



3 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The Bellevue community has sent in a wide range of questions and feedback regarding the Eastside Men's Shelter. Hundreds of written comments have been submitted to the, providing both support and opposition for locating a shelter in the Eastgate community. A complete written compilation of all written comments received from 8/2/2016 - 3/27/2017 is available on the project web site, as well as the submitted petition, "Residents Against Eastside Men's Shelter" signed by over 2,600 supporters.

The public outreach led by the City pursuant to the Joint Letter of Agreement has included contacts to surrounding businesses, stakeholder briefings, and public community meetings. Updated information is posted on the city website:

www.bellevuewa.gov/eastside-mens-shelter.htm

Public outreach and community dialogue during this process is, and will continue to be, critical. The research completed for the best practices report showed that there is no single formula for success for projects and facilities addressing homelessness. Instead, each community worked collaboratively toward a shared set of goals with available resources. Each case study mixed different techniques along with unique community values to design the project and associated programs. An on-going relationship with a defined group of surrounding stakeholders is the best practice of many of the projects visited in the case studies and is expected to be a feature of the programs at the Eastgate location if the project moves forward. This group of stakeholders plays a role in ensuring that program operations are addressing the initial goals of the project.

Major common themes emerged from the record of public feedback in the early months of outreach, and those themes were shared with the City Council at its meeting on November 28, 2016. Since that time the major themes have stayed consistent. They are summarized as follows:

Common themes from the comments opposing the shelter:

- a) Frustration with the public process and lack of transparency.
- b) Concern regarding crime and public safety for the area surrounding the shelter.
- c) Concern about it being a 'low-barrier' shelter.
- d) Concern about proximity to daycares, schools, residential homes, Bellevue College, etc.
- e) Concern about potential impact on local property values.
- f) Support for the homeless, but adamant that this is the wrong site.

Common themes from comments supporting the shelter:

- a) Recognition that homelessness is a reality on the Eastside and gratitude for the City to take a leadership role in addressing homelessness in Bellevue.
- b) Confidence in Congregations for the Homeless and Imagine Housing as local service providers.
- c) Support for the proposed location in Eastgate, emphasizing proximity to transit and coordination of social services.
- d) Personal volunteer experience or connection to the homeless men served and acknowledgement that this program/facility will save lives.

Community-Generated Mitigation Strategies

The quantity and quality of the public discourse regarding the Eastside Men’s Shelter and Supportive Housing Project has resulted in a wealth of feedback around the impacts that must be particularly addressed. Commenters in some cases have also provided ideas for mitigation strategies that should be pursued if the project is located at this site. The strategies and suggestions can be grouped into two categories. The first category are strategies that relate to system level program design and overall outcomes. These strategies can be applied no matter where the project is located. The second category of community-generated mitigation strategies applies specifically to the proposed site at the Eastgate Public Health Center property. Those strategies have already been a valuable tool for all the project partners as the work to determine the ultimate feasibility of this location takes place.

Program Design and Outcomes

A point of common ground between those that oppose and those that support the Eastside Men’s Shelter and Supportive Housing Project is recognition that there is a need to address the real problem of homelessness in Bellevue. The number of individuals experiencing homelessness on the Eastside continues to grow and there is support for providing facilities and services that help transition men out of homelessness.

Bellevue residents generally support Bellevue providing facilities and services that help men to exit homelessness but generally do not support facilities or services that enable individuals to remain homeless without some accountability. Further, those that support the shelter at this location and those that believe it should be located elsewhere generally agree that Bellevue should not follow in the footsteps of Seattle. In many regards, this relates more to unpermitted encampments and trespass issues as opposed to indoor shelter provision, but there is also a recognition that shelters and service centers can have a magnet effect. Again, residents have been clear that no matter where the facility is located, they prefer it to focus on providing services to men who are, or will be motivated to exit homelessness and regain stable housing.

Understand and mitigate the impacts of a low-barrier program

A dominant concern from residents has been about the low barrier operating model for the overnight shelter and day services center. In the FAQ: Shelter Operations, Congregations for the Homeless explains what low barrier means:

What is a low-barrier shelter?

