



## Multnomah County - Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC)

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Multnomah County seeks \$12.5M in Funding to fully realize a long-held vision to create a peer-led, culturally-responsive, and trauma-informed Behavioral Health Resource Center in downtown Portland, currently home to a majority of the region's chronically houseless residents. This is a shared vision, made real through collaborative efforts between local governments, businesses, service providers and, most importantly, the very individuals who will find safety, support and services within it.

**The Need:** Thousands of people in Multnomah County and the Metro region are facing housing instability and, increasingly, experiencing houselessness. The root causes of this unprecedented housing emergency are numerous and the County, in partnership with other jurisdictions, is actively employing many strategies to address the emergency. To coordinate efforts, the County and the City of Portland formed the Joint Office of Homeless Services, which has doubled emergency shelter capacity, supported shelters to provide additional wrap around services and helped shelters better access funding for supportive and transitional housing.

Although progress is being made, the housing emergency continues, disproportionately affecting our most vulnerable residents. As evidenced by the biennial point-in-time count in Portland and Multnomah County, the number of people experiencing houselessness who also report behavioral health issues is growing faster than the number of people experiencing houselessness overall. This trend is attributable to deinstitutionalization, and a lack of adequate community support for those who suffer from severe and persistent mental illness and/or chronic substance use, coupled with a severe housing crisis.

Those experiencing behavioral health issues often face significant barriers to accessing shelter, housing and engaging in services. The vast majority of Multnomah County's existing behavioral health resources are provided in in-patient, acute, and critical care settings. This is an expensive and limited system of care, and one that does not help a majority of individuals it is intended to serve. Without adequate services and facilities, people often have frequent and unnecessary contact with crisis services, hospitals, law enforcement, and jails; systems and services that can exacerbate symptoms while also inappropriately straining already overburdened partners.

This resource gap has been highlighted in at least two reports calling for an improved community-based mental health infrastructure, including a 2015 Multnomah County Mental Health

Jail Diversion Feasibility Study, which identified a 24-hour resource center as a crucial system gap that contributes to unnecessary incarceration of people in mental health crisis; and a 2018 Multnomah County Mental Health System Analysis which recommended enhanced peer-led, walk-in services to address unmet need. Not only is this resource gap well-documented, it has become more acute as the region's housing crisis worsened.

**The Request:** Multnomah County is requesting \$12.5M in Lottery Bond Funds. To date Multnomah County has committed \$16.79M towards the BHRC, this has allowed for the purchase of the building and will fund a portion of the construction.

**Total Project Cost:** Property Acquisition and Renovation: \$31.84M

**Multnomah County Commitment to date:** \$16.79M

**Funding Strategy (Current Proposal):**

Federal Earmark - \$1.3 M

State ARP/Bond - \$12.5 M

Addition County GF - \$1.25 M

**The Project:** In response, County leadership, in collaboration with partners, made the creation of a centrally located behavioral health resource center a top priority. In early 2019, the County purchased a building in downtown Portland with interior and exterior space for envisioned services, easy walk-in access and in close proximity to other community services. Since that time, Multnomah County has completed the design, obtained design approval and received construction bids, a development process guided through ongoing collaboration with consumers, providers, businesses and peers who have long advocated for the BHRC. The resulting design is consistent with a long standing vision to offer culturally-responsive, peer-led and low-barrier programming in the area where many consumers are already living.

The BHRC will have three distinct, yet interconnected, programs:

- **Low-Barrier Day Center** will provide for basic needs (laundry, showers, charging stations, computers), social connection and resource referrals to community service programs, including behavioral health treatment, culturally specific treatment and services, supportive housing, employment resources and other benefits, available seven days a week from 7am-10pm.
- **Mental Health Shelter:** Available by referral only, the mixed gender shelter will offer up to 42 beds to participants.
- **Bridge Housing:** Available by referral only, the mixed gender housing will be for up to 20 participants ready and able to work towards independent housing.

