

Aurora's Emergency
Temporary Warming Shelter
Saving Lives, Strengthening Community



Presented by:

Nicole Mullins,
Chief Community Services Officer

THE NEED

This proposal addresses a gap in existing services within the City of Aurora. It is imperative we find a solution to prevent life-threatening cold exposure this winter.

Aurora lacks a low-barrier emergency option for residents.



No options when current shelters have a wait list.



Unsheltered individuals use emergency services/hospitals to escape the cold.

No one in our community should freeze to death because they have nowhere to go.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

Prolonged exposure without access to shelter impacts the community at large and drains city resources.

Fiscal and Public Safety Impact:

- **ER visits** for unsheltered people: **3.1 per person per year vs 0.4 for sheltered**
Average cost: **\$1,749–\$2,285 per visit**
- Our Local Overnight ER stay can exceed **\$5,000/night** per Hesed House report from local ER's
- **Ambulance rides** cost **\$1,481–\$1,613 each** and are **14x more frequent** among the unsheltered.
- **Supportive sheltering** reduces system costs by **39%** — saving thousands per person annually.
- **Crime reduction happens** when people have their basic needs met and are not desperate for food, shelter, and other basic human rights.

People need a rest, not arrest.

SITE SELECTION PROCESS

Staff reviewed a list of city-owned properties and narrowed it down to a list of 8 based on viability factors including:

- Safe distance from schools and playgrounds.
- Access to transit, outreach teams, and existing daytime warming shelter.
- Zoning suitability.
- Cost for project readiness
- Ability to be up and running in a short time span

SITE SELECTION PIVOT

Only one site of those reviewed was deemed viable for this project.

Several business owners raised concerns of the originally proposed location and the impact it would have on their businesses.

Mayor Laesch inquired about the feasibility of relocating operations at the city's Financial Empowerment Center at 712 S. River Street for this project.

Staff visited the site with the proposed contractor and determined it to be a suitable location for this winter.

Thank you to the City staff and local organizations willing to re-locate so our vulnerable community members could have a warm shelter this winter.

**Shop.
LOCAL**

ABOUT THE PROPOSED SHELTER

Recommended Location: 712 S River St, Aurora, IL

- Low barrier, temporary activation below 32F or during wind-chill advisories.
- Operated by contractor with paid staff, trained volunteers, and security.
- Strong partnerships with existing shelters, social services, local churches, and business owners.
- Funded through city allocation, private donations, and in-kind services and support.



“A community that is engaged and working together can be a powerful force.” - Idowu Koyenikan

THRESHOLD MODIFICATION

Prolonged exposure to the cold is likely to result in the body temperature dropping to below 95 degrees. This leads to hypothermia, frostbite, and even death.

U.S. City	Policy
Chicago, IL	Department of Family & Support Services opens designated warming shelters when temperatures are $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$
Milwaukee, WI	City officials have called for policy to trigger shelter activation at 32°F instead of the current lower threshold.
Elgin, IL	Current policy opens warming shelter between dates in November and March. It does not specify a temp threshold.
Denver, CO	City considering increasing threshold to $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$ to align with other municipalities.
New York, NY	“Code Blue” alert activates additional shelter capacity when temperatures are $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$.

Why 32 degrees?

According to the Mayo Clinic, *frostbite* occurs when skin and underlying tissue freeze, potentially causing permanent damage. **Frostbite can start developing in as little as 30 minutes at a wind chill of 36°F.**

Hypothermia happens when your internal body temperature drops below 95°F, leaving your body unable to produce enough heat. **Hypothermia can occur with prolonged exposure to cold temperatures (below 40°F)**

People living on the streets have a much higher risk than the general population of developing fatal cases of hypothermia or frostbite. **Each year, 700 people at-risk or experiencing homelessness are killed from hypothermia in the United States.**

In fact, due to exposure, people who experience homelessness have **an average life expectancy of around 50 years of age, almost 20 years lower** than people who are housed.

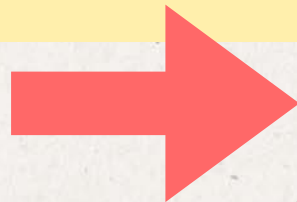
Beyond Shelter: Safety, Stability & Support

AID Mobile Crisis Response & Hesed House Partnership

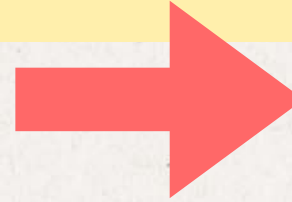
“This is more than a shelter —it’s a coordinated care system ensuring support for our unhoused, safety for residents, and stability for our community.”



