

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Burlington Shelter Community and Community Resource Center

ELMWOOD AVENUE, BURLINGTON

Public Outreach and Community Engagement

What is happening on Elmwood Avenue? The City is proposing to use the Elmwood Avenue parking lot for temporary use as an emergency shelter for persons in our community who are experiencing houselessness, particularly those without shelter. The site will also house the Community Resource Center (CRC).

Why are we doing this? The number of people experiencing houselessness continues to be almost triple the pre-pandemic levels and access to emergency shelter is restricted from the levels available during the Winter of 2021. On December 16th, 2021, Mayor Weinberger released an action plan to fulfill the promise of housing as a human right. The ten-point plan included a number of initiatives including the creation of a new low-barrier shelter pod community in Burlington. The shelter module approach 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 in the near future. In 2021, the Mayor instructed the Economic Recovery Director and her team to actively engage the public so as to best understand their desires for the investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The Economic Recovery Team conducted an outreach campaign including a city survey on this topic. The Team received an unprecedented 3,877 responses to the ARPA survey with over 3,000 written in responses and suggestions. The overwhelming survey results indicate that the Burlington community strongly desires the expenditure of funds to address chronic homelessness and to implement solutions to find secure, respectful and humane housing solutions for all. On February 7th, 2022 the City Council unanimously approved the use of \$2.975M of ARPA to address the acute houselessness crisis. The funding allocation included the creation of a Shelter Community and year-round Community Resource Center.

When will information on operating partners, or a full timeline for operations be available?

Information is being released as it becomes available or as contracts are completed with partners. The planning and public meeting timeline for the site is available on the web page:

<https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/EndingHomelessness>

How is the City engaging with people with lived experience of homelessness on these projects? The projects were each developed including information and feedback from individuals with lived experience, outreach workers, and partner organizations. This outreach and consultation will continue.

The CRC was developed into a year-round project on the basis of guest feedback and guest visit numbers that exceeded expectation. Based on feedback via outreach teams working with the community experiencing houselessness, directly from guests at the Community Resource Center, and from people with lived experience that community members, we know that there is a need for alternative types of emergency shelter. Some people find they cannot maintain well in hotels and some need to be able to share as a couple. Other folks have difficulty finding shelter with their pets. These are just some examples of community input. We have received feedback about the set-up of the shelter space and will consult with people with lived experience on the internal layout of the pods and other aspects of site development and management.

How are neighbors being kept informed on the project? CEDO is regularly posting updates to the project website, which can be accessed at this link: <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/Ending-Homelessness>

Along with website updates, CEDO has held monthly community-oriented discussions, sent letters by post, flyered the neighborhood, and City Councilors canvassed the neighborhood.

Has this style of emergency shelter been used in other urban areas?

Westlake Community in Los Angeles California <https://palletshelter.com/blog/building-community-at-westlake-village/>

North Hollywood Community Los Angeles California <https://abc7.com/tiny-homes-for-homeless-north-hollywood-village-pallet/10364506/>

Grand Junction Village Colorado <https://palletshelter.com/case-studies/grandjunction-co/>

Can I attend informational sessions? CEDO is committed to engaging with the community about the development of the Elmwood Ave site. Several meetings have occurred for community members to gain information and voice feedback.

These meetings included:

- City Council:
 - March 21st, [City Council Meeting and Resolution](#).
- Public Works Commission:
 - March 16th. [Final Ordinance Change](#) and [Minutes Available](#).
- Community Neighbor Conversations, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington Sanctuary, 152 Pearl Street:
 - April 7th, 6:00-7:30 PM
 - May 5th, 6:00-7:30 PM

- June 2nd, 6:00-7:30 PM *Event will now take place outdoors, on the lawn of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 152 Pearl Street.
- June 30th, 6:00-7:30 PM
- Presentation at Ward 2/3 NPA:
 - April 14th, 6:30 PM. 20 Allen Street Burlington, VT. [Minutes Available.](#)
 - May 12th, 6:30 PM. 20 Allen Street Burlington, VT. [Minutes Available.](#)
- [Development Review Board Meeting](#) [These are the Zoning Permit Application Materials.](#)
 - May 17th, 5 PM. [Remote.](#)
 - [June 21st. 5PM. Remote.](#)
- Chittenden County Homeless Alliance:
 - June 2nd, 2022: The CCHA Steering Committee voted in support of the Elmwood Community Emergency Shelter and co-located Community Resource Center. The minutes will be here, when [available](#). The [Chittenden County Homeless Alliance](#) is a coalition of individuals, organizations, and government entities, supporting a vision of a safe, decent, affordable, stable home for every person and family in Chittenden County.

What can I do to help? We look forward to working with all stakeholders, we all have a part to play in supporting community members back into housing. We hope that we can rely on this generous community to contribute their time and ideas to support this community wide effort. The project will be supported with a community group. Meeting regularly, this group serves to lower barriers, fear. For more information, contact CEDO's front desk at cedofd@burlingtonvt.gov and conflict, and humanize our responses, as a community. This community meeting model operates successfully at a number of other shelter sites around the country. It brings together stakeholders; site guests, staff and volunteers, community members, neighbors, faith groups, activists, non-profits, local businesses, local government etc. By meeting and discussing questions or issues on site and identifying opportunities to collaborate, we may build connections to help to reduce tensions, suspicion and conflict, and work together on opportunities and improvements. As the site's opening approaches, the City and service provider(s) will be able share more about specific needs and asks. Donations of food and other items may be requested but they are generally most helpful, and less wasteful, if handled in a coordinated fashion.