

1. This document is to inform you of the current status at the Ramada Inn.
2. How a low barrier shelter is designed to work
3. The issues with the current proposal
4. The Homeless Committee recommendation to the City and Council- separate document

In preparation for a vote on CAN's position on the Ramada Inn property and the proposed low barrier shelter, the homelessness committee has prepared some information about the history of the project, the differences between the current Ramada Inn temporary shelter and the proposed low barrier shelter and the issues facing the current proposal. We have also included our recommendations about the position we would like CAN to take regarding this project which will come before city council for approvals on December 14th.

### **1.Current Status:**

The Ramada Inn is currently a temporary shelter for unsheltered people and [Sunrise Community](#) is the non-profit contracted by the city to operate the shelter. The current shelter is NOT currently a low barrier shelter. The current use of the Ramada Inn was an effort by the city to temporarily remove and house people camping in the city during the pandemic, particularly in city parks and to temporarily fix the homeless camping problem. The hotel is still operational to the public. 3 floors are occupied by the temporary shelter and 2 floors about 20 rooms are available to the public. Food is supplied on a donation basis and packaged for pickup by shelter recipients. There are currently no restrictions on movement, or pressure for shelter recipients to solve their issues. Many have been there since the City moved them there in April.

[Ramada - Non-Congregate Shelter-This information in Blue is from the City Minutes Since April, the City has partnered with Sunrise Community for Recovery & Wellness to provide shelter for 116 people who were previously in encampments. Onsite services have included Medicaid and food stamp enrollment, connections to substance use and mental health treatment, job search assistance, and housing planning and referrals.](#)

### **2 What is a Low Barrier Shelter**

Low barrier shelters are temporary shelters that are intended to provide easier access to permanent housing by removing the barriers that many unsheltered people face. They are only meant to be temporary housing with the goal to transition residents quickly into more permanent housing. Some of the general barriers the homeless face that prevents them from accessing traditional shelters are:

1. No ID
2. Couples that want to stay together
3. Single mothers with teenage sons
4. People with animals
5. People with drug or alcohol issues
6. Criminal records
7. Strict curfews with no exceptions
8. Rigid rules and requirements
9. Mandatory participation in shelter programs (some being religious based)

10. Have to pack up their possessions and leave every day and return in the evenings.

Since the goal is to help the residents find permanent housing, staff at low barriers shelters work with each person to help them overcome their barriers and help them move into more permanent housing. This can include job assistance, money assistance to help with rent and down payments, substance issues, mental health issues, etc. The typical stay at a low barrier shelter is 90 days but some residents may stay longer if needed.

[New Emergency Shelter-this information is from City Housing and Community Minutes City staff have been proactively pursuing long-term solutions to support our growing unsheltered population. Two proposals were received in response to the posted Request for Proposals to operate the shelter. Proposal reviews and due diligence are underway, and the selection committee expects to make a recommendation to Council in November. The City has also posted a new staff position to support this project.](#)

### **3.Current Proposal (going to City Council for a vote December 14)**

The city plans to purchase the Ramada Inn for \$9.75 million, upfit projected to be \$575K and no projection for annual 3rd party operating cost at this time. The decision as well as approval of the operator will come before city council for a vote on December 14.

### **4. Issues this project faces**

- 1, The RFP the City issued (attached) for the operator received 2 bids and the public will only be able to see the applicants and their applications after the contract has been awarded. There will be no public announcement of who will be awarded this contract.
2. The entire project, the operator and the purchase will go to vote on December 14 with limited public access to documents and public input. There is a good chance that the operator the city selects will not have the experience needed for this project to be successful.
3. The current operator, Sunrise, has told the committee that they are in negotiations with the City for the contract and although this can not be confirmed this agency has been running the current Ramada Inn and has only been in business 5 years and their focus has always been substance abuse up until now. They have no experience operating a shelter or a low barrier shelter. They were awarded the original contract without an RFP because the city considered this a crisis and they didn't have time for an RFP. Sunrise had relationships with many of the unsheltered camping in the parks who were identified as populations the current Ramada shelter would service.
4. The City will be spending \$9.75 million for a capital project when the City is currently divesting itself of City owned land to build affordable housing.

5. The County has not made a final decision on whether it will assist with the funding. No information is available on whether Dogwood Foundation is participating. Homeward Bound is not participating in either running or funding the project.

6. There is very limited affordable housing in Asheville and no plan of where these low barrier shelter residents will be placed. Currently there are 5000 people on the waitlist for public housing, Maple Crest now has 2000 on their waitlist. There are very few places and opportunities to transition people to permanent housing.

7. The city has not provided the committee with answers to the many of our questions regarding a plan of how they plan to achieve their goals, how they will continue to fund the project beyond the first year, or how this will address Asheville's homeless issue to help Asheville's unsheltered transition successfully to permanent housing.

8. The city has no experience in overseeing the management of a low barrier shelter or managing a property.

**See recommendation document**