Mobile Crisis Response Team
☎ **(630) 966-4357**



Hesed House Support
☎ **(630) 897-2156**



Community Stability

Coordination & Accountability

**Lead Partner:
Becoming Oswego**



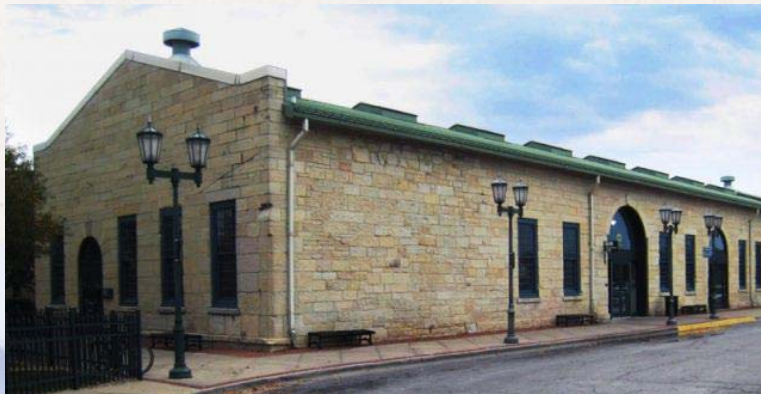
**Collaborators:
Community Services,
Police, Fire, Health Dept,
AID, Hesed House, Aurora
Mutual Aid, Wesley UMC,
Fresh Start City Church.**

**Data on usage, and
incident reporting
provided to City for
transparency.**

RISK OF INACTION

In 2024, the previous administration and City Council confirmed that the Aurora Transportation Center (ATC) was not a suitable location for the warming center.

If this proposal is not approved, the city will likely be forced to return the warming center to the ATC.



TO: Mayor Richard C. Irvin

FROM: Alex Alexandrou, Chief Management Officer
Viviana Ramirez, Chief Community Services Officer
Martha Paschke, Director of Innovation & Strategy

DATE: November 26, 2024

SUBJECT:

A Resolution authorizing the Director of Purchasing to enter an agreement with Wesley United Methodist Church for the hosting, managing, and operating of a Temporary Warming Center on an as needed basis from November 27, 2024 through March 31, 2025 in an amount not to exceed \$44,700.

PURPOSE:

The City desires to partner with an experienced local organization to host, manage, and operate a Temporary Warming Center to ensure the health and safety of individuals in need of temporary respite from extreme winter weather and temperature conditions.

BACKGROUND:

The Community Services Department has hosted the City's Temporary Warming Center (TWC) since the end of 2020 at the Aurora Transportation Center. Prior to 2020 the City provided warming centers at various locations during the winter months when necessary. City staff has previously managed and operated the TWC and private security services were contracted to ensure the safety of guests and staff.

The TWC has been opened an average of 25 nights per winter over the past three years. At the peak period during extreme cold the average number of guests was 12-14.

It was determined that the Aurora Transportation Center was no longer an appropriate

New Location Timeline

Before opening at 712 S. River St. several actions will need to take place:

1. Give notice to nearby residents of the temporary use change
2. Find appropriate location for the Financial Empowerment Center
3. Re-locate other displaced staff and organizations
4. Coordinate with Public Facilities to move City furniture and fixtures
5. Contractor moves into location

SELECTED CONTRACTOR

Becoming Oswego



OUR SHARED PURPOSE:

This year's Winter Warming Shelter is hosted by Becoming Church in partnership with the City of Aurora and a network of neighbors, community/human service agencies, and volunteers to make sure that no one in our community is left without warmth or safety on dangerous winter nights. Through dedicated volunteers, nutritious meals, and a commitment to safety, we will provide a safe space from winter's harshness, embodying our shared responsibility to care for all in our community.

While Becoming Church is the primary host of this year's shelter, we will operate similarly to Wesley United Methodist's hosting last year. The shelter we will be operating will not be a religious space – there are no faith requirements, no proselytizing, and no language policing (though we prohibit threats, harassment, and hate speech of any kind). We welcome all people as they are, without judgment, and honor each person's dignity.



Core Values:

- **Dignity:** Every person deserves to be treated with respect, privacy, and care. We honor the inherent worth of all who enter.
- **Hospitality:** We offer and create a welcoming environment where each guest feels valued and can have a place to rest, eat, and warm up without fear or judgment.
- **Community Partnership:** We collaborate with local organizations, recognizing that sheltering our neighbors requires the shared commitment and compassion of our community.
- **Low Barrier, High Access:** We strive to remove obstacles that might prevent guests from accessing shelter options.
- **Justice:** Shelter is a human right. We strive to address immediate needs while advocating for long-term solutions for a community where safety and stability are accessible to all.