A low-barrier shelter accepts people based on their ability to be behaviorally appropriate. The shelter does not screen out people for any other reason other than behavior that puts staff, clients, or the wider community at risk. This means that people can access the shelter and day center who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or have criminal records.

A low-barrier shelter is not a new idea for Bellevue. For the past 8 years, CFH has operated the existing winter shelter as a low-barrier facility in various city neighborhoods. Regardless of personal histories, they do not turn away needy individuals who otherwise would be exposed to the elements. CFH does cooperate with the Bellevue Police Department (BPD) in conducting warrant and sex offender checks, and BPD officers have established relationships through an established set of routine visits to the shelter. CFH also requires shelter clients to adhere to a clear set of behavioral expectations in and

around the shelter. CFH builds relationships and attempts to maintain an environment in the shelter and its day center that supports shelter clients' ability to focus on the underlying goal of transitioning them out of homelessness altogether.

In voicing strong concern about the low-barrier operating model, commenters raise questions about whether the Code of Conduct established for the shelter and day services center is adequate to protect the surrounding community from shelter clients, some of whom may have a prior criminal history, be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, mentally ill, or a registered sex offender.

For those opposed to siting the Eastside Men's Shelter in Eastgate, there is a strong association expressed by members of the community that an increase in the number of homeless men in the community would equate to increased criminal activity. The comments in the "Residents against Eastside Men's Shelter" petition are filled with safety concerns for women, children and students, citing that the shelter would bring into the neighborhood felons, mental illness, drug addicts, sex offenders and criminals. In addition, there is concern from the neighboring residents about a "spillover effect" into the surrounding area, including potential increases in loitering, pan handling, litter and garbage, crime and unpermitted camping in Eastgate's wooded areas.

Comments in support of the Eastside Men's Shelter have stressed that the Eastside Winter Shelter has already operated as a low-barrier shelter since its inception in Bellevue in 2008. Additionally, the overnight shelter capacity to serve up to 100 men a night would remain the same. Volunteers have spoken about their experience in the shelter, emphasizing that it was a safe environment.

It is expected that any community in proximity to a shelter operating with a low-barrier model would have concerns about public safety. This concern is shared by CFH, the city, and volunteers as well, and has led to the development of protocols that are used at the existing shelter. The operation of a shelter of this kind requires addressing the community concerns while ensuring that single men have a safe place out of the elements in times of crisis. Bellevue Police provided an overview of the current protocol and coordination with Congregations for the Homeless in the [FAQ - Public Safety](#) document, as well as, [Police Data Analysis](#) regarding crime statistics over the past 5 years comparing crime data for the previous location of the Eastside Winter Shelter with the Eastgate location and citywide trends. The reports are posted at:

www.bellevuewa.gov/eastside-mens-shelter.htm.

Ensure that Congregations for Homeless (CFH) and Imagine Housing are the right fit

Congregations for the Homeless and Imagine Housing are established, local Eastside service providers with a history of providing these services. This project would likely require both agencies to increase their organizational capacity and establish an excellent working relationship with each other to keep operations at the building running smoothly. Operating partnerships like this can be challenging. Residents want to make sure that both agencies are up to the task and are well supported to keep the project operating successfully long-term. In a number of places in this report, we note the importance of having clear operating expectations and protocols up front, as well as having a monitoring plan and adaptive approach to those operations. This would ensure that the fit of the service providers remains consistent with the project's stated objectives.

In addition, based on feedback we received through the stakeholder outreach process, we anticipate that CFH and Imagine Housing could be bolstered by a number of other local partnerships. Bellevue College has opened the door to explore partnerships with its workforce training program and ongoing

education classes. Local businesses have offered to support fundraising drives and explore possible employment opportunities for the men. King County Library raised the possibility of partnering with their mobile library and computer classes. And many residents have proffered support through commitments of personal volunteering at the overnight shelter.

