

North King County Enhanced Shelter: FAQs

Last updated: 9/8/2020

1. What is an Enhanced Shelter?

An Enhanced Shelter is a particular type of Emergency Shelter that serves guests seven days a week around the clock. Enhanced shelters provide access to the critical supports everyone needs--meals, laundry, personal hygiene, and health services. In addition, case management staff will develop individual plans with each resident focused on the specific steps needed to make permanent stable housing attainable.

2. What is an enhanced low-barrier shelter?

An enhanced low barrier shelter accepts anyone experiencing homelessness who can sufficiently manage his/her behavior to live in community with others. This means that individuals will not be denied access due to criminal history, mental illness, or drug/alcohol use or addiction. However, because the purpose of an enhanced shelter is to work toward housing stability, shelter staff will work to address such issues as part of their individual case management work with each person.

Low barrier does not mean that there are no rules or boundaries. Individuals will be expected to agree to a code of conduct that respects all guests and the surrounding community. This provides a safe, decent, welcoming, and appropriate temporary living environment, where daily needs can be met while individuals work on pathways back to safe living arrangements or directly into housing programs.

3. Who will be housed there?

This facility will be available to single adults experiencing homelessness. Most will be housed in single rooms unless they arrive as a couple and ask to share a room. There is no central county-wide referral system for single adults experiencing homelessness. Therefore, individuals to be served at this facility would be referred by local first responders, social service agencies in Shoreline and North King County, and outreach staff that would be employed by the program.

4. How will this facility be staffed?

There will be a minimum of three case management/shelter staff onsite and awake around the clock. In addition, the project will support a full time Program Manager, a Lead Case Manager, two Outreach/Housing Specialist positions, a full-time health specialist, and two facilities/housekeeping staff. All case management staff receive training in best practices, motivational interviewing, de-escalation techniques, and safety protocols.

5. Will this be like emergency shelters where people line up every night to get in?

No. The shelter will run on a bed reservation system, giving the population an opportunity to stabilize their health. Because this will be a 24/7 facility, individuals will not line up to get a bed each night, nor will everyone be asked to leave at a set time in the morning. In general, local partners

including social service agencies, faith communities, and law enforcement will refer individuals to the Shelter.

6. How many people will be housed there?

The maximum number of individuals to be housed there will be 60. At the beginning, the shelter will open with about 30 individuals who will transfer from the current rotating Winter Shelter program. There will be a four to six week period before taking more people. This will provide some time for the program staff to settle in with individuals they already know and normalize operations before running at full capacity.

7. What type of security will there be?

Onsite staff will be trained in security measures and cameras will be installed inside and outside with 24/7 monitoring. Staff are trained in de-escalation, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, health/first aid, and person-centered relationships to help prevent security issues.

8. Will drug use be allowed?

No. Possession and/or use of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs will be a violation of the code of conduct. While not a given that a single violation will result in eviction, an ongoing pattern of violations will show that an individual is not prepared to work toward housing stability.

9. Why this location? Why Shoreline?

Because of its prior use as a nursing home, this facility is particularly well-suited to provide a safe housing option. Separate rooms are the best way to protect both residents and staff from spreading Coronavirus or other airborne illness. It is fully accessible and equipped with fire safety requirements including an alarm and sprinkler system. In addition, the facility is on a major arterial and very close to a bus stop.

The direction from the Shoreline City Council earlier this year was to work with other North King County cities to site a shelter in North King County. It was not a given that it needed to be in Shoreline, and it was a process we expected to take at least a couple of years. To be presented with a facility that needs little work to make it shelter-ready is a unique opportunity to quickly provide a resource that has been missing in our community.

10. Won't this encourage homeless people from Seattle to come up here?

It is possible that individuals from outside of North King County may be referred to this shelter. However, we know that many people do not want to leave the community they are familiar with so we expect that most residents will be relatively local. Police, fire, social service agencies, faith communities, and hospitals will all make referrals. The shelter will launch serving a lower number of people, leaving room for more local referrals.

11. What about my property values?

We don't have specific information about the impact on property values and can't report back on that. The shelter will work hard to be a good neighbor and will respond promptly to any issues brought to their attention.

12. Will staff be on site 24/7?

Yes, staff will be on site and awake 24/7. State of the art security cameras will be installed inside and outside the facility with 24/7 monitoring and backed up to the cloud.

13. Will people be loitering around the property?

People will be discouraged from loitering around the property. Shelter guests will have access to a large outdoor courtyard space within the fenced-in area of the facility. Because this will provide outdoor access for residents, the program will be able to limit gatherings in other areas around the property. Having such a large, fenced in courtyard is a unique feature of this shelter compared to others.

14. If I have an issue with operations, is there someone I can call to address it?

Yes. You will be able to contact the shelter directly 24/7 with any concerns. Additionally, the Program Manager will be available to listen to and work with the City of Shoreline and the community.

15. Won't this add more burden to our first responders in Shoreline?

We expect this to be a resource for first responders. They currently have little recourse when responding to a call related to someone experiencing homelessness. This facility will provide an option that has not existed before. Experience shows a relatively small number of emergency calls from enhanced shelters. We believe individuals with chronic health conditions will be better able to stabilize than if they remained unsheltered.

16. How will this be paid for?

King County is expected to provide most of the operational funding, pending approval of a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce. King County is also providing the funding to buy the property. Additional funding is expected from other partners. The Shoreline City Council will consider potential funding in September as part of its review of recommended Human Services Allocations for 2021-2022.

17. Who will own the building?

The King County Housing Authority will own the building and will lease the property for the enhanced shelter operations. King County Department of Community and Human Services will contract with Lake City Partners to fund the operations of the enhanced shelter.