

Project Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Mitigate the Impact of Homelessness in Lancaster City

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION TO APRIL 24, 2023 AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY OF LANCASTER AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER

INTRODUCTION: On April 24, 2023, the City of Lancaster and Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities (“LCHRA”) entered into an agreement to expand the emergency shelter beds by an additional forty (40) beds to address the growing needs of unsheltered residents. LCHRA assumed the responsibility of securing a location suitable as the host site and contracting a provider for overnight services. Shelter doors planned to open the evening of December 1, 2023. Due to an array of challenges, the shelter will not become operational as intended on December 1, 2023. LCHRA is requesting a sixty (60) day extension from Lancaster City Council with a proposed operational date for the extended shelter beds of Thursday, February 1, 2024.

EXISTING EMERGENCY LOW-BARRIER SHELTER UPDATE:

Background: The Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition (LCHC) created a low-barrier *temporary* emergency shelter during COVID to meet the safety needs of community members living unsheltered. In 2020, the Lancaster County Food Hub became the contracted service provider through a vetted process and Ebenezer Baptist Church (701 N. Lime Street, Lancaster) agreed to host the shelter. Both parties entered into contracts with Penn Medicine while LCHC was under the auspices of Penn Medicine – Lancaster General Health. The facility lease and oversight of the shelter were assumed by LCHRA when LCHC was transferred to the Authorities in April 2022.

Current Update: Every evening (365/days a year), the Lancaster County Food Hub serves forty (40) unsheltered adult individuals from 9:00pm until 7:00am and is operating at full capacity. Challenges occurred most recently as the facility has experienced difficulties with the heating system (boiler) that needs to be replaced due to inability to function and potential carbon monoxide release. Given the immediate health concerns due to inadequate heating, the existing shelter was relocated to a temporary host site located at 232 N. Prince Street (formerly the Benjamin Roberts building) and owned by Ben Leshner. The shelter will remain at this temporary site pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding (to be replaced with a lease agreement) through March 31, 2024, with a month-to-month renewal. In the meantime, LCHRA is diligently working with Ebenezer Baptist Church to determine facility improvements and code upgrades to ensure compliance to resume church and community operations.

Budget: The operational expenses for the temporary location at 232 N. Prince Street have increased by 650% and far exceed the available resources for FY23 without Council’s approval of ARPA funds.

<i>Shelter Facility</i>	<i>Contracted Costs</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Ebenezer Baptist Church</i>			
Existing Facilities/Monthly (3,300-4,000 sq ft)	\$1,700	Social hall, bathrooms, classrooms (2), utilities, internet, water/sewer/trash	*Paid FY23 Q1 and expecting invoice for services through 11/7/2023
Cleaning Service/Monthly	\$700	Morning service	Secured by LCHRA
Total	\$2,400		
<i>232 N. Prince Street</i>			
Facilities/Monthly (+/- 12,600 sq ft)	\$10,000	First floor and garage	Secured by LCHRA
Utilities/Monthly	+/- \$2,600	Electric and Gas	Secured by LCHRA
Internet	+/- \$100	Internet service for guests and staff	Secured by LCHRA
Trash service/Monthly	\$500	Toters being utilized	Secured by City and awaiting confirmation of costs
Portable restrooms and sinks/Monthly	\$1,500 - \$2,000	4 – inside garage / 1 – outside 2 – portable sinks	Secured by City
Cleaning Services/Monthly	\$720	Morning service (3 hours daily)	Secured by LCHRA
Total	+/- \$15,900		

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**Note:* The contracted Provider's Services (\$306,600/annually) are not expected to increase unless expansion of shelter beds is agreed upon.

EXTENDED LOW-BARRIER SHELTER UPDATE

Efforts Made: The LCHRA team performed site inspections at 21 locations within Lancaster City limits in a search for a suitable host for the shelter. The site inspections occurred during the Winter of 2022-2023, Spring and Summer 2023. Each site was evaluated based on space size and availability for forty (40) additional beds, handicap accessibility, egress/ingress, accommodations for dual populations (men and women adults), restroom availability, safety, renovation costs (asbestos mitigation, infrastructure, and residential habitability requirements), neighborhood acceptance, facilities costs, and amenability of organizational host's mission. In an effort to eliminate obstacles, LCHRA even submitted an offer to purchase a local building, but the offer was declined due to a competitive bid.

