

**Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
Request for Proposals Q&A**

RFP for the Operator of the Low-Barrier Shelter and Drop-In Center at
Second Avenue Commons

May 21, 2021

1. We are focused on issues around eliminating the ‘Three P’ barriers: people, pets, possessions and have questions about intended policy and physical space that are relevant to those barriers. We do not know to what level of detail the interiors have been planned, but a number of our perceived needs would require plumbing and electric placement, and so are highly relevant to bring up before the build. There is a lack of isolation rooms in the shelter. Could there be at least one isolation for a number of different needs, such as lice, scabies, and sexual assault victims, someone in extreme mental distress?

The Commons has been designed to allow for the maximum amount of flexibility. There is at least one isolation room on the Shelter floor that will accommodate a single Client or a couple. In addition, the design includes a congregate sleeping room that will be kept at a lower capacity to allow additional space for those that do not require complete isolation. Plumbing and electrical outlet placement have been designed to serve the best needs of those staying and working at The Commons. Please include specific suggestions and requirements related to electric and plumbing within your Proposal narrative.

2. Without isolation rooms that can accommodate two persons, can couples truly stay together in the shelter?

The Successful Proposer must demonstrate a commitment to allowing couples to stay together at all times, when requested. The Commons does include at least one isolation room that can accommodate up to two people and bathrooms can be designated to serve couples, as needed.

3. What is the position on smoking? Will SRO residents be allowed to smoke in their rooms? If not, there do appear to be any outdoor smoking areas on the SRO floors (e.g. balcony).

As a strong proponent of Harm Reduction, DHS expects that the Successful Proposer will create policies and procedures that allow the maximum amount of flexibility to Clients, visitors, guests and resident. Concurrently, the Successful Proposer must follow applicable smoking laws. Outdoor space has been designed to accommodate smoking. Proposers with specific needs or suggestions related to smoking should include those needs and suggestions in their Proposal.

4. Do shelter guests have to go downstairs and outside to smoke?

This has not been determined. Accessible outdoor space for smoking has been included in the building design. The Successful Proposer must design policies and procedures for smoking

indoors and outdoors to allow the maximum amount of flexibility to Clients, visitors, guests and residents without violating applicable laws and regulations.

5. Is there a place to put a kennel for shelter guest dogs if the guest has to go to the hospital (for example) or if the dog does not interact well with other pets or other humans?

The building design does not currently include a kennel as animals are welcome in all spaces at all times. DHS expects that the Successful Proposer will establish policies and procedures to handle situations such as this and that those policies will align with local regulations and insurance requirements. Please include specific suggestions or requirements related to animal care in your Proposal.

6. Is there space for veterinary care beyond washing and grooming—a vet clinic space for minor and emergent care and routine vaccinations?

We encourage Proposers to think creatively about the existing space. Space restrictions did not allow for the designation of dedicated vet clinic space; however, flexible-use spaces have been included in the building design. These flexible-use spaces may be used to meet the needs of the community, which could include providing vet services. If specific building accommodations are required to allow for services a Proposer believes necessary, please include details and justification in their Proposal.

7. Where are the metal detector and amnesty lockers located?

The amnesty lockers will be located just inside the main entrance of the building. People entering the building will have access to the lockers before going through the metal detector and before exiting the building. The final placement of the metal detector is to be determined and DHS expects that the Successful Proposer will participate in those decisions.

8. Where are refreshments in the welcome center intended to be located?

The Drop-in Center has been designed to allow for multiple uses including solitude, rest and connection to others. In the building design, refreshments and coffee will be located along a wall within the Drop-in Center itself, accessible to anyone using the space for any reason.

9. Where are computers for clients located in the drop-in center?

DHS expects that computers available for Client, visitor, guest and resident use will be laptop models that could be used throughout the building using Wi-Fi. The Successful Proposer will be responsible for establishing policies and procedures that support the maximum amount of flexibility.

10. Is this intended to work on a fob system, where clients all get a fob which allows them to access certain floors by elevator?

