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Contact: Michael Parks, Harrisonburg Director of Communications
540.432.7701
Michael.Parks@harrisonburgva.gov

Open Doors selected as operator at City's new Homeless Services Center

Local nonprofit will operate overnight shelter, drop-in center at City's North Main Street property

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg has selected local nonprofit Open Doors to serve as the operator of the City's Homeless Services Center when it opens later this year.

The choice, made following a competitive procurement process, will designate the long-time Harrisonburg low-barrier shelter provider as operator of the overnight emergency shelter, a hypothermia program that will provide extra space for guests during extreme cold temperatures and a drop-in center during the day at the City's property at 1111 N. Main St. Construction is underway at the location and expected to be complete in October 2024, in time for the center to be operational for the winter season.



(Above) A rendering of the future Homeless Services Center at 1111 N. Main St. in Harrisonburg.

The Homeless Services Center is a key piece of the City's efforts to address homelessness in Harrisonburg and support agencies working hard to assist unhoused individuals in the area.

"The City's believes this project will strengthen our community's efforts to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring for people in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County," Harrisonburg Deputy City Manager Amy Snider, who has led this project for the City, said. "We are very grateful for all our partners who are moving this project forward, and eager to continue working with a great partner like Open Doors to support those in need in The Friendly City."

Open Doors, which the City has worked closely with for many years on homelessness services, will receive \$100,000 of annual funding from the City to support operational expenses as part of their three-year contract. The City will be directly responsible for the expense of the utilities and the maintenance of the structure, its mechanical systems and its fixtures, such as kitchen and laundry equipment. An existing building on the 3.68-acre property, formerly the Shenandoah Presbytery, is being preserved and renovated to provide space for administrative offices and a medical wing with exam space and five temporary medical beds for individuals with symptoms of acute illness or awaiting medical transport. The shelter and drop-in center will operate out of a connected addition to the existing building which is currently being constructed.

The shelter, open every day from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. once in operation, will contain space for up to 72 congregant beds and 4 universal rooms, with other support facilities such as showers and a laundry room. Open Doors expects to operate the drop-in center Monday to Friday, except for major holidays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open Doors will partner with other local agencies, including Sentara RMH, the Suitcase Clinic for the Homeless, Strength in Peers, Mercy House, First Step and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board, to provide on-site services. Open Doors continues to work on potential partnerships to advance on-site access.

“We are excited to lead and to work collectively with our community on this tremendous opportunity to improve the lives of others,” Open Doors Executive Director Nate Riddle said. “Open Doors is thankful for the City and community’s trust, and we look forward to what can be achieved through this campus as it serves as a beacon of hope and first point of entry.”

The Homeless Services Project is supported in part by \$5 million in funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), approved by Harrisonburg City Council in November 2021. Council had previously identified the need for a permanent, low-barrier shelter in its Harrisonburg 2039 Vision Plan.

“I am very proud of all the work that has gone into making this effort a reality, and I am excited to have Open Doors as our committed ally as we move closer to opening this new center,” Harrisonburg Mayor Deanna Reed said. “In my time as mayor, as I have met with service providers in Harrisonburg and spoken with individuals experiencing homelessness in our community, I have seen that there is more we can do as leaders to support those in need. Our City Vision calls for us to ensure that all in Harrisonburg feel safe, valued and have abundant opportunity to improve their lives. I believe this project is a huge step in the right direction to accomplishing those goals.”

More information about the project is available at <https://harrisonburgva.gov/homeless-services-center>.

***The City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,990 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.*

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