space for the site. This building will include additional bathrooms and shower facilities, a kitchen, private offices, and open community space to serve the guests of the shelter community for low-barrier access to basic human necessities (food, personal hygiene products, community gathering space, etc.) and provide the opportunity to connect with housing and health resources, medical services, recovery support, mental health and other services.

The Shelter Community will operate under a low-barrier model, ensuring that members of the community are *safe* at all times and participate in the development of- and adherence to identified common community guidelines.

III. Referral and Placement Management

Referrals to the Shelter Community are made to the Operating Partner and may derive from the following sources:

- CVOEO CORA Team and Coordinated Entry Outreach
- Howard Center Street Outreach
- City of Burlington CSL/CSO Teams
- VT State Economic Services Division
- 211
- Turning Point Center
- Safe Recovery
- Steps to End Domestic Violence
- Other outreach and service providers
- Self-Referral*

The City will work in close collaboration with the Operating Partner to develop and hone a low-barrier referral process for the Shelter Community with a goal of most flexible access possible.

*Self-Referral indicates that potential guests may not need to have current engagement with a service provider to access the shelter; every effort will be made to connect guests to necessary services and providers during their stay.

IV. Site Management

While the goal of this project is to create a sense of community with shared values, guidelines, and responsibilities, we recognize that individuals may be living with a multitude of health-related challenges and support with maintaining the site will be provided. A minimum of two (2) supportive and suitable staff will be present 24/7 to provide security and ensure safety, maintain a sense of community, and ensure the safe well-being of the community guests and the surrounding neighborhood. Every effort will be made to provide opportunities for restorative response to breach of community values and guidelines, utilizing the expertise of various service partners. The goal will be to meet the following goals through site management:

- Safety of guests and surrounding neighborhood;
- Uphold a sense of security for the guests of the Shelter Community;
- Provide guidance and modeling for respectful conflict resolution and ensure community; guidelines are upheld;
- Ensure the Shelter Community operates within a low-barrier model.

To achieve these goals, it is the expectation of the City that any and all reasonable measures would be taken to avoid interaction of law enforcement and rely as much as reasonably possible on support-oriented and a harm reduction approach to conflict resolution. Staff will work with guests, make frequent check –in with guests and make observation of the site and neighborhood to ensure that the Emergency Shelter Community is a good neighbor. Skilled site-based staff will work to promote safety and a supportive shelter environment and include:

- **Operating Partner**

The Operating Partner works in close collaboration with the City to establish procedures and policies for smooth operation of the Shelter Community. The Operating Partner oversees the day-to-day operation of the site and manages contracts (between the City and sub-contractors) for cleaning, snow clearance and other services and maintenance to the site.

The Operating Partner demonstrates a track-record for providing site-based management practices with a focus on therapeutic and service-based intervention and philosophy. The Operating Partner will support measures to be a good community neighbor in all aspects of project management.

- **Shelter Community Manager (1FTE)**

The Shelter Community Manager (SCM) is responsible for operations, quality assurance, referral assessment and guest placement, neighborhood relations, and provides limited direct service to new guests of the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community. The SCM provides supervision to the Associate Community Managers, Community Support Specialists (CSSs), and indirect supervision to the Community Service Coordinator (CSCs) staff, and reports to and is employed by the Operating Partner. The SCM will ensure the shelter is a good community neighbor, ensuring regular neighborhood reviews and site reviews.

- **Associate Shelter Community Manager (2FTE)**

The Associate Shelter Community Manager (ASCM) is responsible for assisting the Shelter Community Manager (CM) with managing operations, quality assurance, referral assessment and guest placement, and provides limited direct service to new guests of the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community (EESC). The ASCM provides supervision to the Community Support Specialists (CSSs), and indirect supervision to the Community Service Coordinators (CSCs). The ASCM reports to the SCM and is employed by the Operating Partner. The ASCM will ensure the shelter is a good community neighbor, ensuring regular neighborhood and site reviews.

