

Safe Haven Information Summary

The CSB's Safe Haven Program at 115 N. Patrick Street:

- Will provide PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING to 12 homeless men and women in a facility previously used for more than 20 years for a CSB Clubhouse program for 65 persons with severe mental illness, substance use disorders and similar histories as the Safe Haven consumers
- Will offer EXTENSIVE SUPERVISION with 24 hour, 7 days per week, awake overnight staff
- HAS COMPLIED WITH ALL APPLICABLE ZONING AND CODE REQUIREMENTS. The residential use proposed for the building is in compliance with zoning and building codes. No Special Use Permit (SUP) is required. The CSB has gone through all of the processes that would be required of any other housing provider or property owner.
- Has gone well beyond all legal requirements for neighbor notification, especially in light of Fair Housing Law, which protects the residents of the program by virtue of their disabilities (see Items 7 & 8, "Fair Housing" and "Neighbor Notification")
- Will not negatively affect property values for surrounding homes (see Item 3, "Impact on Property Values")
- Will utilize primarily federal and state funding for on-going operations (see Item 4, "Financial Impact of Program")
- Is a PROVEN, NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED MODEL for providing housing and services to the chronic street homeless population

In addition . . .

- No one will be allowed in the Safe Haven who is determined to be a risk to the community or him/herself.
- A thorough risk assessment will be made by experienced clinicians prior to admitting anyone into the program
- The cost of housing this population is approximately the same as not housing them in terms of use of public resources since homeless people placed in supportive housing experience marked reduction in shelter use, hospitalizations, length of stay per hospitalization, etc. (See Item 4, "Financial Impact of Program")
- The CSB's Housing Policy requires that the next Board-owned and operated facility be placed in the section of the City that has the lowest proportion of special needs housing (see Item 5, "Reason for Selection of Patrick Street Site")
- Many of those individuals who are homeless are long-term Alexandria residents, have attended City schools, and have families who have lived here for generations. Some are aging veterans.
- Fair Housing law prohibits a jurisdiction from developing policies or taking actions which have the effect of foreclosing special needs residences from locating in entire neighborhoods or areas of the City (see Item 7, "Fair Housing")
- The CSB has been operating residential programs in Alexandria for more than 20 years, and currently operates 63 residential sites (173 beds) across the City. Since January 1998, when data collection was automated, the CSB has served a total of 560 consumers in its residential programs with no significant community incidents and a high degree of success, as measured in part by consumers' movement to more independent living. The CSB believes the Safe Haven offers the same potential for success.

Safe Haven Information

The following information is intended to provide a summary of information about the Safe Haven. For additional details, please see the Community Services Board's website at http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/safe_haven.html

This program will provide permanent supportive housing (not emergency shelter) to 12 men and women who are currently homeless and are unable to use the existing shelter system due to their mental illness and sometimes co-occurring substance use disorders.

At present, existing housing and services for homeless persons in Alexandria are provided through four emergency shelters, none of which have staff with mental health backgrounds able to serve this population.¹ The Safe Haven will provide intensive, 24-hour, awake overnight coverage with professional mental health staffing.

Safe Haven is a proven, nationally-recognized model for providing housing and services to the chronic street homeless population.²

1. History/Background – Safe Haven

1997 – Safe Haven identified as high-level priority of Alexandria's *Homeless Services Coordinating Committee* (HSCC), a coalition (established in 1989) of approximately 40 private and public agencies providing services to the homeless in Alexandria.

1999 – The HSCC developed strategic objectives to address the pressing needs of the chronically homeless population. One of the objectives was the creation of a Safe Haven.

2000 – Safe Haven incorporated as a priority objective into the City's *Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development, 2000 – 2005*. This same year, the *National Alliance to End Homelessness* (NAEH) established a ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness throughout the country.

2002 – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all jurisdictions receiving HUD funding to develop a concrete plan to end chronic homelessness. (Alexandria receives approximately \$730,000 in HUD funding annually for homeless programs.) With every application to HUD for funding each year, the City is required to report on its progress in serving the chronic homeless population.

2003 – The U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously endorsed the 10-year planning process and urged cities across the nation to create and implement strategic plans to end chronic homelessness in 10 years.

¹ For a comprehensive description of housing and supportive services available to the homeless in the City of Alexandria (i.e., its Continuum of Care) and the history and role of the *Homeless Services Coordinating Committee*, see Appendix 1 of the City's *Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness* at the Community Services Board's website: http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/safe_haven.html

² HUD defines chronic homelessness as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." A "disabling condition" is defined as "a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions."