Yes. DHS expects that the Successful Proposer will participate in design and implementation of the fob system along with other co-located partners. The Successful Proposer must create fob policies and procedures for Clients, visitors, guests and residents that ensure safety without unnecessary barriers.

11. Are stairs intended to be accessible by staff only?

No.

12. Are things like the front desk configuration already a done-deal—shape is very uninviting and doesn't allow for staff sight-lines to the back of the lounge area?

Placement was determined using Trauma-Informed principles, wayfinding best practices and with consideration for sight lines. The current location of the front desk is considered final. Please include recommendations and justification for alternate location of front desk in your Proposal, if critical.

13. Where are bottle fillers/drinking fountains on every floor?

Sources of fresh drinking water are planned for each floor within the building. Location varies by floor. We are working to include access to fresh water for those outside of the building as well.

14. There appear to be no inset phones in the welcome center?

The Drop-in Center and Shelter will have phone service within the building. Phones will be made available for Client use.

15. Where is storage for bathrooms (drop-in and shelter level)?

The building has been designed to meet the storage needs of Clients, visitors, guests, residents and staff. Storage is available on each floor of The Commons.

16. There seems to be no accessible bathroom for drop-in center folx?

There are accessible bathrooms on each floor of The Commons.

17. There is no in-room storage for belongings in the accessible shelter room?

There is limited storage for Clients within the sleeping rooms and each Shelter Client will have access to a locker outside of the sleeping rooms. Additional storage space for Client possessions is available on the first floor of the building as well.

18. There is no laundry facility for SRO's—do SRO residents use the 2nd floor laundry facilities?

Yes. DHS expects that SRO residents will have access to the second floor laundry during Drop-in Center hours as well as during times specifically designated for SRO residents.

19. Is there a space for a fitness room for staff?

A fitness room for staff has not been included in the existing building design. Proposers are encouraged to think creatively about the available space and how physical fitness needs of staff and Clients could be addressed within The Commons and/or through collaboration with external partners.

20. Is there a space for a barber/hair station?

There is not designated space for a barber/hair station. Proposers are encouraged to think about how existing flexible-use space can be used to meet this need (see question 6 about flexible-use spaces). If specific building accommodations are required to allow for services a Proposer believes necessary, please include details and justification in their Proposal.

21. There should be panic buttons in every shelter room and every bathroom that alert the staff areas, and staff area 911 panic buttons?

The Commons will have an emergency communication system including panic buttons and connection to 911. The Successful Proposer must participate in planning discussions and decisions as that system is finalized.

22. Are cameras and their wiring part of the plan?

The building safety plan does include use of cameras and the building design provides for necessary wiring.

23. Are the SRO's intended to serve as permanent housing, or as transitional housing?

By definition, SROs are considered permanent housing. See question 31 for more details.

24. Can we communicate with someone from the health clinic side to help understand their plans? For example, will the clinic have someone on staff 24/7 who can prescribe, or have a video link to someone who can prescribe? Will clinic or proposer be responsible for med management?

The Health Clinic at The Commons will be operated by UPMC and final details are not yet available. The Successful Proposer will be required to collaborate and coordinate with UPMC and other co-located partners.

25. What is being evaluated for the food service contract?

The Successful Proposer will work with DHS to determine evaluation criteria for third-party food services.

26. Are applicants required to get more than one quote for subcontract services, such as sanitization, to include with the proposal, or is one quote sufficient?

We do not have a specific requirement for the number of quotes you must solicit. Instead, we ask that you use your budget narrative to explain your line-item budget. The budget narrative should describe how you arrived at your numbers and why you think they are reasonable and appropriate.

As you solicit quotes for in your line-item budget, you can use this as an opportunity to participate in Allegheny County's MWDBE and VOSB goals. For more details, see RFP sections 6.1 and 6.2.

27. Is emergency maintenance, such as plumbing, electrical, glass handled by the building owner?

The building owner and their subcontracted building management company will be responsible for ensuring major building systems are working, including plumbing and electrical.