Community Support Specialists (3FTE)

The Community Support Specialists (CSS) work closely with Shelter Community Manager, Associate Shelter Community Managers (ACMs), Community Services Coordinator (CSC), and the guests of the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community (EESC) to ensure safe and supportive operation of the EESC site. The CSS also work with the designated, site-based security staff, Burlington Police Department Community Liaison staff (CSLs), Community Outreach and Resource Assistance (CORA) staff and other outreach staff to ensure conduct aimed at building a healthy and low-barrier emergency shelter community. The CSS will ensure the shelter is a good community neighbor, ensuring regular neighborhood and site reviews. The CSS report to the CM/ASCM and are employed by the Operating Partner.

- **Community Service Coordinators (1.6FTE)**

The Community Service Coordinators (CSC) are responsible for assisting guests of the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community with access to Coordinated Entry and access to basic needs. The CSC will work closely with community service provider(s)/case manager(s) to facilitate a smooth transition into the EESC to enable the guest support ongoing successful placement and to determine Individual Service Plan, enabling permanent housing placement. The CSC maintain communication and collaboration with appropriate EESC staff and other provider(s) throughout the guests stay to ensure adherence to their service plan and Shared Values and Community Guidelines. The CSC will work

closely with the Community Support Specialists (CSSs), the SCM and ASCMs to meet program objectives detailed in CVOEO's grant agreement with the City of Burlington, Community Economic and Development Office (CEDO). This position reports to and is employed by CVOEO.

- **Contracted Services**

The City will provide maintenance services or retain a contractor to provide such services. A contractor may be responsible for such site-based property services including physical site upkeep (fencing, gates, parking, lighting, etc.), functioning utilities, site and shelter cleaning, and snow and waste removal.

Operating Partner, City, Shelter Community, and support staff will hold a meeting at least once every two weeks to discuss problems, identify solutions, and to share information. For issues that require immediate actions, Operating Partner will approve solutions and meet on site (if needed) to take necessary actions within 24 hours. The City shall provide a dedicated staff member to serve as liaison to the Shelter Community and related contractors.

All press inquiries related to the Shelter Community may be handled by the Operating Partner or referred to the City.

Per the permit conditions for this facility, at least two (2) overnight staff will be present at the shelter.

Contact Information for Public Use: All public inquiries and concerns regarding the Elmwood Shelter Community should be directed to the City at (802) 865-7144 or CEDOFD@burlingtonvt.gov. In addition to the open line of communication with the City, while the facility is in operation the operating partner will provide an emergency contact number for on-site staff. This number will be available on the City's website and will be shared with neighbors and community members to report any noise or other nuisance from the site – see IX Grievance Procedure, below.

Community Engagement

The City is committed to being a good neighbor in the operation of the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community at Elmwood Avenue. In addition to close collaboration with service/support providers, the Shelter Community will offer a regular forum with the surrounding neighborhood through the establishment of the **Elmwood Community Group**. Meeting regularly, this group will bring together stakeholders from public and private sector, neighbors, faith-based groups, and local business and government entities. The Elmwood Community Group will strive to alleviate tensions as they arise, explore opportunities for community- and relationship-building, and shift biases and stigma associated with operation of an emergency shelter. The group will be convened by City staff in partnership with the onsite staff and Operating Partner.

V. Intake Process and Protections

The Operating Partner will work in partnership with the City, CVOEO, and guests at the Shelter Community to develop an initial and basic set of shared values and guidelines for conduct. Expertise will be sought from the Burlington Community Justice Center to integrate restorative practices, in addition to low-barrier shelter operators.

Intake Process Provisions: Upon arrival, guests will meet with either the CSC or the CPM to ensure the Intake Process is completed in a consistent and trauma-informed manner. The Intake Process includes the following:

- Determine if the guest is eligible for another mainstream emergency shelter placement (*Diversion*) which could include: COTS, ANew Place, ESD Transitional Housing (motel), friends or family, etc.
- Collection of basic guest information
- Ensure the guest has access to basic needs (bedding, water, food, medications, personal hygiene products, etc.
- Review of the policies and procedures
- Review and agreement of the shared community values and guidelines
- Agree to schedule appointment to meet with SCS and complete the HMIS Informed Consent and Demographics forms, within 24-48 hours of arrival.

Accessibility: Interpretation will be provided when necessary. Reasonable Accommodations will be made to meet the needs of guests. No individual may be denied admission to or removed from the shelter on the basis or as a direct result of the fact that the individual is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, if the individual otherwise qualifies for admission or occupancy.

