

Year-Round Shelter Project
Spring 2024 Community Feedback Report
Spring 2022 Focus Group Feedback & Online Survey Results

Background

In mid-June 2022, the City of Hillsboro planned three focus group sessions to allow community members an opportunity to learn more and provide feedback about the planned future year-round shelter site in Hillsboro. These groups were led by a third-party facilitator and conducted in partnership with Washington County Supportive Housing Services and Community Engagement staff.

The first focus group was held at Open Door HousingWorks Day Center, just a mile from the planned shelter site. This group was dedicated to local providers of homeless services and persons with lived experience of homelessness/houselessness. Dairy Creek park users, businesses, and residents who live or work near the future site were invited to the other two focus group opportunities. The first was held in-person at Community Action's main office, less than half-mile from the site, and the final focus group was held virtually.

Each focus group event consisted of a short information presentation about plans for the future site, followed by a question-and-answer period. Participants were then broken into small groups, each with a dedicated facilitator and note taker. Finally, small groups reconvened to share out to the larger audience key points of their discussion.

In addition to these focus groups, a survey was launched on the City of Hillsboro's Engage Page for the Year-Round Shelter Project. This survey mirrored questions posed in focus groups.

Results on community feedback in this report are a combination of poll questions conducted during the groups, note taking from small group breakouts and online survey responses.

Results

Overall attendance for each group was as follows, not including city or county staff:

- Focus group #1 at Open Door HousingWorks: 20 participants
- Focus group #2 at Community Action: 15 participants
- Focus group #3 held virtually via Zoom: 8 participants

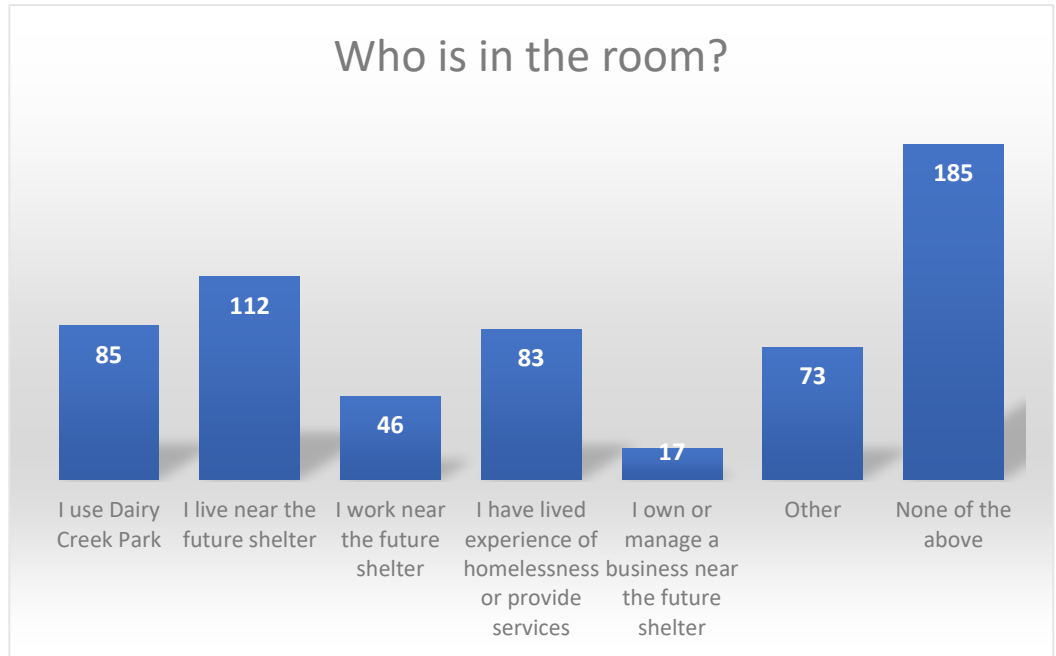
Total unduplicated number of participants in all focus groups: 42

Total number of Engage Page survey respondents: 455

Poll Question #1:

Who is in the room?

