



September 12, 2022

Dear Terese and HAND members,

Thank you for sending your letter dated September 8, 2022, regarding the transition of the non-congregate shelter at the Quality Inn (QI). As always, I appreciate your advocacy on behalf of those experiencing homelessness.

However, it appears that you have a misunderstanding about the nature and purpose of the non-congregate shelters as well as the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless' efforts to assist those who have been staying at the QI shelter and other protective action non-congregate shelters.

1. Beginning in early 2020, in response to the growing COVID pandemic, the Coalition took the lead in master leasing motels to provide non-congregate shelter (NCS) for individuals experiencing homelessness who tested positive for COVID, and providing on-site health care to address their needs (also referred to as activated respite). With funding from the City of Denver and FEMA, we expanded from one motel to four and the City directly master-leased 2 additional hotels to provide "protective action" non-congregate shelter for people experiencing homelessness who were 60 years or older or had medical conditions that increased their risk of bad outcomes from COVID. These leases were undertaken as temporary measures to provide NCS while new congregate shelters were being reconfigured and brought online to provide safer, 24-hour, 7-days a week shelter for both men and women.
2. As congregate shelter capacity increased with the renovation and leasing of new shelter facilities by the City and shelter partners, three of the motels were closed in late 2021 and early 2022, with the expectation that the remaining motels would be closed in June of 2022. The QI was extended to September 2022.
3. As part of the process of the closing of the NCS operations at these other motels, CCH and its partners worked with guests to find alternative housing in the community, move to remaining protective action motels, or to help them move into the newly expanded and renovated congregate shelters. More than 445 people were moved into long term housing as part of this process, and the remaining guests moved into the remaining NCS locations.
4. The Quality Inn is the next motel scheduled to be phased out as the risks of COVID in the congregate shelters have diminished, and funding from FEMA was expected to be phased

out by now. CCH is not in a position to be able to extend the lease as we have committed to returning the property to the owner by the end of the month and the site must undergo scheduled maintenance and cleaning.

5. Extending the use of the QI for another few months would create the same problems of finding alternative housing for guests once the extension expired.
6. CCH and its partners have worked with the guests at the QI shelter to find alternative housing and shelter as part of the closing process. We have been actively engaging with all guests to identify housing or shelter options and we will continue to work with clients after the motel has closed to help find appropriate longer-term housing options for them.
7. With the reopening of the renovated congregate shelters at the Denver Rescue Mission and Catholic Charities, these congregate shelters are one of the alternatives to the non-congregate shelters that is being offered to those who cannot be moved immediately into longer term housing. We have worked to reserve these shelter spaces that come with case management and meal services so that no guest is discharged to the streets.
8. You characterize people leaving the QI shelter as being “kicked to the shelters.” That characterization is just not accurate especially in light of the fact that the improved Denver Shelter System is satisfactorily being used by more than 2,000 people in Denver as their temporary place of refuge as they seek longer term housing options. While we would all love to see the end of the need for emergency shelters, until we have sufficient long term housing available for everyone who needs it, these shelters play a critical role in keeping people experiencing homelessness alive. The improvements made to the shelter system in Denver over the past two years include moving from overnight shelter to 24-hour seven day per week shelters with onsite housing counselling, health care and supportive services. I doubt that those sleeping in these shelters tonight feel that they have been “kicked” there.
9. Denver Rescue Mission and Catholic Charities will have case management on site in the congregate shelters to continue to work with residents on short- and long-term housing options. Discharge from the non-congregate shelter to congregate shelter does not mean that the work to identify housing resources for these individuals will discontinue.
10. To date, of the 138 guests staying at the Quality Inn shelter, the following alternatives have been identified (this is a snapshot as of Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, and we fully expect these numbers to change over the next week):

<b>Discharge Location</b>	<b>Number</b>
Bridge Housing	15
Long-term Housing	23
Protective Action transfer	15

Paying for Motel	2
Reserved Shelter Bed*	52
Staying in vehicle	3
Staying with friends/family	14
Transitional Housing	2
Unknown (Have denied shelter or case management support)	12
TOTAL	138

- Many of the individuals for whom shelter beds have been reserved currently have housing vouchers and are just awaiting the appropriate housing resource to be matched with that voucher. It is likely that these individuals will be housed within days or a few weeks.

As the chart indicates, no one is being “kicked to the streets.” We hope that by the end of the week, we will have more people identified as housed. Further, our staff on-site at QI are working with the guests to prioritize those with the highest medical needs for the remaining available protective action rooms.

10. Over the past two years, as CCH has been doing this temporary, COVID related non-congregate sheltering at motels, we have continued and expanded our street outreach to all the people experiencing homelessness who remain unsheltered. We remain committed to working with these individuals as well to find appropriate shelter and housing. Our outreach team has been successful in housing more than 300 households over the past year.
11. We recognize that some people may prefer individual motel rooms to beds in congregate shelter. However, the use of motels as non-congregate shelter is a very expensive, resource-intensive approach. Indeed, the cost of master leasing the Quality Inn since April 2020 has been more than \$9 million. That equates to more than \$59,000 per bed. The cost of providing food, security, case management, medical and other supports significantly adds to this cost. Clearly, this is not a sustainable shelter option post COVID especially as FEMA funds wind down. We believe available funds should be used create more long-term housing options so that less emergency shelter is required.
12. However, to preserve the ability to extend some non-congregate shelter options, the Coalition has purchased one of the remaining motel sites, and plans to continue operating this as non-congregate shelter for both activated respite and protective action purposes until we can redevelop it into more sustainable and appropriate supportive housing.

13. The Coalition is also opening 98 supportive housing apartments, the Legacy Lofts, in early October as well as a 75-bed recuperative care center that will expand short-term and longer-term housing options to those experiencing homelessness.
14. We are also in the process of purchasing another 215 room hotel that will provide a combination of short-term and longer-term supportive housing units for those currently unsheltered.
15. We recognize the difficulty of the situation and the anxiety that the planned closing of this shelter creates for some guests. Unfortunately, given the temporary nature of this approach, the motel was bound to close, and that anxiety will occur whenever a facility closes. That is why we have worked and will continue to work to find alternatives for those staying at the motel.
16. Despite the closing of this latest motel shelter, the availability of these motels during the height of the COVID pandemic prevented COVID spread among people experiencing homelessness and kept people safe and out of the hospital due to COVID exposure. With vaccines and treatments being made available, emergency resources for COVID response are winding down, and less expensive shelter options are being used while we and our partners work to find long term housing for all who need it.
17. The Coalition's goal continues to be to create enough long-term housing options for those experiencing homelessness so that no one needs to call the street or shelters their home. Unfortunately, it will take a significant time and resources to create enough housing for all who need it. Until that occurs, we will need to rely upon congregate shelters to provide a safe place for people as an alternative to living on the streets.

Hopefully, this information demonstrates that we take our work seriously, and are doing everything we can to provide a safe place for everyone, and ultimately a place for everyone to call their home.

Thanks again for your advocacy, and we hope we can work collaboratively together to safely transition the guests out of the Quality Inn and ultimately, to end homelessness in Denver and across the State of Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Parvensky', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Parvensky  
303.293.2217