2004 – The Commonwealth of Virginia created a *Policy Academy on Chronic Homelessness* and developed an action plan, approved by Virginia’s Governor Mark Warner, entitled, “Virginia: A Common Wealth to End Homelessness.” (Representatives of Alexandria’s HSCC, including an individual who was chronically homeless and had lived on the streets, served on the *Policy Academy*.) Alexandria’s City Council incorporated the Safe Haven into its *2004 – 2015 Strategic Plan* this same year. In June, 2004, Council approved the CSB submittal of a grant to HUD requesting funds for the Safe Haven program. (Neighbors notified two days later.)

2005 – Alexandria’s City Council adopts *Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Alexandria*, with Safe Haven being one of the key features of the plan. (Alexandria’s plan received recognition from the *U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness*, a collaborative group of more than 10 federal departments.) In March, 2005, Council authorized acceptance of the HUD grant for Safe Haven.

2. Safety Issues & Impact of Facility on the Neighborhood

The individuals who will live at the Safe Haven are currently living on Alexandria’s streets with no supervision. At the Safe Haven, staff will be present every day, with awake overnight coverage. In the CSB’s view, this will bring increased safety to the neighborhood. The 12 Safe Haven consumers will have similar diagnoses, backgrounds, and criminal histories as the 65 individuals who attended the CSB’s Clubhouse program that previously occupied this same property for more than 20 years. It is the CSB’s opinion that this program will have less of an impact on the neighborhood than the Clubhouse program.

The CSB has assured the 115 N. Patrick Street neighbors that no one will be allowed in the Safe Haven who is determined to be a risk to him/herself or others. CSB outreach staff have worked with this population for many years, and a thorough risk assessment will be made by experienced clinicians prior to admitting anyone into the program. The Safe Haven will be staffed 24/7 by mental health and substance abuse professionals who are experienced and specially trained to identify, assess and manage safety and security concerns among the residents.

The CSB’s experience has been that neighbors of a proposed special needs residence react in a negative way every time a property for persons with mental illness is placed, and we have found that once the project is in operation, neighbors’ fears and concerns abate. At one of our community meetings this past month, neighbors of the CSB’s Men’s Recovery Home on E. Windsor told the 115 N. Patrick Street neighbors that the Men’s Recovery Home residents have posed no problems. The residents of Men’s Recovery, like the Safe Haven residents, were homeless and have mental health and substance abuse issues. (One of the Men’s Recovery Home neighbors was a woman with small children who lives across the street from Men’s Recovery. She said that before her family bought their home, they knocked on many doors to ask about the impact of the Men’s Recovery Home on the neighborhood, and were assured by everyone they spoke with that the residents caused no problems whatsoever, and this has been her experience since living there.)

Additional information on safety can be found at Attachment 1 and also in the Safe Haven FAQs #11 and #12 at the CSB’s website: http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/safe_haven.html

3. Impact on Property Values

Research has shown time and again that property values are not affected by the placement of special needs residences. (A handout on this issue has been made available at various meetings held with the neighbors of 115 N. Patrick Street.) An article summarizing research on property values and special needs housing can be found at:

<http://www.nonprofithousing.org/actioncenter/toolbox/acceptance/affhousingpropvalues.pdf>

4. Homeless Population in Alexandria and Financial Impact of Program

Nationally, it is estimated that 10% of the single adult homeless population experiences chronic homelessness. This 10% has been found to consume 50% of the resources expended on the homeless population. In Alexandria, approximately 20% of the homeless population experience chronic homelessness, with 80 – 90 unsheltered homeless persons identified in each of the past several years, of about 450 total homeless persons in the City.

While the costs of operating the Safe Haven on an annual basis appear relatively high, the cost of housing this population is actually about the same, and in some cases less, than not housing them. See Item 2, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the CSB's website http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/safe_haven.html (Questions 21 and 22). Note that the City's contribution to the on-going operating costs of the Safe Haven program is only 20%, with most of the program's revenue coming from Federal and State sources.

Anyone who has a relative in a nursing home can appreciate the annual cost of providing 24-hour housing and services to this population. The CSB's other 24/7 residential facilities have comparable operating costs.

With respect to the cost of the renovation of the 115 N. Patrick Street building, the City had set aside \$795,000 for the renovation of this building some time ago in its Capital Improvement Program funds. The building, which the City has owned for more than 60 years, has been in need of renovation for many years. Because the City had been anticipating the Clubhouse relocation for many years, costly improvement projects were delayed pending the move of the Clubhouse. At this time, substantial renovation is required.

5. CSB Housing Policy, Placement of Housing Throughout City and Reasons for Selection of 115 North Patrick Street Site

The CSB's Housing Policy requires that the Board disperse its special needs housing programs throughout the City. This policy received national recognition from the *Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law* as a model policy for managing the placement of special needs housing.

