

BARTILLON SHELTER

FAQ

I see the shape of the building and the square footage. What are the main program elements driving this design and what will be located on each of the two floors?

First and foremost, this facility is being developed to provide emergency shelter services. So the main program elements are oriented toward ensuring safe and clean accommodations for an orderly intake process, sleeping, dining, bathrooms and showers and staff space. We also hope to include space that will accommodate an as yet unspecified array of supportive services, most of which will be geared toward helping shelter users get reconnected to stable housing.

The building has two floors, each about the same size (~20,000 square feet) and totaling ~42,000 square feet. The main elements on the first floor are intake/entry space, supportive services, staff and service provider offices, day use spaces, and kitchen/dining. The main elements on the second floor are sleeping dorms and bathrooms/showers.

At other facilities we had one large sleeping area. In this facility we intend to have smaller sleeping dorms, each with ~50 beds in them. This helps the guests sleep better as there will be less people sleeping around them and less potential for conflict, distractions or disruptive noise while sleeping. The intent would be during the day and evenings the first floor is very active with the second floor mostly closed so it can be cleaned and made ready for the following overnight.

We often hear about a “purpose built” facility. What are the features of the design that make this purpose built?

The term “purpose built” shelter conveys the idea that the facility is being intentionally designed for the uses it will support. That’s in contrast to trying to convert a building, for use as a shelter, which was constructed with a completely different use in mind. Some of the ways you’ll see this are design features that maximize line of sight so that staff can easily monitor activity in the building, or avoid creating secluded spaces, appropriate lighting, and use of materials and fixtures that can withstand heavy use. You’ll also see it with respect to how different spaces are made to fit together, or work together, to enhance functionality, e.g. the configuration of food storage, food prep and dining areas.

How has Porchlight influenced this design?

From the start, several Porchlight employees have been active members of the design team that has worked with the Dimension IV, the design consultant, through the conceptual and schematic design phases of the project. We have drawn heavily on their experiences about what has, and has not worked, in their other settings and what they believe is needed to optimize the facility’s functionality – for guests and staff.

What are the design features that will make this a humane place for homeless guests and staff?

It’s appropriate to go back to where we started. For 30+ years, the only men’s shelter operated from cramped spaces in church basements. The temporary shelters set up during COVID have offered progressively better spaces and conditions – more room, better equipped, better staffed, etc. But they still involved converting spaces designed for other uses.

Early in this design process we worked with a consultant, a group out of Denver by the name of Shopworks that guided us through a Trauma Informed Design process. In it, we engaged a variety of community members, including folks with lived experience, current shelter guests, those who have opted not to use

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shelter, service providers, and others to gain insight into what features were/are important in a shelter. Many of their recommendations will be incorporated into the design of this facility - material and color selections, sizes and types of spaces, proximity of spaces to one another. Safety was a high priority (for guests, as well as staff and nearby residents). One of the key design elements flowing from this engagement is the use of multiple, smaller sleeping spaces (for about 50 people) in place of the more traditional single, large space. We hope to respond to another priority, secure storage space. And the facility will offer different type of spaces – formal and informal, quiet or active – that will contribute to a less stressful environment.

What can happen here that couldn't at the temporary facilities?

We hope to offer programming that is generally unavailable at the temporary facilities. And we intend to equip the facility to provide in-house food preparation that should reduce one of the larger current expense items (catered meals.)

What are the key services?

Again, this is a shelter facility first so the first priority is ensuring safe and comfortable sleeping accommodations, nutritious meals and clean bathrooms and showers. We will want to ensure adequate security and de-escalation services are present, provide some secure storage space for guests, and offer some of the supports that can help prepare guests for stable housing – housing navigation, perhaps some basic primary and behavioral health services. The service model is still under discussion but the operating assumption is that this will be a housing-focused facility.

What sort of furnishings are anticipated with this design?

Furnishings will be pretty basic. We intend to minimize the use of bunkbeds, and ensure accessibility for guests. Secure storage space will be furnished and guests will have ready access to electrical outlets. The shelter will include sitting areas and dining spaces with the prerequisite chairs and tables. We will provide some conference room and small meeting spaces appropriate for support services. We will provide outdoor space for guest use, for smoking or just to enjoy the outdoors. There will be accommodations for bikes and, last but not least, we are planning a commercial grade kitchen to be used for food preparation and storage.

How will the enclosed patios be used?

Primarily for outdoor smoking and relaxation.

What is the anticipated capacity of the facility and how does that compare with the temporary facilities that have been used?

We are designing for a 250 guest max capacity. But for Warner Park, the temporary facilities have had comparable capacities. We have been closely tracking utilization rates at the temporary facilities and, though use levels have been consistently higher than pre-pandemic (while the number of unsheltered persons has declined – a sign of progress), the numbers do fluctuate based on weather and other factors.

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What are the biggest lessons from the temporary facilities?

1) Adequately resourced shelter facilities, in terms of both physical space and staffing levels, can function successfully. 2) Overnight shelter is a much needed service in Madison and Dane County but without housing-focused support services it will not solve the issue of homelessness. 3) Successful shelter operations require a substantial and sustained financial commitment, at levels that cannot be met solely by County and City governments; financial support from the private sector is essential.

Were there any constraints in the site or budget that precluded desired features?

Yes. The property lies within a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay District which has maximum setback requirements, parking location requirements and building configuration requirements, the latter of which mandates a minimum two-story structure. There is a WI DOT no-build setback on the western side of the property. A portion of the site is also in the Well-15 Wellhead Protection Zone, which limits what we can do below grade for stormwater and geothermal bores. Budget is always a concern, especially given current inflationary pressures, so we're having to prioritize essential features and services.

How does the 42,125 square feet compare with the current temporary facility and the previous one in the former vehicle maintenance facility?

The current temp facility at Zeier Rd is ~31,000 square feet. The former facility at First Street was also ~30,000 square feet (building was bigger but the full building wasn't used).

When can we expect a formal land use submission, when will construction begin, and when will the facility open?

We are currently finalizing Schematic Design plans and entering the Design Development phase. Design Development is when the details are developed that will be used for construction bidding. Land use submissions occur during the Design Development Phase. We are doing a submission to Urban Design Submission on 6/28/23. Our Site Plan Verification submittal will happen in late 2023. We do not need to go to Plan Commission for this project as a Mission House is a permitted use for our property zoning. We hope to put the project out for bid in early 2024 and start construction shortly thereafter. Construction will proceed through mid-2025 and we hope to be open by June 2025. At that point we would transfer operations from Zeier and cease operations at that location.