Guiding Principals:

- **Because dignity is central to our mission**, we will create an inclusive, respectful environment, upholding each guest's privacy, individual needs, and story. We honor each person's inherent worth, fostering a space where all are valued and welcomed without judgment.
- **Because we believe in the power of community**, we will work closely with local partners and volunteers, embracing collaboration as a path to greater impact. Through shared resources, insights, and dedication, we build a strong, compassionate network of support for our neighbors.
- **Because everyone deserves warmth and nourishment**, we will provide consistent, nutritious food and a safe, welcoming shelter.
- **Because access should be easy and judgment-free**, we uphold a low-barrier, high-access approach, reducing requirements that may limit entry. Our shelter is designed to welcome those who might otherwise struggle to find safe places to stay, making room for everyone who needs support.
- **Because change is a process**, we are committed to adjusting and improving our services, learning from feedback, and responding to the evolving needs of our guests. We remain flexible and open, allowing for continuous growth and adaptation in our shelter operations.
- **Because we trust in abundance**, we will seek community support to bridge funding gaps, inviting all to participate in providing shelter and safety for our neighbors. Our Warming Shelter relies on the generosity and care of our wider community, believing there is enough to meet the needs of all when we share.

Operational Commitments:

- Our volunteers and staff come from diverse backgrounds and serve with open hearts. We do not require religious participation or enforce religious language. We do not police swearing or personal expression — but we do maintain strict boundaries around threats, hate speech, and violence.
- We focus on providing immediate safety and warmth, not long-term case management or advocacy within this setting, as we know our local community agencies are the champions of this work.
- We respect and follow City of Aurora safety protocols and guidance to make the Shelter Operation work in congruence with nearby agencies, elected officials, and the Aurora Police Department

NIGHTLY FLOW



SHELTER SITE SET-UP | 6:00-6:25PM

Site Director Team & Hospitality Volunteers & the “Good Grub Gang”

Site coordinator and volunteers arrive to set up the space and set up tables/chairs, replenish any resources/freshen up the space. They will also welcome and situate any serving and check-in staff/volunteers. Our Good Grub Gang; or Ministry of Meals (M.O.M), will be bringing enough for 25-40 people (guests and staff).

SHELTER NIGHTLY MEETING BEFORE DOORS OPEN | 6:25-6:40PM

Site Director Team, Good Grub Gang, Security Team, Check-in Staff & Volunteers

This will be important for everyone to get on the same page and to be there before we open doors. This is a time where we will let everyone know what the plan is for that night, who is going to have what role, and then there will be time for questions and clarification

CHECK-IN PROTOCOL BEGINS | 6:40-7:00 PM

Entrance located in back of building with protocol to protect guests from raids

It will be important for those at risk of Immigration Enforcement situations to arrive right on time, and be priority for letting into the building. We will rope off the area and will continue to communicate protocol with our partners as we develop them with ARRT. Volunteers and security will ensure everyone is getting inside and not lingering, to avoid attraction to the area. This will be just to get them inside and secure, and delving out beds and the rest of the process will shortly follow.

SHELTER COMPLETE CHECK-IN | 7:00-8:00 PM

All guests will go through a safety check upon entry with Site Director Team Member and Security, and we will provide an amnesty box for any items that can't be brought into the shelter with them. Guests will be given a cot and tub to store their belongings.

We will need: 1 staff + 1 volunteer to help with check-in, 1-2 Hospitality volunteers needed to be extra hands & welcome, 1 volunteer + security with guests and safety checks, 1 fire watch staff, 1-2 volunteers for cot and bin assignments

NIGHTLY FLOW CONT.



DINNER IN THE TILED ROOM | 7:30-8:15 PM

Guests will enjoy dinner provided by the nightly Good Grub Gang! Chairs and tables will be broken down and moved for sleeping as needed with overflow. 1-2 volunteers to be helping with serving and breaking tables down will be helpful!

LIGHTS OUT, GO TO BED :) | 9:30-10:00 PM

While guests are not forced to sleep at 9:30pm, we will turn lights out and ask that all guests respect those who are ready for bed. Voices kept low, conversations slowing down. Encourage guests to start going to bed to rest. Some may request to be woken up by a certain time, try to accommodate that and help note that for AM/overnight staff. Any guests who arrive after consistently without an arranged plan with Shelter Director Team will be invited back to arrive on time the next time we're open. Will be one person on fire watch, one staff & or volunteer, and one security guard

LIGHTS ON/ WAKE UP

6:30 AM-7:00 AM

Wake-up and clean-up begins. Coffee is only available during morning hours, light grab + go, additional breakfast items available to make the morning a little easier. Lights turn on at 6:30, reminders to start waking up and getting going with their breakfast start at 7 AM

SHELTER CLOSES

8:00 AM

Shelter closes, guests will not be allowed back in the space or permitted to access anything left in bins until the next night. Bus passes and case management may be available most mornings, but not guaranteed for every morning. Rides are not provided by volunteers or staff, especially due to centralized location. If other organizations want to coordinate rides or work with us in that way, we will always stay open to any ideas.



SEE YOU TOMORROW TO DO IT ALL AGAIN!



QUESTIONS?