With each housing placement, the CSB conducts an analysis of the dispersal of special needs housing throughout the City based on eight Board Housing Planning Areas. Board policy requires that every attempt be made to place new housing in those areas with the lowest proportion of existing special needs housing.

The CSB's analysis of special needs housing throughout the City has shown that the area with the lowest density of special needs housing is CSB Housing Planning Area IV, Old Town & the Southwest Quadrant, with two such facilities. The area with the second lowest density is Area V, with four facilities. (As a point of comparison, Board Area VI, Potomac West/Del Ray, has

21 such facilities.) The 115 N. Patrick Street property falls on the border between the two lowest density areas - the 1st being Area IV and the 2nd, Area V.

In addition to the siting reasons just noted, the 115 N. Patrick Street location is one of the few properties examined over the past several years that would permit the CSB to serve as many as 12 individuals in private apartments. The Safe Haven model that has proven to be successful with these vulnerable individuals has been a homelike, non-institutional environment with a strong emphasis on nurturing and support.

The literature on successful Safe Haven models notes that there needs to be “a communicated sense that Safe Haven is a home rather than a shelter or institution.” Also, HUD notes that an important feature of a Safe Haven is for the residents to learn community living skills – how to interact in a community setting – going to the bank, the post office, the library, for example. Finally, the 115 N. Patrick Street site is well-suited for a Safe Haven because of its proximity to other community resources such as employment, social services and CSB services.

The CSB operates 63 residential facilities throughout the City.

6. Compliance with Planning & Zoning Regulations, Codes, and Other Requirements

The Safe Haven, a multi-family “by right” project, has complied with all applicable zoning and code requirements. The residential use proposed for the building is in compliance with zoning and building codes, and because there is more than adequate parking at the facility, there is no further land use approval required for the use of the 115 North Patrick Street site for a Safe Haven. No Special Use Permit (SUP) is required. The CSB has gone through all of the processes that would be required of any other housing provider or property owner.

7. Fair Housing

While the CSB understands the concerns of the neighbors and wants to work with the neighbors to address their concerns, the Board also has an obligation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. By virtue of their disabilities, the individuals who will live in the Safe Haven are protected under federal Fair Housing law, which prohibits public officials or their designees from taking any “actions that treat groups of persons with disabilities less favorably than groups of non-disabled persons.”³ Simply put, if an apartment building for 12 individuals without disabilities would be permitted at this location, federal law protects the rights of 12 individuals with disabilities to live there.

Fair Housing law also prohibits a jurisdiction from developing policies or taking actions which have the effect of foreclosing special needs residences from locating in entire neighborhoods or areas of the City.⁴

8. Neighbor Notification

Neighbors were notified of the Safe Haven project after considerable study of the site, including an analysis of whether the site could be adapted to the proposed use. Once it was determined

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Housing and Civil Enforcement: The Fair Housing Act Source: http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/housing_coverage.htm

⁴ Ibid.

that the site could be adapted for Safe Haven use, at its June 2004 meeting, the Board approved the submittal of a HUD grant by staff seeking funding for the project. City Council approved the HUD grant submission in the same month. Within two days of the Council's approval for the HUD grant submission, the CSB notified 63 properties surrounding the building on all four sides of the Safe Haven program and, after our first meeting with the neighbors in July 2004, added an "occupant" mailing at the neighbors' suggestion to those buildings whose owners are off-site, bringing the total to 88 letters per mailing. (See Attachment 2, "Safe Haven Meetings" for a listing of letter correspondence and meetings with neighbors since June 2004.) In addition to these property owners and tenants, we have, since the beginning of the project, notified the Presidents of the Upper King Street Civic Association, the Inner City Civic Association, and *Kizmet*, an Old Town business association.

Our legal requirement for neighbor notification under Board of Architectural Review (BAR) rules is limited to the small number of properties which abut the 115 N. Patrick Street site. Thus, the Board believes it has gone above and beyond any requirement for notification of neighbors, especially in light of Fair Housing law.

9. CSB Experience in Operating Programs Like Safe Haven

The CSB has been operating residential programs in Alexandria for more than 20 years, and currently operates 63 residential sites (173 beds) across the City. The residents and staff of all of our programs value our role as good neighbors and take pride in keeping our properties well-maintained, attractive, and orderly. Since January 1998, when data collection was automated, the CSB has served a total of 560 consumers in its residential programs with no significant community incidents and a high degree of success, as measured in part by consumers' movement to more independent living.

10. Other Issues

Please visit the CSB's website at http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/safe_haven.html for additional information about Safe Haven.

Questions?

Contact Carol Layer, Director, Extended Care Services at 703-838-5011 or via e-mail at carol.layer@alexandriava.gov. Judy Carter, the Assistant Director of Extended Care Services, is also available at the same number or at judy.carter@alexandriava.gov.