Current Status on Facilities: After a series of onsite meetings with Otterbein United Methodist Church (20 East Clay Street in Lancaster) with City staff, LCHRA, church pastor and trustees, the church agreed to become the host for the extended shelter and inspections immediately began in collaboration with City officials. Momentum continued as the City of Lancaster's Zoning Board approved usage on October 23, 2023. In the meantime, the necessary operational supplies were researched and purchased for the slated opening. Currently, LCHRA staff, and contracted architect have been diligently working on the needs for the facility to become completely compliant with Codes. This development will, in part, delay the opening of the shelter as set out in the agreement.

Current Status on Service Provider: Concurrently, immediately upon executing the agreement with the City of Lancaster, LCHRA and Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition (LCHC) began sharing the vision with local providers for an extended low-barrier shelter. On September 5, 2023, a Request for Proposal for a service provider was released broadly to 130 individuals (57 agencies) with a deadline of September 29th. (In addition to direct solicitations, LCHC promoted the opportunity on its website and by news coverage.) LCHC hosted site visits at the church on September 12th with three local homelessness providers, met with each provider and other providers. No formal response was submitted on September 29th which prompted collaborative group meetings with the three providers the week of October 9th during which providers have expressed concerns of mission drift, capacity, and funding limits. Both LCHC and City of Lancaster staff assured that funding limits could be resolved as a provider is secured.

Over the past two months, LCHC staff have met with additional local homelessness providers in Lancaster County and in Dauphin and York Counties. Currently, there are four (4) active discussions with potential providers from Lancaster County: a new nonprofit collaboration, Ebenezer Baptist Church's non-profit entity, YMCA, and Penn Medicine-LGH. This development will, in part, delay the opening of the shelter.

Extended Shelter Budget: The operational revenue and expenses anticipated for the Extended Shelter for 28 months were originally based on a budget of \$1,051,500 for Otterbein UMC Church. However, due to the necessity for modifications to meet Code, the existing project now includes a renovation cost of \$1.4M (determined on November 17, 2023) for the lower level bringing the total costs to \$2,347,500. The following funds have been secured:

- Lancaster County Human Services Assistance Funds: \$50,000
- Lancaster County Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities Funds: \$200,000
- Local Funders Forum Funds: \$40,000
- Community Investment Funds: \$41,000
- City of Lancaster Funds: \$800,000

Additional funds will be solicited by state grants, capital campaign, host agency, foundations, and federal funds.

Revised Project Plan

Combining Current Shelter + Partial Extended Shelter + Code Blue (Temporary site)

Immediate/Short-term Goal through March 31, 2024: The current temporary location has adequate space for additional beds while the Otterbein and Ebenezer churches are being upgraded to Code. LCHRA welcomes service providers for additional shelter beds at the facility for Code Blue and to increase existing beds for the extended shelter.

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We continue to invite the Lancaster County Food Hub to increase bed night services while also having deliberate discussions with additional providers over a collaborative effort including a third-party contract for case management services.

Mid-term Goal:

- **Shelter for Individuals and Families through December 1, 2024:** A three-fold plan. First, LCHRA continues with its architectural engagement for the lower level of Otterbein UMC for extended shelter by preparing biddable plans, initiating a bid process and securing a contractor, and renovations for a December 1, 2024, extended shelter opening, at the latest. Second, LCHRA and City explore the renovations required for Ebenezer Baptist Church to be in full compliance with City Codes and conduct the feasibility of shelter operations. Third, continued dedicated focus on Prince Street Hub to open on December 1, 2024, with Permanent Supportive Housing units on the second floor (22 units), Crisis Housing units on the first floor (9 units), Code Blue shelter, and a community-based Day Center. All of these efforts expand the current bed nights available for unsheltered community members.

Long-term Goal through applicable ARPA expenditure deadline: A two-fold plan. First, we continue to operate emergency shelter beds through April 1, 2026 in accordance with the City agreement. Second, working with City and Otterbein UMC church leadership to renovate the second floor of the church for single resident occupancy units. We intend to develop additional collaborative efforts in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Policies SNH-1.3 "Housing Affordability", SNH-1.5 "Homelessness", and SNH-1.6 "Housing Inclusion and Innovation".

The request for an extension is submitted by the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority as presented to the City of Lancaster's City Council on Tuesday, November 28, 2023.