

Dane County Exec. Parisi: Announces \$13 million investment to provide bridge from hotels to housing for neighbors experiencing homelessness

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Dane County will make a \$13 million investment over two years in housing resources to help ease the transition out of hotel shelter and into housing for people experiencing homelessness, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced today.

Preventing exposure to and spread of COVID-19 among households experiencing homelessness has been a pillar of Dane County's pandemic response. Beginning in March of 2020, Dane County funded non-congregate hotel shelter operations and assisted with other congregate shelter expansions to quickly create critical social distancing in the community's homeless shelter system, partnering with numerous hotels to provide rooms, and with the City of Madison, Public Health Madison & Dane County, and frontline agencies to administer the program.

"Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dane County has been committed to helping our most vulnerable residents receive the support and shelter they need to stay safe and avoid catching or spreading this highly contagious disease," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "This multimillion-dollar investment over the next two years will aid in community recovery and ease the transition out of hotel shelter and into housing for those experiencing homelessness."

Families with children, adults without children who are considered at higher risk for severe illness if they contract COVID-19 (per the CDC), and individuals experiencing

homelessness who are symptomatic/test positive for COVID-19 or are considered a close contact to a positive case, have been served by hotel shelter. Hotel shelter was originally funded through June 30 in the County Executive's 2021 budget, and with additional support from federal American Rescue Plan funding, is anticipated to continue through August 31.

Under the hotels to housing initiative, nearly 300 households can be served with up to two years of rent and utilities, housing search assistance, and case management supports. This year, more than \$2.6 million in funding will be provided, with over \$6.3 million to be proposed in the County Executive's 2022 Budget to continue the supports through next year. The balance of the \$13 million commitment would extend into 2023.

Funding estimates for the initiative are based in part on the average number of households currently being served by hotel shelter and the average amount needed for housing costs and utilities. More households could be served depending on how much rental assistance is needed by households.

Since the beginning of the hotel shelter program, more than 900 households have been served and have received access to on-site supportive services, meals, and pathways to behavioral health supports, medical care, employment, housing, and more. More than 90 people exited from hotel shelter and into housing in 2020. The additional resources provided by the hotels to housing initiative will significantly bolster these efforts.

"The federal funding provided to Dane County as a result of the pandemic presents us with a unique opportunity to help unhoused families and individuals with the stability they need to thrive in our community," said County Board Chair Analiese Eicher. "The rapid re-housing model this innovative program follows has been used nationally with positive results, improving the quality of life for those involved. With hotel sheltering ending in August, time is of the essence. We are fortunate to have strong partners to assist the county deliver this potentially life-changing initiative for our neighbors in need."

Local landlords are an important partner in the effort to help neighbors experiencing homelessness from hotels to housing. Landlords who are interested in learning more, or in committing units are encouraged to e-mail the Catholic Charities housing navigation program at mpulsipher@ccmadison.org or call 608-826-8117.

The funding for the housing effort would come from Dane County's local aid allocation from the recently passed federal American Rescue Plan and is subject to final approval by the Dane County Board. A resolution allocating funding for 2021 was introduced at the April 22 meeting of the Dane County Board.