This poll gathered broad information on what stakeholder groups were participating in the focus groups and online survey. Responses in the “Other” were persons who shop in the area or are residents in other areas of Hillsboro.



Poll Question #2:

What excites you about participating in today's group?

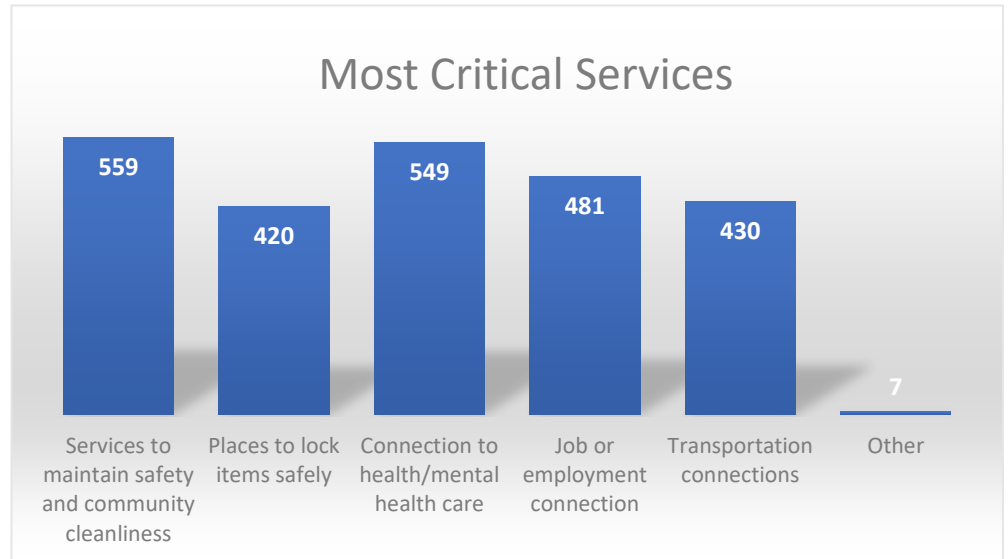
This poll gathered broad information on the primary reasons participants attend the focus groups and was not applicable to online survey respondents.



Poll Question #3:

What services are most critical to include with this shelter?

This poll describes which services participants thought most critical to include with the future shelter site.



Breakout Discussions

Breakout groups explored four broad question areas with a facilitator and notetaker. These notes were analyzed for overarching themes that emerged among break out groups during the three focus group events. In addition, online survey respondents had the opportunity to respond to the following question areas.

Main themes:

The asterisk symbols (*) indicate the number of focus groups where this suggestion was made. If a suggestion was made at all three focus groups, it will have three asterisks (***). If a suggestion was also made in the online survey results, it will have an asterisk noted in red (*).

Question 1: Physical Design

The discussion around physical design asked participants to discuss what is important to them visually about the site, including site layout and physical amenities on the site.

How will this feedback be used/limitations: Feedback on physical design will go to project architect for consideration in final site design. Cost is a limitation. Final design will seek to incorporate feedback while staying within project budget.

Descriptive words most often used by participants to guide space design: healing, home, welcoming, durable, clean, attractive.

Safety:

- Consideration should be given to fencing- should not feel/look institutional or boxed in, while also having well placed fencing for safety/security. Avoid chain link fencing. Consider natural fencing, such as native plants/shrubs/trees *****
- Open design to limit hidden places, with some intentional design to privacy in personal areas, such as around beds (example cubicles). Trauma-informed design with open sight lines. *****
- Space to be inviting/welcoming and not threatening, not institutional looking. *****
- Good lighting – indoors and outdoors, including adequate lighting to street/sidewalk*****
- Good ventilation and good air filtration***
- Considerations for traffic safety at WinCo turn-in***
- Programs to help surrounding home and business owners (example: lighting) *
- Area for biohazard/needle safe disposal*

Amenities:

- Adequate restrooms and basic amenities (showers and laundry), trash that is screened from street*****
- Areas for pets, indoor and outdoor. Partner with organization to offer vaccinations/pet care and services.*****
- Colorful “welcoming” spaces for community art*****
- Ample meeting spaces for service connection, including onsite spaces for health and addiction services and flexible meeting space for group events*****
- Garden spaces/raised beds/flowers/natural landscaping *****
- Lockers or other areas to safely store belongings ***
- Multiple outdoor gathering areas and outdoor smoking area**

- Space where participants can separate themselves if needing quiet space
**
- Bike parking/Adequate vehicle parking**
- ADA accessibility**
- Space where participants can use a computer to find employment, fill out applications, and have job seeking resources*
- Considerations for couples to remain together*

Other Considerations:

- Using trauma-informed colors/design****
- Use solar power and other renewable energy. Credits from PGE.*
- Find ways to utilize the parking space. Some participants may have a car so they can sleep in their car but use the facility during the day for showers and laundry.*

Question 2: Service Provider

The discussion around service provider or site operator asked participants to discuss what is important to them in the selection of a service provider to operate the site, including any key characteristics or experience the site operator will bring to management of the site. The site operator would be the non-profit contracted by Washington County to operate the shelter once open.

Descriptive words most often used by participants to describe ideal operator:

Culturally competent, trauma-informed, empathetic, competent, accessible, accountable/transparent, effective, and experienced.

How will this feedback be used/limitations: Feedback on the site operator will be shared with Washington County for consideration in selection of the final site operator. One key limitation is that the site operator must be on the list of providers that were pre-qualified through Washington County’s Request for Programmatic Qualifications (RFPQ) process.

Characteristics and Experience of Operator Experience

- Qualified professionals able to resolve conflict/high-stress situations, maintain safety, and are trauma informed ****
- Experience using equity principles and non-discrimination****

- Staff are culturally competent and diverse, including competency in working with persons who identify as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ and have lived experience of homelessness****
- A good track record and have enough experience with past shelter operations of similar size including track record of moving persons into housing successfully.**
- Staff have commitment to work with neighborhood to address issues, communicate consistently, and involve the community/volunteers in the work/create spaces for collaboration (community picnics/garden or other activities that bring the community together) ***
- Low staff turnover, consistency, and living wage for staff**
- Financial transparency**
- Staff should be able to navigate shelters and systems/resources across the tri-county region. **
- Experience keeping sites safe and clean**
- An employee on-site with pet training skills would be helpful*
- Staff should have passion and be part of the larger community/familiar with systems in Washington County*
- Facilities management experience *
- Willingness and experience engaging and problem solving with neighbors.*
- Data-centered, experience sharing metrics with community*

Staffing Model

- Onsite wrap around services, especially mental/behavioral health/medical are offered. If these are not offered by operator, have other agencies share space and be available onsite (co-location).****
- Staff with lived experience of homelessness/houselessness are present, peer mentors***
- Individual caseworkers available for each person's housing support***
- Offer job placement services and training for job preparedness for all ability levels**
- Security is part of staffing plan for internal and external safety**
- Offer help with legal and criminal system. *

Staff Interaction/Program Components:

- Includes chores for participants or other participation options **

- Site operator should build trust with participants. Be caring and compassionate**
- Staff are open communicators with participants and include participants in leadership or advisory roles**
- Understand that not all shelter models work well for everyone*
- Minimize paperwork*
- Find a balance between empathy and safety*

Question 3: Good Neighbor Agreement

The discussion around the Good Neighbor Agreement asked participants to discuss what is important operationally for being a good neighbor. Participants considered what it would look like practically for all stakeholders involved to be a good neighbor.

How will this feedback be used/limitations: Feedback on operational elements of being a good neighbor will be shared with Washington County and across relevant internal city departments for consideration in creation of a final good neighbor agreement with the neighborhood. Limitation to this feedback is that the shelter must be accessible to persons living outside. Focus groups were not set to determine who gets to access the shelter.

