



Richard C. Irvin
Mayor

The allocation of \$1 million dollars in CARES Act funding from DuPage County to the City of Aurora will be for the benefit of Hesed House. Hesed House is the 2nd largest homeless shelter in the state and the only regional shelter in the DuPage County area. Prior to COVID, Hesed House traditionally handled approximately 250 men, women and children a night. To comply with IDPH COVID requirements, Hesed House's occupancy was reduced to 103, but through their own efforts that number has been raised to 165.

COVID is causing an increased wave in the number of people/families in need of their services. Calls for housing assistance have increased by 600% this year. With winter around the corner, it is expected the nightly need will exceed 300 men, women and children.

Before COVID started, Hesed House purchased an old warehouse across the street from its existing facility. The plans were to someday use the warehouse to meet the increasing needs for their services. The projected cost of the total conversion will be in excess of \$9 million.

Hesed House does not have the funds to cover the construction costs, or the need from the unexpected surge in homeless demand today caused by COVID. In addition, it is expected that after the "freeze" on foreclosures and evictions is lifted, even if COVID is brought under control, the demand for Hesed House services will continue to rise.

To meet the demand today caused by COVID, Hesed House needs to immediately expand its shelter into the un-winterized warehouse at 680 S. River Street in Aurora to provide for appropriate distances between residents which prevents the spread of COVID. The funding from DuPage County will allow Hesed House to provide these improvements to the west portion of the warehouse and allow Hesed House to start meeting the needs of the homeless population during this time. In addition to construction costs, this allocation will allow Hesed House to afford the startup costs associated with running a homeless shelter.

The winterization project involved in these improvements needs to be started as soon as possible to accommodate guests before the winter weather sets in, and to meet the CARES Act spending deadline. These renovations will be completed before December 30th. By providing the funding directly to the City of Aurora, the City will ensure timely and proper completion of the project, and complete compliance with all CARES Act requirements before the end of the year.

Men, women, and children of all ages seek help daily for a variety of reasons. These reasons have been exacerbated by COVID. In addition to the many people who already use Hesed House services, Hesed House now sees approximately 16 newly homeless individuals each week – that is one new homeless individual every 10 1/2 hours. Unfortunately, this number is expected to increase.

Finally, Hesed House utilizes approximately 7,500 volunteers per year to assist at the shelter. Funding for this winterization project will ensure a safe and appropriate environment for volunteers to return to assist and support staff and homeless guests. Thank you for your consideration of this critically needed and time sensitive request for Hesed House.