

Mini Case Executive Summary

Community Resource Center Campaign Readiness Planning Study

June 2024



The Need

In the heart of Eau Claire, over 700 individuals struggle without the security of a home. These numbers, stark as they are, fail to capture the depth of the crisis. Each statistic represents a person—someone’s parent, child, or friend—dealing with complex challenges that extend far beyond the visible issue of homelessness. Despite the city’s economic growth and initiatives aimed at helping the unhoused, the number of people without homes continues to rise, painting a troubling picture of need and resilience.

Amidst this growing concern, hope is emerging through the dedicated efforts of two local organizations and the City of Eau Claire. These groups have a shared vision and a compassionate plan to change lives. They are spearheading the creation of a building where those who are unhoused can find more than just a roof over their heads. Their mission is simple yet profound: “People experiencing homelessness will have safe shelter and access to supporting services to help move toward wellness, employment, housing, and stability.”

The Solution

Western Dairyland Economic Development Council (WDEDC) is one of the leaders in the initiative. As one of the largest social service agencies in Western Wisconsin, this vital non-profit offers housing and employment services, Head Start preschool education, and a dozen more programs. The organization cares deeply about the mission of this proposed center, as it is their goal to alleviate poverty-related conditions and provide opportunities to those in need.

Hope Gospel Mission is another key, local non-profit and is more than a typical homeless shelter. It provides hope and recovery for those in need - beyond a roof, warmth, and food. Also, it aids in overall wellness by offering holistic programming focusing on academics, addiction, finances, nutrition/fitness, parenting, and much more.

The Community Resource Center would be a downtown shelter and a site where unhoused residents would be linked to needed services. As the owner of the building, WDEOC housing services would be located in the new facility and will financially maintain ongoing building costs. Hope Gospel Mission will operate and fund the day resource center. The City of Eau Claire is a key funding partner to make the project a reality. Staff of these other organizations that assist unhoused people would also provide support at the site, interacting directly with clients to link them to services such as mental health therapy, case management services, financial literacy, coordinated entry, educational opportunities, etc. WDEOC will cover the rental expenses for the other services housed in the facility without imposing charges for these services to be offered.



The Center will be a central hub for many resources to provide mental health support, shine a light on substance abuse programs, and help adults living with mental illness by providing the safety and security they need as they work toward a brighter tomorrow.

The project would cost an estimated \$6.2M. The breakdown of costs for the proposed building and three years of operations is as follows:

- Building Structural & Architectural Components: \$2.9M
- Mechanical & HVAC Systems: \$370,000
- Electrical, Plumbing, & Fire Protection: \$577,000
- Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment: \$1M
- Operating Costs for 3 years: \$1M
- Fundraising: \$325,000

Total: \$6.2M

The location is still being determined. More than 50 locations have been examined and vetted by the organizations involved to determine suitability. If an existing building in the right location becomes available, it would be renovated, which may decrease the overall campaign goal. If an excess was fundraised, the amount would be used for ongoing operations and maintenance.

Five potential locations are currently being examined:

1. Barstown and Seaver Parking Lot
2. Graham Riverside Parking
3. Parking Lot at Main & Farwell

4. Schlegelmilch Parking Lot
5. Wilson Park

The locations under consideration will be determined by the date of the study.

Funding and Proposed Campaign

WDEOC, the city of Eau Claire, Mayo Clinic Health System-Eau Claire, and a private donor have already committed \$850,000 toward the proposed capital campaign if it proceeds. The city's financial commitment will come from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

The Community Resource Center began to take shape three years ago when Community Haven House Inc. convened to provide a solution. The effort continued and gained support and input from the City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County officials, nonprofits, local healthcare providers, business owners, and others.

Planning has begun to identify philanthropic interest and capacity, potential lead and major gifts, the area's financial environment, volunteer leadership, and the importance community residents place on the facility to improve Eau Claire's quality of life. Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC has been retained to determine the viability of the fundraising initiative.

A Campaign Readiness Study Summit will be held July 16 and 17 in Eau Claire. The involved partners' Board of Directors, City Council, and Campaign Readiness Study Committee volunteers will receive the recommendations within a comprehensive report in mid-August.