



July 8, 2020

Members of the Bend Affordable Housing Committee,

Once again this year, Bend faces the possibility of a winter without an emergency warming shelter. This at a time when, with increased demand and the need for social distancing due to COVID-19, our shelter network in Deschutes County and throughout Central Oregon is already severely stressed.

Last year, after a month-long delay, the Homeless Leadership Coalition (HLC), NeighborImpact and governmental and private partners were able to establish a winter shelter at the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Campus. Unfortunately, the space is no longer available. Attempts by both the county and city have not, as yet, located a suitable, publicly owned, location. We are currently exploring all other avenues to secure a location.

Last winter, the Bend shelter hosted nearly 3500 overnight stays by 327 unique guests who also received thousands of meals and a variety of social and medical services. However, the most important impact was the opportunity for guests to establish relationships with service providers that, for some, mark the beginning of the journey out of homelessness.

The experience demonstrated the importance of the shelter to Bend and the wider Central Oregon community. The Bend winter shelter is the lynchpin of our Central Oregon shelter network. It reduces the demands on our full-time shelters, particularly Shepherd's House and Bethlehem Inn, allowing them to focus on their full-time programming assisting people transitioning out of homelessness. In addition, it also relieves pressure on winter shelters in neighboring communities that often operate at or even over capacity.

This year, Shepherd's House, which has extensive experience managing both full-time and winter shelters in our community, has agreed to manage the Bend shelter provided a location and funding can be secured. In addition, members of our community including Bethlehem Inn, Reach Out Central Oregon, NeighborImpact and others have volunteered their time and expertise to ensuring the project is a success.

Our plan is for a low barrier shelter serving a cross section of individuals, families and youth. Our immediate need is securing a location or locations with a capacity of 100 shelter beds in Bend. In addition, COVID guidelines may require securing additional shelter space throughout Central Oregon.

It will be a challenging fund-raising environment that we face, but we are confident, once a location is secured, we will be able to raise adequate funds to operate successfully this winter. To ensure we can address the need, fundraising has already begun. The city of Bend has committed over \$75,000 of CDBG funds and we are hopeful additional private, state and federal funds can be secured.

We are asking the people and governments of Central Oregon to assist in:

Locating a central building or buildings in Bend capable of sheltering 100 of our most vulnerable neighbors who are experiencing homelessness during Central Oregon's harsh winter.

Identifying additional funding sources to employ adequate staff, train volunteers and ensure adherence to best practices for low-barrier shelters.

Dissemination of accurate information regarding the needs and practices of the program so the shelter can be a good neighbor to the community.

Sincerely on behalf of the Homeless Leadership Coalition and community partners,



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