

City Hotel Acquisition Budget Proposal

What:

City acquisition of two additional hotels for housing and shifting the hotels planned as “navigation centers” into housing.

Why:

The City budget currently has 23mil dedicated to hotel acquisition for “navigation centers.” It appears that these navigation centers will turn hotel rooms into group rooms with 4 beds and will be treated as temporary places to navigate to housing, not as housing to live in. While some people do prefer to stay with a community, people should not be forced to live with a group of 4 random people. And while the benefits of moving in without going through ID and applications processes for housing are needed, navigating from there to housing that does not exist is ineffective, and living as a shelter guest without the rights of housing leaves people in continual instability. Instead the 23mil going for these navigation centers should be brought up to 40mil and these funding used to buy four more hotels, in addition to the other two planned for 20mil, to be turned into housing.

Where:

The City of Denver will buy hotels that are open on the market anywhere within Denver. Locations should be within a few blocks from a bus stop, near grocery stores, near medical facilities, and near other services. No neighborhood of Denver can exempt themselves.

How:

HOST will purchase these hotels and convert them into housing with small kitchenettes and other needed amenities.

Who:

The process of accessing this housing will allow houseless people to walk up and apply directly, as well as being referred by outreach workers, case managers, or going through service agencies. Access will not be limited to those going through certain service agencies.

Funding:

\$17mil should be moved from the Police Department and Shelters to this housing to bring the full budget for this housing to \$40mil. (Plus the \$20mil already designated for hotels to be converted to housing).

Costs: This \$40mil will cover the cost of purchasing two hotels

***Note:** This housing should include a program for immediate move in prior to processing paperwork and documents normally required for housing. When someone moves in prior to processing the leasing paperwork, during this time they will be treated as a guest such as a guest of a hotel. Once they are able to process leasing paperwork, they will then be treated as a tenant with tenants rights.

We (Housekeys Action Network Denver) recently conducted a Housing Survey with over 800 houseless people about housing. This survey asked an open ended question of “When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of?” A large present of respondents wrote something about privacy as central to what they want in housing. Having one’s own private space with a door that locks is one of the most common answers to what people are looking for

in housing. Being put in a room with other people who you are not choosing to live with is not what houseless people are asking for in housing. The ability to have partners, family or friends visit or stay, is also a common theme in what people want in housing. However this desire for freedom of visiting guests or living with a partner comes from the same people who also name privacy and a door that locks as a top desire in housing. There is a difference between having guests you choose, and being forced to live with people in one room with no privacy. These navigation centers are better turned into housing that can meet this critical need for privacy with the ability for guests to visit like any other home.

Another common theme when answering what folks are thinking of in housing was kitchens and the ability to cook a meal. The ability to cook your own food is critical for one's health, finances, and personal well being. It also saves providers huge amounts of money as individuals can provide their own food instead of depending on expensive, often unhealthy, mass cooked food.

This is a critical opportunity to use federal dollars to create the housing we need and build it in a way that will create safe, desired, comfortable housing for all residents.