Guest Rights: No guest will be discriminated against for belonging to a class of citizen protected by the City, State, or Federal government. No guest will be required to participate in political activity. Guests have the right to pursue established rights to appeal without fear of retaliation. The shelter exhibits cultural competence and responsiveness, including providing adequate protections for shelter seekers across demographic differences. All guests have the right to speak freely, however guests (and staff, visitors, etc.) will be required to refrain from discriminatory language or behavior at all times or risk removal from the Shelter Community.

Safeguards for Violence: Potential guests will be screened to assess the risk for potential of threats to safety. Additional considerations will be made for persons fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In instances of domestic violence, staff will consult as needed with Steps to End Domestic Violence and/or Hope Works to ensure safety of guests.

Confidentiality: Strict confidentiality policies are in place to ensure that the identity of guests is protected, except in those circumstances when a guest has signed a release of information or as required by law. Shelter Community Staff will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement upon hire and renewed annually; breeches of confidentiality are terms for termination.

Data, Communication, and HMIS Protocols: The SCS will ensure records are stored in a confidential database (HMIS). New guests will meet with the SCS and complete the HMIS Informed Consent and Demographics forms, within 24-48 hours of arrival. CCS staff are required to keep notes in a log, detailing interactions and challenges during their shifts to ensure clear communication during shift change-over.

Visitor Policy: Shelter Guests will not be permitted to provide overnight accommodations to others. All visitors will be required to sign in and out of the Shelter Community. Prearranged drop-offs of donations and food deliveries are welcome and will be coordinated by site staff.

VI. Shelter Community Safety

While the goal of the Shelter Community is to ensure access at the lowest-barrier possible, clear rules around safety will be enforced. *Violence will not be allowed on the site.* The following are strictly banned within the Shelter Community:

- Projectile firearms of any kind including but not limited to airsoft, pellet, bullet, buckshot, etc.

- Knives, machetes, axes, or other sharp objects
- Explosives of any kind
- Weaponry of any kind not listed above
- Illegal substances, including illegal possession of non-prescribed medication (guests will be asked to show proof of prescription upon request)

In the instance that a guest is found in possession of weapons or illegal drugs, the guest will be asked to remove the item from the property immediately. If the guest refuses, they may be discharged from the Shelter Community (see Discharge policy below). Onsite staff will work very closely with appropriate community agencies (i.e. mental health, BPD Community Services Liaison) to assess the risk and support the guest with making safe choices which do not impact or endanger the Shelter Community and surrounding neighborhood.

There may be instances where guests do not follow the shared values and guidelines but there is no immediate threat or danger to oneself or the Shelter (or surrounding) Community. Shelter Community staff will consider progressive and restorative solutions and avoid involuntary discharge when possible.

Violations of a serious nature may include calling BPD Community Service Liaisons (CSLs), or in the case of violence, the Police, to take immediate action. Those who are committing or threatening to commit acts of violence will require a call to the CSLs and/or Police.

The City will work with the Operating Partner and other community partners to establish clear safety guidelines to enable onsite staff to respond to safety concerns in a supportive, appropriate, and consistent manner.

VII. Policies and Procedures:

Intake and Coordination with Economic Services Division:

Shelter staff will be in frequent contact with Economic Services Division (ESD) to coordinate on shelter intake capacity and other shelter availability. There is regular communication and coordination with local shelter partners and state bodies at formal and informal meetings within the CoC structure and other area system meetings to track bed capacity, trends, and other resources. A weekly meeting with the ESD eligibility supervisor is also available. Typically, a client is referred to ESD. ESD screens the client to determine eligibility and refers the client to appropriate shelter options available within the local region – this referral is based upon bed capacity and the eligibility for the various shelters.

If referred to the Elmwood Emergency Shelter Community the guest will complete intake at the shelter office, the guest would then receive access to a unit. The shelter will track all referrals from ESD, both those that are offered a unit and those of any no-show referrals.

The Emergency Shelter staff will work closely to coordinate shelter bed and hotel room capacity, establishing contact history for case consultation and for retention or diversion to permanent or transitional housing where possible.

