

Recommendation

It is this Committee's recommendation that the Board vote to deny this project due to the following reasons.

1. There is currently no qualified experienced operator available in Asheville to make this project successful. The City received 2 bids, one is Sunrise the agency currently running the Ramada Inn who has no experience in running a shelter. .
2. Buncombe County has not made a final decision on whether it will be assisting with the funding of this Shelter. Homeward Bound has stated they are not participating in this project. No word from Dogwood Foundations participating. ABCCM is reluctant to participate as their shelter operations have different standards. Future funding of the facility would be the responsibility of the city to apply for and receive grants; there is no guarantee that they will have the funds to maintain the program past the initial contract.
3. The City of Asheville is not in the shelter or real estate management business and should NOT be purchasing and running a low barrier shelter when they have no experience. It should be owned and operated by an experienced 3rd party.
4. The location of the Ramada Inn for a low barrier shelter poses considerable safety risks to the surrounding neighborhoods of Oakley, Riverridge Apartments, Verde Vista Apartments and the adjacent Riverridge businesses. Due to the significant affordable housing issues in Asheville there is currently nowhere for shelter residents to be placed as they resolve their issues. There are currently 100 Ramada Inn shelter recipients in transition to alternative housing. For the low barrier shelter this will result in residents staying indefinitely in the shelter awaiting housing and taking up beds for new people in need.
5. The city has no concrete long term plan to manage and fund this project.
6. Asheville is desperate for affordable housing and we on the committee believe that affordable housing would be a better investment for these funds..
7. There is no plan for an exit strategy or transition of this property and project. Total price of this project is estimated to take the bulk of the amount of the funds allocated to Asheville, leaving very little for relief in other areas.

The complicated homeless issues the city is facing are not going away and we on the homeless committee believe that they need to be addressed. However, we strongly believe that the purchase of the Ramada Inn and surrounding property and a low barrier shelter on this property do not offer an answer and will do nothing to change the problems we face. We recommend that the CAN board vote NO on this project and that we then do everything we can to stop the city and city council from approving the purchase of this property.

We do recommend that a better option might be for the city to run a pilot project based on the Low Barrier concept. If this method is successful, and affordable housing units become available, the City could reconsider a project of this size and scope. The City should adopt a zero tolerance on camping on City Property.

