

September 14th, 2022

Dear John Parvensky and Colorado Coalition for the Homeless at large,

It is disheartening to know that the residents of Quality Inn are seen just as numbers and not as human beings who need breathing machines, depend on their partner to get around, care for their dog more than anything, and otherwise have real human needs and feelings. The bottom line here is we need to take action to secure safe housing for these specific residents - not just treat them as inevitable casualties in this profit-based house-hoarding society.

It appears you did not hear Quality Inn residents at city hall, at the meetings, in interviews, or quoted in our letter saying again and again that shelters are not a viable or safe place for them to be. As one resident said "if I go to a shelter, in two months, I'll be dead."

Changes to the shelter since COVID have still not made them COVID-safe - they are still mass congregate settings with hundreds of people breathing the same air, beds are not 6 feet apart, and no effort to make congregate shelters safe from disease will ever work. Quality Inn residents have spoken loud and clear on the fights, theft, and other reasons they will not go to shelters. Just because 2,000 people are stuck in the shelter system does not mean they are "satisfactorily being used" - it means people have to sleep and eat somewhere and shelters may be the only place to be (especially when being in public space is more and more criminalized). Being forced to go somewhere is quite accurately being "kicked" there.

Just calling a hotel a "non-congregate shelter" does not make it a shelter. The difference between a private room with a door that locks and a warehouse with no walls between you and no door cannot be disregarded.

Continuing to repeat shelters as a viable option for Quality Inn residents is to completely ignore these residents' words. These are elderly and sick who cannot do the chaos of the shelters. These are couples who will not be separated.

Thank you for sharing more updates on the places Quality Inn residents have been given to move. It is helpful to have more updated numbers.

81 out of 138 residents going to shelters, staying in their vehicle, staying with family/friends, or unknown is not a good outcome. That is over half of residents being kicked out to worse situations. We are very glad for the 17 continuing to stay in hotels and the 40 getting some sort of housing, but this does not change the fact that 81 vulnerable people have no safe living situation lined up.

It is also important to note that in spite of the fact that your chart showing where residents are going does not list "streets" that is in fact where a number of residents will be going. Residents have already been

asking us for tents and sleeping bags as they believe they will be on the streets by the end of this week. As much as this can try to be ignored, this is reality.

It is noted in your letter that a number of people with reserved shelter beds have housing vouchers and should be getting housing within a matter of days. We very much hope that this is the case and are actively working with some of these residents to try and find available housing units they can rent with their voucher. Case managers at Quality Inn, and at any of the shelters, have so many clients they cannot provide the support residents need to find housing. A number of them have thanked HAND members for attempting to offer additional case management avenues due to this issue. Many of these people have had their voucher for months and have not been able to find a place. Regardless of whether they are able to find a place in the next few days or if it takes another couple months, these residents need more time to secure housing.

Your letter stated that extending the time at Quality until the end of the year would just create the same problem of not having housing at the end of the time. This is only true if CCH and/or the City do not choose to use that time to create housing. Over the past 2 ½ years, housing could have been created specifically for residents of protective action hotels which were known to have limited time. Funding could have been secured with the City and/or other sources to buy Quality Inn or other hotels/properties so that vulnerable houseless people qualifying for protective action have somewhere to move at the end of the federal protective action funding.

In the next 3 ½ months, housing could be secured for the remaining 98 residents of Quality Inn who do not have housing lined up. As stated, some of these people have housing vouchers and this time should enable them to find housing with that voucher. That would leave less than 98 people needing housing. Without knowing the exact number of residents with vouchers right now, we can guess it might be somewhere around 70-80 people that housing would need to be created or found for.

The new CCH housing you mention would be great options for these residents. Legacy Lofts could potentially house all Quality residents who don't have vouchers or housing lined up. Furthermore, the two hotels mentioned that CCH is buying would be great housing options for these Quality Inn residents. It is important to know which existing hotel CCH will be buying as this will affect the total housing need for protective action residents which will be coming up at the end of the year with the closing, or not closing, or La Quinta and Aloft. If this housing is not enough given others on wait lists for housing, the new Denver Health building would be a good option. And if this does not meet the housing need for these residents the City can master lease apartments for all protective action residents needing housing.

We are glad to hear of hotels being purchased to convert into housing! This is a great way to create decent housing quickly. It is also clear that creating permanent housing is not only better for residents but also more cost effective. Transitioning hotels from being called and functioning as "non-congregate shelters" to being real housing is a vital way to create the needed housing.

This transition from protective action hotels into hotels as housing however can not be done by making the very residents of the hotel who need the housing houseless again. Quality Inn residents need to have housing secured for them. This should be done before they are kicked to the streets/shelters, but if CCH is really going to kick these residents out before housing is secure for them, these residents need a guarantee from CCH that they will have priority housing placement in the new CCH properties mentioned above opening in the next few months.

Quality Inn residents, as well as residents of La Quinta and Aloft, cannot be sent back to the streets and shelters. They are elderly, sick, disabled and must be in safe housing. We as a community in Denver must come together to secure housing for the most vulnerable among us.

In order to “work collaboratively together to safely transition guests of Quality Inn,” we need to know what is going on. While the updates are helpful information for people to know, this is all in place of actual collaboration that could have happened as soon as it was known that the hotel would close. Plans for the closure, where residents are supposed to go, housing options, future plans for the hotel building, have been kept secret leaving us struggling to work with residents or with the City or CCH on housing or moving plans. We hear rumors of what is going on with the building being bought by the City or CCH for other residents to move in while kicking out sick, disabled people, but we need answers to questions on what is going on to be able to collaborate in working for housing for all. We are not allowed to work with residents on site and must set up an outdoor office across from the building to help people with the housing search or with logistics for their moving support. None of this is conducive to collaboration in supporting Quality Inn residents. In the future we hope that open communication and transparency of key information affecting everyone’s situation can take place.

This is a critical time to come together as a people and treat people as human - deserving safe housing. As residents of Quality Inn lose their safe place to live and are forced to live in dangerous situations on Friday and onward into the winter...

Will we have to watch these people die?

... Will that have to be what awakens our city to open the doors to housing for these most vulnerable?

Sincerely,

Housekeys Action Network Denver on behalf of Quality Inn Residents