28. Who is responsible for trash and recycling removal?

The Successful Proposer will be responsible for ensuring that trash and recycling are removed from the areas of the building they utilize and put in the space designated by the building owner for removal from the property.

29. Do PNC and the other partners have a commitment to green building and to making this space function as eco-responsibly as possible?

DHS is unable to speak for PNC and other partners.

Info Session Questions

30. You said that the shelter is 92 beds. Are you going to keep the Winter Shelter on Smithfield open? There are more people in the Winter Shelter than 92 and even if you add 40, would that be enough? Will both facilities be open at the same time?

We will not be utilizing the Smithfield Winter Shelter after The Commons opens. Part of the impetus for creating The Commons was to replace the Winter Shelter and create a year-round version of it. Based on the data that we have collected over the past several years about lengths of stay in shelter, we expect by having the 92 beds year-round, we will be able to reduce the number of people who need shelter in the winter. Between the 92 regular beds and the 40 overflow beds, we anticipate we will have the capacity to serve anyone who would have been served with the traditional Winter Shelter. We do not expect to have a reduced capacity.

31. You said that there are 45 single rooms on the top two floors. Are those transitional beds or short-term beds? Or can people experiencing homelessness use them as well?

The SROs are permanent housing. Individuals will self-select to live in them. As examples, someone could live in an SRO if they: are participating in a supportive housing program; are receiving a subsidy through a housing choice voucher; or can self-pay, if they have the income to do that. The SROs will function like the Wood Street Commons or the Ys where there are individuals living there under different circumstances and using different funding streams. They will be considered permanently housed, but they may live in them for a transitional period of time. If there is a need to use an SRO for someone coming into the Shelter or Drop-in Center for any reason, that would be a conversation between the Successful Proposer, the owner of the building, the operator of the SROs and DHS. The Commons is about flexibility and meeting the needs of the people served. If the situation comes up where a Shelter or Drop-in Client needs an SRO, we are open to that.

32. Is there going to be a place where bed bugs are handled? Especially if you are going to allow pets to sleep in the beds, is there going to be a way to ensure that pets are not carrying bed bugs or fleas or anything like that? Or should we just consider that we will need to sanitize the bed every time that there's a pet in it? And what should we do to consider pet allergies?

There is a hot room in The Commons where individuals who come in can have their belongs put in there. The hot room should kill the bed bugs before their belongings are moved into the Shelter or stored. Of course, pets cannot be put in the hot room. We don't want to have rules that say when pets come in, we will do a fur check or they need a license or a note from a veterinarian saying that the pet is up to date on their shots. None of that is the direction we are hoping to go in. What we envision is that the Successful Proposer will acknowledge that when pets come in, there is a possibility that they will have fleas or other pests, and so they will have a plan to mitigate issues. The Successful Proposer should develop policies and procedures for pets and pest control. Some examples are that anytime a pet comes in, the bed is sanitized or the dog is given a flea collar. There is an opportunity for creativity that we hope the Successful Proposer will bring around pets. Proposers can describe their policies in their Proposals and include them in the budget. As long as people are treated well and fairly and the space remains low barrier, there is a lot of flexibility for how it could look.

June 2, 2021

33. Do shelter clients have to come each day to try to get a bed, or once an intake is done and they have a bed, do they have that bed for a certain amount of allotted time (e.g., 30 days)? If they do have to come each day to claim a bed, does this mean they have to be admitted and discharged through HMIS daily?

DHS expects that Clients will be able to stay in the Shelter continuously, as needed. Specific policies and procedures will be agreed upon by the Successful Proposer and DHS.

34. On page 6 of the RFP Response Form you note "Budget (10 points, not included in page count." For clarification does this mean both the budget and budget narrative are not included in the 30 page count?

Correct, neither the budget nor the budget narrative is included in the page count.

35. One of my questions regarding the RFP for The Commons relates to the refreshments for the Drop In Shelter. Is the thought that there would be meals served to those who utilize the Drop-in Center as well or only coffee etc.

Please refer to page 13 of the RFP.