The project fills a specific gap in serving people who have on-going behavioral health and basic needs, and serves as a place where first responders, mobile crisis, and other providers might refer or transport persons who may not need further crisis stabilization services but will benefit from connections to resources and other opportunities to for on-going peer and other treatment support.

**Design Narrative:** Transform a 100-year old unreinforced masonry building and adjacent parking lot into the Behavioral Health Resource Center. The building work will include critical seismic and structural upgrades, and fire and life safety features to support residential use. Major improvements to the building include exterior improvements, a new roof, new vertical circulation with an elevator, and two new fire rated stairwells. The plaza will serve as an exterior space with seating, landscaping and an accessory structure for bike and property storage.

**Project Features:** Seismic Upgrades: A significant portion of the construction work required on the BHRC is attributed to seismically upgrading the building structure, from the footings to the roof deck. The City of Portland's Title 24.85 requires the building to be brought into compliance with structural design standards for new buildings, due to the change in use of the building from office space to residential use. The brick masonry exterior will be reinforced with spray-applied cement and several large concrete shear walls. In the basement, these walls will be supported on new footings. At each floor level and at the roof, new plywood decking will tie the floors and walls together. The result will be a building designed to current structural safety standards.

**Exterior Improvements:** The exterior of the building will be rehabilitated with a new roof and windows, brick masonry repair and painting, and new storefront windows and canopy along Park Avenue. Design of the new outdoor plaza required approval by the Portland Design Review Commission. The Commission heavily influenced the final design of the street-facing plaza elements, including landscaping, an artistic fence, and the location of the bicycle storage accessory building. The final design balances the need for participant privacy with the desire to enhance the sidewalk and neighborhood design experience.

**Trauma Informed Design:** Internally, final design decisions are reflected throughout the building, with continued focus on trauma-informed design principles. The building design aligns with program needs, such as an open and visible day center space on the first level, with direct access to the private outdoor plaza. The second level provides classroom and meeting spaces, a warming kitchen, and showers and hygiene facilities for program participants. The third level includes dormitory-style sleeping rooms with a common-use kitchen and gathering space. On the fourth level, transitional housing with a shared kitchen can be found. Administrative spaces are located on the fifth level, with a conference room, shared workstation spaces and staff support areas..

**Mechanical, Plumbing and Electrical Systems:** Completely new mechanical, plumbing, electrical and data systems have been designed to meet Multnomah County standards and have been reviewed with the County's engineering trades. The heating and ventilation system for the building was uniquely considered – the building will be provided with 100-percent fresh air (most buildings provide some amount of recirculated air) and an energy-efficient heat recovery system. Not only will this

system provide the building occupants with fresher air, it contributes to the overall building's energy efficiency. The project is on track to achieve LEED Gold Certification.

**Cost efficiency:** The goal is to realize the best value and operational efficiency for the citizens of Multnomah County.

**Durability:** Design decisions were made with the goal of a minimum 80 years life expectancy for the building. This means that choices about the kinds of exterior materials, hardware, mechanical systems, roofing and other important elements were made in the context of maximizing longevity. Finishes and materials were selected for durability and ease of maintenance while avoiding an institutional feel.

**Functionality:** The functional project goal is to provide integrated care along a continuum of behavioral health services for persons experiencing homelessness. The project seeks to create a safe, dignified, wellness-supportive environment for guests and residents.

**Sustainability:** The project seeks to minimize environmental impact within an urban environment and has specifically set sustainability goals including LEED Gold Certification and American Institute of Architects Architecture 2030 Challenge.

**Community Integration:** The project provides privacy and dignity to guests and residents while unobtrusively integrating into the neighborhood. This is particularly visible in the design of the outdoor Plaza and it's boundary with the public sidewalk – landscaping, an artistic fence, and careful placement of seating areas inside, all contribute to a balance of public/private experiences.