Site Specific Mitigation strategies

The location at the Eastgate Public Health Center provides unique opportunities and challenges. Through public outreach and engagement, the community has provided the following insights:

	Supportive Comments	Concerns
Proximity to Eastgate Park and Ride	Provides ease of access for individuals without transportation to access the shelter day services center and housing.	Increases safety concerns for P&R commuters; loitering and car prowls. Also, Eastgate seems better connected to Downtown Seattle than Downtown Bellevue making it easier for people from Seattle to come to the shelter and day center
Proximity to Bellevue College	Partnership opportunities for employment services, retraining or continuing education for shelter and housing residents; also opportunities for student engagement, education and service	Safety concerns for students on campus; wooded areas; poor lighting and cell coverage; need for greater campus security
Surrounding businesses	Local facility to refer men for services; partnership opportunities for employment; will not hinder future TOD development	Concern about potential impact on future TOD development; parking management; loitering
Surrounding residential	Support for volunteer opportunities, meeting local need	Concerns about crime, safety, “spillover effect” and potential impact on property values
Coordination of social services	Partnerships between CFH, Imagine Housing, SKCPH would improve services and outcomes	Increased services may provide “magnet for homelessness” in Eastgate, increasing population beyond what is manageable

In addition to identifying concerns, public comment has also generated numerous mitigation strategies. These are summarized below, and many are reflected in the later section of the report, entitled *Surrounding Area Impacts and Mitigation Options*.

Eastgate Park and Ride

Commenters noted that the Eastgate Park and Ride is heavily used and it is anticipated to have an increase in ridership during the closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride for the construction of the Sound Transit Light Rail. There is also significant use of Microsoft and Amazon van pools at surrounding corporate lots, increasing overall commuter activity in the area.

There is community concern regarding existing parking management at the Park and Ride, which is not monitored and is believed to be in part used now for Bellevue College student day use. In addition, the

community notes existing concerns about public urination in the parking garage, poor lighting, the lack of Orca machines for regular users and a desire for more bike lockers.

Residents note that the proximity to the Eastgate Park and Ride provides an ease of access for homeless men from Seattle to come to Bellevue for services. There is concern from residents that the Eastgate location would provide a “magnet for the homeless” and incentivize homeless men from outside the Eastside to come to Bellevue for services.

Community concerns in response to the proposed Eastside Men’s Shelter and Supportive Housing Project identified improved lighting and security as a top priority for early morning and late night commuters. Additionally, added surveillance was recommended to deter car prowls. If the project moves forward, these concerns would be a point of discussion with King County. The city’s goal would be to work to have the County address existing safety and accessibility concerns, as well as to ensure that the facility can be maintained and operated to serve the future TOD vision as part of the development of the shelter and housing project.

Community-generated mitigation strategies

- ❖ Better Parking Management
- ❖ Improve Lighting
- ❖ Landscaping improvements on pathway between Park & Ride and Bellevue College
- ❖ Surveillance cameras for surface lots
- ❖ Increase Bike Lockers
- ❖ Add Emergency Call Boxes
- ❖ Add Orca Card Machines
- ❖ Security Coordination to Address Loitering, Car Prowls
- ❖ Need for Address Construction Access, Parking Impacts

Bellevue College

Bellevue College has a student body of over 30,000 students, including a Running Start program for younger students. Bellevue College has transitioned into a 4-year college and will become a residential community with the addition of two new dormitories (tentatively scheduled to open in Fall 2018). Bellevue College has a commitment to the safety and education of their students. Their commitment to social justice has also opened the door for potential partnerships with the Eastside Men’s Shelter in regard to workforce training, ongoing education and future student engagement to volunteer/intern with shelter operations.

Community concerns in response to the project identified campus safety as a top priority. This includes recommendations to increase the security presence on campus, improve lighting and cell coverage and explore greater partnership opportunities with Bellevue Police. Additionally, Bellevue College’s Running Start program was specifically highlighted as a program that would need to be incorporated into any future planning for notification and mitigation efforts if the shelter and housing project proceeds at the Eastgate location.

Community-generated mitigation strategies

- ❖ Improve Cell Phone Coverage
- ❖ Increase Campus Security
- ❖ Improve campus crime reporting, safety and security protocols
- ❖ Explore potential for Campus Escort Service (student patrol, walking service)

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- ❖ Partnership with Ongoing Education, Employment services
 - ❖ Partnership with BC library staff, LGBTQ student group
 - ❖ Notification for Running Start parents
 - ❖ Explore Partnership with Bellevue College for BPD Office
 - ❖ Coordinate reporting and policing w/ Bellevue College personnel
 - ❖ Add safety lighting on pathways that users can illuminate manually or with motion detectors

Bellevue Police and Bellevue College are already in communications, both about changes on the campus that are driven by adding dormitories, and about potential partnerships associated with the potential shelter in Eastgate. These discussions will continue and opportunities to pursue the above mitigation strategies will be identified in the next steps of the shelter project.