Communication:

- Staff should be able to communicate with neighbors to address their concerns in a timely manner. Neighbors should have an accessible contact ***
- Clear path for park users and neighboring businesses/residents to address safety concerns in a timely manner. Take ownership of issues that arise***
- Clear expectations/communication on behavior and code of conduct. Accountability of members of the shelter and consequences of losing services if they expectations not met**
- Ongoing updates/communication to neighborhood after shelter opens, including transparent goals/results**
- Provide an email and phone for shelter provider to neighborhood*

Safety:

- Solutions for nearby encampments-limits to camping in neighborhood/park near shelter and priority for persons camping nearby for shelter entrance***
- Cleanliness of surrounding area/park is maintained, neighborhood pride***
- Safe disposal of sharps- no sharps in neighborhood and solutions for visible drug use in neighborhood***

- Regular patrolling of neighborhood/park and consideration for what happens outside or around the perimeter of the shelter. Potential security onsite and at nearby businesses***
- Respect for neighbor's property- solutions/response to trespassing or adult/unsafe behaviors in the park or nearby properties. Respect both ways-between shelter and neighbors***
- Perimeter security/clear property boundaries**
- A crosswalk will be integral. The far side of the turn into Winco**
- On-site de-escalation team to minimize 911 calls.**
- Considerations for safety at Winco bottle return: recommendation that the shelter or the city runs and monitors the bottle drop instead of Winco or provide security to bottle drop at Winco/ move bottle drop to police station**
- Limits to when participants can come and go- limit traffic very early or very late*
- No curfews/time requirements*
- Do background checks (note limitation on this above)*
- Add fence around playground in nearby Dairy Creek park to assist families in safe play (similar to Bagley Park)*

Community Involvement/Partnership:

- Offer volunteering opportunities like neighborhood cleanup or landscaping maintenance at the park for shelter residents and neighbors. Show care for neighborhood***
- Supportive Employment programming- offering employment to participants to better the neighborhood/community**
- Adequate health and hygiene services onsite, including opportunities for community to be involved (relationship development) **

Other Considerations:

- Ensure food and drink needs are met onsite to limit persons asking nearby businesses for support.**
- Set limitations for loitering or panhandling in nearby commercial parking lot**
- Ensure adequate on-site parking, no accumulation of non-working vehicles*
- Adequate onsite sanitation/garbage service. Maintain clean site.*
- Ensure onsite designated smoking area, screened from street*
- Quiet hours enforced/moderate noise level*

Question 4: Ongoing Community Engagement

The discussion around the community engagement asked participants to discuss what is important for community engagement before and after the site opens including any changes suggested to the ideas for community engagement already planned.

How will this feedback be used/limitations: Feedback ongoing community engagement will be shared with Washington County and internal across relevant city departments for consideration in creation of ongoing engagement plans.

Community Engagement

- City, county and operator should create a wish list on how community members can help, volunteer opportunities****
- Ongoing communication with neighborhood, clear and transparent updates, key project facts readily accessible to the public****
- Opportunities to ask program specific questions once operator is chosen, open house events.****
- Engagement before and after site opens, including events, newsletters, mailings, library newsletter ***
- Provide performance measures and info on how persons are getting into housing, update community on beds available and key project facts***
- Increase neighborhood buy-in by providing an opportunity for community and residents to work together to keep the site looking good.***
- Offer periodic neighborhood meetings, before and after opening**
- Don't just rely on good neighbor agreement, make actual contact with neighbors and businesses near site to cultivate relationship and learn experience after opening.**
- Ensure businesses are engaged and flyers are distributed to the neighborhood*
- Include information posted at Winco and other nearby businesses*
- Tap into small neighborhood groups*
- Offer tours of finished facility to neighbors*
- Share stories to humanize those experiencing homelessness, broader education on the topic*
- Regular engagement of persons who live outside to get feedback before and after opening.*
- Communicate on how external activities will relate to the shelter (camping or other programming) and long-term plan for site use.*