Discharge: The Shelter Community has written policies and procedures implemented by the Operating Partner addressing discharge from shelter that meet the following requirements:

1. A formal process for both voluntary and involuntary discharge of shelter that at a minimum:
 - Recognizes the rights of individuals affected
 - Clearly defines what could result in the discharge from shelter, focusing on behaviors that disrupt or jeopardize health or safety of shelter guests, staff, or neighbors rather than compliance to rules or case plans
 - Exercises judgment and examines all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations warrant discharge so that a participant's assistance is terminated only in the most severe cases
 - Includes restorative and harm-reduction approach to conflict resolution
2. Information about the discharge process is provided to all guests at intake
3. When involuntary discharge occurs and contact with the guest can be made:
 - All efforts will be made to find a suitable place for the guest to move to during the bar period.
 - Guests are provided with a written notice that includes:
 - Reason for termination
 - Process to appeal the decision
 - Actions they will need to take in order to be considered for a return to shelter in the future, if needed
 - Documents explaining decision and appeal process in appropriate language/format as required
4. The appeals process must:
 - Happen in a timely manner
 - Include the option for guests to have their request reviewed by agency staff not involved in the initial termination decision
 - Allow for a support person to be present (i.e. case manager, legal representation)
 - Allow for interpretation at no-cost to the guest
5. Terminations, both voluntary and involuntary, are documented in a way that allows for them to be reviewed

Such immediate discharges are initially set for specific periods of time (for example 12 to 24 hours, etc.) and are swiftly reevaluated by the Shelter Community Manager to determine the full duration of the ban. Individuals who are banned from the Shelter Community must leave the site as directed – and stay at least one block away from the Shelter Community. Staff will escort those banned off the site and outside the block when it can be safely done. If it cannot be accomplished safely then CSL / BPD assistance will be required.

Security Design: There is only one main entrance from any street; it is from Elmwood Avenue. The Reception and Office at the entrance will provide visibility inside the Shelter Community and to the surrounding area. Security cameras will be installed. Security cameras will focus on common spaces and will not point directly at nor be installed within shelter units. An emergency exit is provided in the back of the community (on the western property boundary). Existing site lighting will remain for safety.

Community Self-Help and Co-care: Guests are asked to participate in community co-care, where possible. Shelter guests and staff will work in partnership to identify ongoing community service opportunities and (when possible) guests will be asked to contribute a certain number of hours per week for the benefit of the community. This includes tasks such as: community projects, gardening, site clean-up, trips to the food banks etc. Reasonable accommodation will be made for those who are frail or have disabilities. Guests are asked to attend weekly meetings in the Community Space

to discuss how the Community is operating and to develop a sense of community and reinforce respectful group norms. Problems, solutions, announcements, and community activities will be discussed.

Noise Ordinance: The Site will operate within the structure of the [City Noise Ordinance](#)

Noise concerns should be directed to the onsite Emergency Shelter Management Office and brought to the Elmwood Community Group meetings. The External Grievance Procedure (below) may also be followed for any ongoing noise concerns.

The City noise ordinance **applies 24 hours a day**. There are also special "quiet hours" for the community from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am. Unreasonable noise is prohibited. Noise is unreasonable when it is unreasonably loud given the time, place, and nature of the noise. The noise ordinance is enforced by the Burlington Police Department, contact (802)658-2704 with questions or for assistance.

As stipulated in the permit conditions for this facility, amplified music and other sound is not permitted at any time on the site.

Trash

The site will include screened trash and recycling dumpsters and compost, serviced weekly to manage trash on site.

Health and Public Health:

The City will ensure that cleaning services are provided to maintain offices, units and bathrooms. At a minimum, the routine will include daily cleaning of bathrooms, offices and other common areas. Weekly cleaning will be offered to each unit, also allowing for unit inspection for health and safety. Monthly site inspection by Operating Partner and City to ensure clean – healthy site.

The Shelter Community must be operated within any CDC, State, and/or City guidelines for COVID safety.

Fire Department: City Fire Department employees are welcome to enter the Community to observe fire safety issues and offer advice and suggestions on how to prevent fire hazards and may schedule routine site inspections to ensure a safe site all times. The Community has fire extinguishers in each unit and placed throughout the site and, while there is no smoking in the units (or any structure on the property), designated smoking areas will be identified and will include safe receptacle for waste. The units each have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Appropriate first aid kits are stored on site.