June 8, 2021

36. Will the drop-in center in the year-round low barrier shelter/drop-in center RFP replace Pittsburgh Mercy's Wellspring Engagement Center?

At this time, we expect that PATH funding for drop-in services will be utilized to support the Second Avenue Commons Drop-In Center.

June 11, 2021

37. If we wanted to attach Letters of Support from other organizations, would these letters count toward the 30-page limit or would they not be counted?

Letters of Support are not required for your proposal and will not be given to the evaluation committee as part of the evaluation process.

38. Regarding the SRO units. Are these units open to the public or only accessible through coordinated entry?

It has not yet been decided if these units will be open to the public or only accessible through coordinated entry. DHS expects to include the Successful Proposer in planning discussions after award is made.

39. What is the total square footage of levels 1-3?

The total square footage of the Second Avenue Commons building is expected to be approximately 42,500 feet, divided between five floors.

40. What is the total square footage of the SRO floors, levels 4 and 5?

The total square footage of the Second Avenue Commons building is expected to be approximately 42,500 feet, divided between five floors.

June 17, 2021

41. The RFP states: "For internet, the building will provide basic Wi-Fi, but Proposers may propose to pay for a more robust system." What does basic Wi-Fi mean? Will the

building be hard-wired for internet for all staff stations and for the computers in the drop-in center? Will there be wired security for cameras?

The Commons building will be equipped with Wi-Fi accessible to Clients, guests and staff. Computers designated for Client and guest use will be laptop computers that connect to Wi-Fi to ensure flexibility and movement by users. Hardwiring will be provided for all staff workstations. The crisis response system including cameras will be hardwired and provided with the building. DHS expects the Successful Proposer will be able to perform all Contract Services as described in the RFP using the existing Wi-Fi system. However, Proposers can choose to enhance the existing Wi-Fi system, if desired. Proposers should describe their proposed enhancements in their Proposals and include them in their budget.

42. You note that the Drop-in Center is open from 8am – 5pm daily. Does daily mean 5 days/week or 7 days/week?

DHS expects that the Drop-in Center will operate seven days a week. If you wish to implement a different schedule, please include proposed hours and rationale in your Proposal.

43. What about security for the Drop-In Center and Low-Barrier Shelter? Should we be budgeting for a security service?

DHS expects that the Drop-in Center and Shelter will be a safe and secure facility for all who work, live in or near and visit The Second Avenue Commons. Recognizing that many conflicts arise due to behavioral health issues and/or substance use, the Successful Proposer must have skilled behavioral health staff onsite at all times. Skilled staff will be expected to deescalate situations and prevent traumatization for those we serve whenever possible. When clinical intervention is not or will not be sufficient, the Successful Proposer will be responsible for requesting additional crisis services including police, fire and/or EMS.

44. Will there be any designated parking for staff?

DHS expects that there will be very limited designated parking for staff. In the area surrounding The Commons, there are multiple parking options including on street and in garages. The Second Avenue Commons was designed to be accessible and is located near several public transportation options.

45. Once we find clients housing are we responsible for wrap around services or do we hand them off to another organization once housing is established?

The goal of this RFP is to identify an operator for the Drop-in Center and Shelter. As such, the Successful Proper will have limited engagement with Clients post-transition to housing.

June 21, 2021

46. Who is responsible for purchasing the laptops the clients will be using?

The Successful Proposer will be involved in decisions related to computers. DHS anticipates that an initial supply of computers for Client and guest use will be provided to The Commons operator upon opening. The Successful Proposer does not need to include the initial purchase of computers in their budget, but they will be expected to maintain and replace computers, when necessary, after opening.

Amendments

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

We amended the timeline to have the deadline for questions to be one day earlier than originally stated because the Juneteenth holiday will be observed on Friday, June 18. Please submit your questions regarding this RFP to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us no later than 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 17, 2021.

In the RFP, all instances of the question deadline were changed. What was stated as:

Deadline for Questions:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on ~~Friday, June 18, 2021~~

Now says:

Deadline for Questions:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 17, 2021