Surrounding Businesses

The feedback from surrounding businesses in Eastgate has primarily been positive or indifferent. The positive feedback has included offers for supporting Congregation for the Homeless fundraisers, potential employment opportunities and support for a place that could offer services to the homeless men around their businesses. Nearby businesses have posed questions about how the shelter and housing programs will work, what steps are being taken to provide security in and around the proposed site, and how this fits with the proposed zoning changes coming with the Eastgate Land Use Code Amendments (LUCA).

Additionally, some surrounding businesses have expressed concerns about potential long term secondary impacts, specifically raising concerns about the possibility of a safe injection site being co-located in the area. Although there are no current plans to locate a safe injection site in Bellevue, they have inquired whether there is a way to prevent any future possibility of a safe injection site being co-located in the proximity of the Eastside Men's Shelter. The county has confirmed that neither the Eastgate site nor any other location in Bellevue is being considered as a safe injection site.

Former members of the Eastgate Community Advisory Committee have questioned how the Eastside Men's Shelter and Supportive Housing fits with the vision of the "Gateway in Bellevue" transit-oriented development and how it might impact future redevelopment in this area.

Community-generated mitigation strategies

- ❖ Establish primary contact with Congregations for the Homeless for assistance and referrals to send homeless men for services
- ❖ Address access points for men to avoid cut-through activity through adjacent parcels
- ❖ Coordination of local security already present on neighboring properties
- ❖ Parking Management
- ❖ Improve directional signage for Seattle King County Public Health and Shelter
- ❖ Proactively address concerns regarding loitering, pan-handling
- ❖ Explore land use code safeguards to prohibit any future safe-injection site near the shelter location.

Additional discussion of these mitigation strategies, as well as compatibility with the TOD vision, is addressed in Chapter 4 of this report.

Surrounding Residential

The Eastgate neighborhood is full of residents with differing views on the Eastside Men’s Shelter being located in Eastgate. Many residents have voiced their strong opposition to the shelter being located in Eastgate, while others have spoken publicly in support of the shelter location and have offered to provide their financial and volunteer support. Opponents to this location believe it to be the wrong size, wrong approach and wrong place for such a facility. Residents living in the nearby multi-family townhomes of Sunset Ridge, Harmony, and Seasons at Madrona have felt overlooked and believe the criteria used to identify the proposed location did not take their proximity to the site into account.

To date, residents who are opposed to the Eastside Men’s Shelter at the Eastgate location remain adamant that there is no mitigation that would adequately address their concerns. They continue to identify:

- a) The need to re-evaluate alternative sites
- b) The need for more research in national best practices
- c) A preference for a site closer to downtown or BelRed – providing better access to transit from the Eastside, hospital/medical services, and access to nearby employment opportunities.
- d) A re-examination of the low-barrier standard for shelter operations.
- e) Concern that the combined capacity of the overnight shelter, day center and housing units are too large for Eastgate.

Community-generated mitigation strategies

- ❖ Creation of Advisory Committee that would re-open a citywide analysis of potential sites for a homeless shelter.
- ❖ If sited in Eastgate, create a stakeholder group comprised of representation from surrounding businesses, neighborhood residents, Bellevue College, and Seattle-King County Public Health, to work on a plan for mitigation for secondary impacts and provide direct community input on facility design and ongoing operations.
- ❖ Identify a 24-hour phone number and point of contact at the overnight shelter for the community to report ongoing concerns
- ❖ Increase Bellevue Police community policing presence in the Eastgate community surrounding shelter.
- ❖ Ensure timely Police response to resident requests, especially regarding unpermitted encampment enforcement.
- ❖ Utilize BPD Bike Patrol for trails, patrol of surrounding wooded areas.
- ❖ Notification protocol for the community regarding identified sex offenders.

If the shelter project proceeds in this location, the public safety and operating protocol suggestions submitted would be considered in the next phases of the project. Bellevue Police representatives have been a key part of the project team and would remain closely involved in next steps. The next step in consideration for the location will also consider the appropriate role for an additional visible presence for BPD in the vicinity.