Burlington Police Department (BPD) and Community Service Liaisons (CSLs): The Shelter Community and CRC coordinate with the CSLs for outreach and case management. The CSLs will be partners and frequent visitors to the site. BPD Downtown Shift Lead will maintain contact with the Operating Partner and onsite staff to coordinate/provide intervention as necessary.

Shelter units: The units are the property of the City of Burlington. Guests are to keep the units habitable, clean and safe. Each unit has heating and cooling, outlet and light. No smoking, candles, naked flames, cooking or fires, hair dryers, are allowed in the units. Unit contents must be limited to allow for safe egress and code compliant. No storage of personal belongings outside of the unit. Weekly cleaning will be available to each guest/unit.

Bathrooms: Six (6) total and two (2) ADA Bathroom units are available onsite. Bathrooms will be cleaned by contractors (hired by the City and managed by the Operations Partner) twice daily. Shelter Community staff will check bathrooms regularly and close units as required until cleaning or service is available. The expectation is that guests will clean each bathroom after use, and leave as found.

Nutrition and Water: Hot food and drinks, provided by Feeding Chittenden, will be available from the CORA Team and Feeding Chittenden. The Shelter office will be open from 9am to 4pm – daily. Deliveries of food may be arranged by Feeding Chittenden (and/or Operating Partner) and the CSC will work with guests to ensure adequate access to proper nutrition. Filtered drinking water is available at filling stations at bathrooms and the Shelter office. Guests will have access to the kitchen, located within the Shelter office/Community Center (onsite), during hours of operation.

VIII. Grievance Procedure

The Operating Partner will provide clear contact information for neighbors and businesses in close proximity to the Shelter Community. Comments or suggestions may be made verbally, in writing, or over the phone, or open dialogue can take place during the Elmwood Community Group meetings. It is the goal of the City and Operating Partner to ensure clear and transparent communication with guests of the Shelter Community and the surrounding neighborhood to develop trust and to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

When an incident takes place, it must be reported directly to the Shelter Community staff. Staff will work with the complainant to understand the scope of the incident, the impact it had, and work to resolve the issue. The staff member completes the Incident Report Form.

Internal Grievance Process: The Operations Partner will work in partnership with Shelter Community staff, with input from guests to establish a method for resolving internal grievances. This grievance process will be outlined on the back of every incident report form; this ensures that every member of our community is aware of the grievance process. Staff will also provide information to guests on the grievance process. Operating Partner Management Team will discuss all issues, and complaints, and grievances in a timely manner. At minimum, this policy will include the following:

- Guests are expected to report all issues and problems on site to any available staff member.
- CSC's will report all issues and concerns to the Shelter Community Manager (or its designee) who will make sure that all issues are resolved in a timely manner.
- Guests should discuss their concerns with the CSCs or with the Shelter Community Manager (or its designee)
- Guests are encouraged to put their concerns in writing so the Operating Partner can address them effectively (however this is never required).
- Staff will investigate the complaint to determine the factual elements and identify and clarify any missing or ambiguous issues and make a determination as to the best approach to reach resolution.
- Staff will work with guests, using trauma-informed and restorative approach, to resolve the issue (s).

If the involved guest(s) are not satisfied with the decision or outcome of the resolution by staff, or if the grievance or issue involves site staff, he or she can appeal the decision in writing to the Operating Partner.

External Grievance Process: Concerns and suggestions are received from the surrounding neighborhood by Shelter Community Manager who must record all pertinent information received. If an immediate solution cannot be provided simply by the CSC or the Shelter Community Manager, it is taken to the Operating Partner to resolve. The Operating Partner will inform The City of major incidents, complaints, compliments, report on progress, and consider recommendations for change or improvement.

External concerns should be made to the Shelter Community Manager or the Associate Shelter Community Manager:

- Neighbors and others are encouraged to put their concerns in writing so the Operating Partner can address them effectively (however this is never required).
- Staff will investigate the complaint to determine the factual elements and identify and clarify any missing or ambiguous issues and make a determination as to the best approach to reach resolution.
- Staff will work with guests and neighbors, using trauma-informed and restorative approach, to resolve the issue(s).

Non-pressing issues can also be discussed with the Elmwood Community (detailed above). This group will discuss methods of conflict resolution through the development of trusting and supportive relationships and may, when necessary, include facilitation from the Burlington Community Justice Center.