

# Group Living Advisory Committee – Shelter for the Homeless Subgroup Meeting #2

Date and Time: Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Location: Webb Municipal Building

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## Attendees

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Terrell Curtis  
Terese Howard  
Michael Henry  
John Hayden  
Mimi Florance  
Mike Malloy  
Polly Kyle  
Mary Jane

### GUESTS

Chris Conner  
Mary Anna Thompson

### DENVER STAFF MEMBERS

Andrew Webb  
Kyle Dalton

### FACILITATOR

Meagan Picard

## Meeting Summary

### 1. MEETING OPENING

Meagan Picard opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and shared the meeting agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Agreements on desired future
3. Existing DZC – what's getting in the way of achieving this future?
4. Close

### 2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members shared their names, affiliation and one word to describe how they were showing up at the meeting, which included hopefulness, positivity and a little bit of frazzled-ness as a result of the wind storm.

### 3. AGREEMENTS ON DESIRED FUTURE

Meagan invited the group to reflect on the goals that they said they hope to achieve through this process and determine if all are agreed. A lengthy, substantive and thoughtful discussion ensued. As summary of each discussion on each goal follows:

**Goal 1 (1<sup>st</sup> draft): Provide for safe emergency shelter**

Some discussion took place about adding “well-managed” to this goal. The group determined that the zoning code can’t necessarily help to manage shelters well. However, it can help with bed spacing and specifying use of beds (versus mats), which lends to good management.

*Agreed-upon final goal statement: Provide for safe, well-managed emergency shelter*

**Goal 2 (1<sup>st</sup> draft and final): Enable path to stable housing for those who are ready**

This goal was accepted as written with the caveat that we should understand that most (nearly all) are ready.

**Goal 3 (1<sup>st</sup> draft): Enable supportive services as needed/desired, along continuum of service**

Generally, people agreed with this statement, but they felt that “as needed/desired” was unnecessary and that “enable” was enough to indicate that services wouldn’t be required – just available as needed, not prohibited under the code for any part of the continuum of service.

*Agreed-upon final goal statement: Enable supportive services along continuum of service*

**Goal 4 (1<sup>st</sup> draft): Be good neighbors/respect neighborhood needs**

The group discussed what they mean by being good neighbors. Issues raised include:

- **Communication:** A suggestion was made that good organizations reach out to neighborhoods, explain what they’re up to, and detail safety and security practices and strategies. This good neighbor attitude melts hostility. These smart organizations set up committees (as required by code) and usually after a few meetings they stop meeting until a particular need arises. Good communication is the heart of it. Some felt that this requirement is based on bias, giving an example that an architecture firm isn’t required to hold public meetings. Discussion also ensued about how public engagement is hard, and most organizations aren’t skilled in doing this themselves. Also, it may be misleading to residents, who think they have an actual vote in the process. It was also suggested that this process allows neighborhoods with more political power, clout and money for lawyers to shut projects down.
- **Welcoming:** An example was given about how one organization was welcomed in one out of four projects. The other three threatened or opposed them, even though their efforts were aimed at being good neighbors. No matter the approach, results seem to almost always be negative, some saying that this is because there is a stigma around homelessness and mental illness, which makes it difficult for people who have been homeless to turn their lives around.
- **Reciprocity/strong, stable communities:** It was suggested that the “good neighbor” language seems like it’s saying that operators need to be good to people with homes. The group wants a code that promotes strong, stable communities. The group appeared to agree that the neighbor relationship should be reciprocal.
- **Equity:** It was noted that “equity” is a key word in the Denveright process

*Agreed-upon final goal statement: Be good neighbors, reciprocally, to promote strong, stable neighborhoods.*

**Goal 5 (new/proposed): Clarify/improve spacing requirement; prevent concentration of poverty**

Michael Henry shared that the original residential care use regulations adopted in 1993 were adopted with a philosophy that it is better not to concentrate poverty in one neighborhood or part of the city. The fact that permanent supportive housing can come in outside of the group living regulations is causing an angry dispute regarding the St. Andrew's church application (Mental Health Corp. of Denver permanent supportive housing development). This is being called independent living, without services, and is not limited by the spacing requirements in the DZC.

John Hayden suggested that a new goal should be to clarify spacing issues in the city so that those using the shelter and living around it are helped in the best way. Discussion ensued about a follow-up suggestion that the goal be to prevent concentration of wealth, which many in room did not support. One person experiencing homeless explained how difficult it is to access services if spread out, since services are not available everywhere and travel by bus can be long and unreliable. Missed appointments can have significant, negative consequences. Others talked about how people don't have a problem with concentrating wealth and that this seems to be a bias against people living in poverty.

Terrell suggested that the code should not congregate people by income but should make sure they have access to services and that ideally, if we want sustainable policy, all communities would say, "we are a community that welcomes all residents."

Michael Henry recalled a phrase from the mid-90s: "fair share of homeless services facilities". Discussion ensued about this phrase identifies shelters as problems. A need for a change in dialogue about "how we can help" was identified.

A question was raised about property values and impacts of siting homeless shelters in neighborhoods and whether it is real or perceived. Terrell said that studies show property values have not been impacted by these uses.

This issue was re-shaped to address shelter siting that supports access to services and helping people stay in communities they call home. Discussion continued about what counts as services. Answers offered by other participants included medical/health, job and life skills training, child care, day activities, meals, showers, etc.

*Agreed-upon final goal statement? Facilities are located throughout the City and County of Denver in order to provide shelter and services to people in need, helping them to stay in communities they call home and moving toward greater equity. (Needs confirmation)*

4. EXISTING DZC – WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY OF ACHIEVING THIS FUTURE?

The discussion turned to issues that get in the way of achieving these goals. Several issues were identified in the full group:

- One of the biggest impacts of the code is hours of operation – people show up to sleep and don't have time/energy to receive services then. Integration/continuum of services requires services in the day.
- What if religious organizations want to provide services to 10, 12 or 15 people? How is that any different than 8 (current cutoff in DZC between large and small residential care facility)? Origin of 8-person limit came from assumption that “pastor’s family would live in church.” Code limits on length of stay are impossible to meet. We can’t put limits on people’s length of stay, as it is detrimental to their ability to access services and start to improve their lives.
- Issues that may relate to building code, thresholds for sprinklers, etc. Those codes also limit affordability of shelter development.
- Denver Human Services involvement language (12.2.10.4.B.1): Involvement – what does that mean? What constitutes DHS involvement in a shelter?

The group then split into smaller groups to focus on problems related to each goal statement. They started their work during the meeting, then agreed to continue their work outside of the meeting – before the next one.

#### 5. MEETING CLOSING

Next meeting: Date and Time TBD: Andrew will send Doodle poll. When scheduled, it will be held at the Webb Municipal Building.