Eastgate Public Health Center

The co-location with Seattle-King County Public Health provides the ability to provide a full range of health care services for shelter residents, day center users and the housing tenants. These services include medical and dental care and case management. In conversations with Eastgate Clinic Public Health staff, they acknowledge that while they currently serve individuals who are homeless, the percentage of their overall client base experiencing homelessness will increase if the proposed Eastside

Men's Shelter and Supportive Housing Project is constructed on the same property. Alterations to their existing programs may be necessary to accommodate this change.

The discussion regarding the coordination of social services is underway. Staff at Seattle - King County Public Health identified concerns regarding parking management, safety measures, and the need for a proactive plan to address loitering.

Community-generated mitigation strategies

- ❖ Coordination of Parking Management
- ❖ Explore additional security protocols at Seattle King County Public Health
- ❖ Coordination of Social Services

Conclusion

This community feedback is a record of the public input to date from 08-01-16 to 03-27-17. The public outreach during this time has generated hundreds of emails, questions and comments from the community. This outreach has mobilized residents who have many questions and strong concerns about how the Eastside Men's Shelter will impact the quality of life and public safety in the Eastgate community. Congregations for the Homeless and Imagine Housing are experienced service providers who have a history of working with the surrounding community to ensure the success of their programs. If the Eastgate location is pursued for the Eastside Men's Shelter, additional outreach would be part of any design process to continue to inform potential mitigation strategies and establish a productive and long-term relationship with the surrounding community.

For the complete record of public comment, visit www.bellevuewa.gov/eastside-mens-shelter.htm:

- ❖ Compilation of Public Comment 080116 - 032717
- ❖ Residents Against Eastside Men's Shelter - Petition

Stakeholder Engagement & Public Meetings

Stakeholder Briefings

7/29 – 8/15	Door to Door Outreach to Businesses/Faith Communities
8/22	Sunset Community Association Board
8/31	Harmony Condominium Residents
9/7	Eastgate Neighbors
9/9	Urban Renaissance
9/20	King Co. Metro Leadership
9/22	Madrona Condo Board
9/22	Sunset Ridge Condo Board
9/26	Bellevue College Leadership
9/28	Intellectual Ventures
10/5	Eastgate Public Health Staff
10/20	Eastside Christian Parents
10/20	Bellevue College Student Meeting
1/25	Eastgate Resident Committee Rep. Meetings
1/28	Honda Dealership Meeting

Public Meetings

8/1	Council Study Session
9/14	Planning Commission Briefing
9/29	Community Meeting Champion Centre
10/4	Human Services Commission Briefing
10/8	Youth Link Board Retreat
10/27	Community Meeting Champion Center
11/28	Council Study Session

Media and Postings

8/2	News Release: City and County propose men's shelter in Bellevue
9/1	Neighborhood News (1900 subscribers)
9/15	Next Door Post: Community Meetings 9/29 and 10/27 (Citywide)
9/21	News Release: Community Meeting for Men's Shelter Site 9/29
9/22	Bellevue Reporter: Community Meeting for Men's Shelter
10/1	Neighborhood News (1900 subscribers)
10/15	It's Your City Article - (mailed to all City residents)
10/21	Next Door Post: Men's Shelter Meeting 10/27 (Citywide)
10/26	King 5 News: Bellevue plans for First Permanent Shelter
10/30	King 5 News: Bellevue's First permanent shelter could open by 2019
11/1	Seattle Times: Thank You Bellevue for Stepping up for Homeless
11/2	Bellevue Reporter: Eastgate Residents Draw Issues with Proposed Mens Shelter
11/14	Seattle Times: Battle Brews in Bellevue over Sheltering the Homeless
11/21	Kiro TV: Neighbors Fight Proposed Homeless Shelter
11/23	Next Door Post: 11/28 Council Briefing (Citywide)
11/30	Bellevue Reporter: Police Release Data Regarding Eastgate Homeless Shelter
12/11	Seattle Times: Eastside Communities Stepping up Efforts to Help the Homeless
2/15	It's Your City Article - Dialogue continues on men's shelter location