

# Group Living Advisory Committee

## Shelter Subgroup Meeting 1, Phase 3

Date and Time: Tuesday, December 11, 2018, 4:00 – 7:00 PM

Location: Webb Municipal Building, Room 4.I.4

---

### Attendees

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Terrell Curtis

Michael Henry

John Hayden

Chris Conner (DENVER STAFF)

Councilmember Robin Kniech (DENVER CITY COUNCIL)

#### GUEST

Laura Rossberg

#### DENVER PROJECT STAFF MEMBERS

Andrew Webb

Kyle Dalton

Eugene Howard

Edson Ibanez

Will Lindsey

#### FACILITATOR

Meagan Picard

### Meeting Summary

#### 1. WELCOME AND CHECK-IN

Meagan Picard opened the meeting, welcomed and invited everyone to check in and share any new learning since the group last met in June. Some learning shared by participants included:

- Learning to be more compassionate
- Getting to know provider organizations better as well as the complications that arise for them when they interface with city regulations
- Watching camp development around shelters and the safety and health issues that come with these arrangements – need to prevent this
- Homelessness is everywhere – saw boat in Prague that shelters 500 individuals without homes
- Seeing the difficulty in breaking through silos and finding solutions that address differing needs – going to try hard to think from all sides
- Shelter visits over the summer were helpful in learning how things work and seeing firsthand

- Visited Community First Village at the edge of Austin (Tiny Home Village/RV Park), which is growing to 500 units and is attractive and appears full of joy. These are "Regulated Encampments" – something between shelters and permanent supported housing. There is too big of a gap in Denver between emergency and permanence. Recognizing that this work is hard but must be done – a range of solutions is needed.
- Working on TCOs for new shelter, and it is going well – getting lots of help

One participant also shared that a relative who had been unhoused (and didn't use shelters because they didn't work for this person) died on the street last month. This person will be remembered as the committee seeks to find solutions within the scope of this committee's work that may prevent such tragedies in the future.

## 2. SCHEDULE, AGENDA, OBJECTIVES AND HOUSEKEEPING

Andrew gave an overview of the revised schedule, and Meagan reviewed the agenda and objectives, noting two decisions to be made at this meeting – both regarding terminology. She also reminded everyone of the group process agreements and subgroup goals. Then, while discussing housekeeping items, Meagan talked about how this phase will require decisions and that those decisions need to come only from official committee members. Guest participation is valued and helpful for informing discussions. Guests are asked to abstain from decision-making. Councilmember Kniech asked that Polly be allowed to be her proxy when Councilmember Kniech is unavailable. All agreed.

Meagan also checked in with the group about the schedule extension and asked if any adjustments need to be made. Councilmember Kniech noted that evenings are hard for her, and Terrell asked for more lived experience in the room. Meagan and Andrew will be following with missing committee members again to determine if there is anything that can be done to re-gain their participation. Parking was also noted as an issue. Other meeting sites (possibly Delores Project site) may need to be identified where parking is free. Andrew also noted that he has looked into getting bus passes for committee members.

## 3. SHELTER DEFINITIONS

Andrew gave an overview of research conducted by Edson and Will. Comments on the definitions included:

- Should have "person first" language
- May have problems with the Portland definition around the space, space requirements; would avoid using "housing" in a definition.
- May also want to avoid "mass shelter"
- Should also avoid "Emergency" in the language since its confusing.
- "Temporary" is also confusing – could be describing the structure or the stay and is unclear.
- Councilmember Kniech: "I like the Englewood definition." Want to make sure services can be provided. Think about language "including but not limited to..." for the health and wellness for the individual (persons/families), and associated services...
- "... or other household or community emergencies..."

- Question: Are domestic violence shelters included here? Andrew shared that a separate definition for Safe House is in the DZC to allow for increased safety of people in need of confidential shelter.

The group agreed that fixing the Safe House definition to not have time limitations associated with them (more than 30 days) and should be included in the Group Living revisions. This issue was added to the “bike rack”.

#### 4. RESOLVE PROBLEM 1: “SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS” (USE TERMINOLOGY)

Meagan asked the group what they thought about just using the term, “Shelter”. The group liked this term, especially if in context of a more complete definition like Englewood’s. Committee members voted to recommend changing the term to “Shelter.”

#### 5. RESOLVE PROBLEM 2: “BEDS” AND “RESIDENTS” (PEOPLE TERMINOLOGY)

The group discussed a few options as alternatives to “residents” terminology, including guests, occupants, etc. Chris offered that “guests” is common terminology across shelter operators. Committee members voted to use this term.

“Beds” remains an outstanding issue to be addressed – possibly by looking at square footage per resident instead of defining the appropriate number of beds per facility (capacity could be better addressed in the Building Code). A concern was raised about potential for creating a single tower but was acknowledged that this can be addressed in the later discussion on shelter categories and future decisions on spacing/density requirements. The group also doesn’t want to limit options for using mats or other alternatives in true emergencies. These issues were added to the bike rack.

#### 6. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK – SHELTER CATEGORIES

Should some shelters be regulated differently than others? If so, what factors should be used to categorized them? Andrew shared background on how shelters are categorized now. Comments on current categories and regulations included:

- With the 120-day limitation on churches, they can only get to 360 days (not 365), so maybe the duration should be extended to something like 130 days so coalitions of churches can cover a full year.
- The perception of "seasonal homelessness" is not necessarily true - depends upon the guests being served. Women, children, families need shelter year-round.
- QUESTION: Do we need the distinction between "permanent-primary" vs. government vs. private-non-profit; do we need these distinctions?? We may need to keep the religious assembly option.

Meagan facilitated further discussion to generate a list of differences among shelters that may affect how they impact a community/neighborhood as well as the guests. The list included:

- Permanence (permanent primary or temporary?)
- Who Owns it
- Who Operates it
- Number of guests
- Duration of stay

- Services offered
- Location-Ability to access
- Availability of stay during/throughout the day
- 24 hour access - better for the guests AND communities
- Staffing is a driver of operating hours
- Location spacing from one another/Density of use

Committee members identified the top two most important items and shared why:

1. Number of guests was unanimously selected as #1. Reasons why included:
  - a. Smaller ones integrate more seamlessly with fewer impacts to community
  - b. Provides a better guest experience
  - c. Smaller facilities would be more like residential care use which has different regulatory mechanisms
2. Three factors were selected as #2:
  - a. Location and ability to access (2 votes): Locations that are incorporated into communities seem positioned for better outcomes. Also, the proximity to other services and amenities is better for guests. Building community, building relationships by being located "in" communities is more desirable for neighborhoods.
  - b. Permanence v. Temporary (1 vote): Honoring the difference in order to be flexible to respond to the needs of guests is important. Temporary shelters also have less impact, but more permanent shelters may integrate into communities better. Communities may be more accepting if there is a known expiration.
  - c. Number of days/Duration and services within a year (1 vote): Individual discontinuous nights of service versus 120 consecutive days (one may be more desirable than another)

With these priorities identified, Meagan asked what is "Small"? Participants said 100, 50 or 25. Temporary was then identified as 120 days or less. The group agreed that location and ability to access is not so much something to use in categorizing shelters; it should be addressed in regulations and with incentives for smaller shelters that are sited in neighborhoods with good access to services and transportation as well as opportunities to access shelter in areas people have been living and where their social supports may be.

Other items added to the bike rack during this discussion included creating incentives for 24-hour operation without creating undue burden on operators.

#### 7. NEXT STEPS AND CLOSE

Project staff will draft definition options to share back with the group for review, edits and approval. Another meeting will likely be scheduled in January. The meeting closed early at 6:45pm.