

## **2020 FAQ Homelessness in New Mexico:**

### **Proposed Gateway Center Site**

Homelessness is a serious problem in New Mexico. In the past year, our homelessness rate rose by 27% and chronic homelessness rose by 56%, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Homelessness affects all people, no matter their background. One key and effective strategy in addressing the variety of needs of a diverse homeless population is to provide temporary emergency shelters and housing. By providing these services, people have a place to go to receive the care they require to meet their particular needs.

The City of Albuquerque received voter support to move forward their effort to develop and build the Gateway Center, an emergency shelter with beds that will also serve as a gateway to permanent housing and other community services needed to promote housing stability. Selection of a site to build the Gateway Center must be carefully considered and with input from all members of our University Community.

President Stokes will be hosting town halls on the following dates, with experts on homelessness, the project, and law enforcement, to solicit input from the University community. Following the last town hall on February 13, you'll receive a survey to provide input as well.

Friday, February 7, 2020, 12 noon, Domenici Auditorium

Tuesday, February 11, 2020, 12 noon, SUB Ballroom A (hosted by ASUNM)

Thursday, February 13, 2020 5:15 PM, Comprehensive Cancer Center Auditorium (parking not enforced during the forum)

Friday, February 14, 2020: Survey goes out.

Below are important informational items regarding the City of Albuquerque's Gateway Center. This decision will ultimately be made by the Board of Regents, with a recommendation from the President and her leadership team.

### **Q: What do we know about the Homeless in Albuquerque?**

The below data all come from the Coalition to End Homelessness 2019 Point in Time Count. In Albuquerque, on any given night there are approximately 1500 people experiencing homelessness. Of those 1100 are adults, 300 are families including small children, and 30 are unaccompanied youth. Of the adults, approximately 45% are unsheltered, 45% are in emergency shelters, and 10% are in transitional housing. Of the families, approximately 60% are in emergency shelters, 35% are in transitional housing, and 5% are unsheltered. Many people experiencing homelessness are or have been our patients at UNM Hospitals. Regarding duration of homelessness, approximately 40% of people experiencing homelessness have been homeless for more than a year and 60% (mostly families) are transitional due to a sudden life change (loss of a job, familial abuse, divorce). Some of our own students struggle with both homelessness and food insecurity.

**Q: What role do shelters play in addressing this problem?**

A: Emergency shelters, like the Gateway Center, are designed to provide temporary shelter and do not include long-term housing units. Emergency shelters help keep homeless individuals and families safe from the elements and other threats on the streets. They also benefit the community as a whole. Shelters can provide a hub for access to provisional services including housing, childcare, social services, and health care. The goal of the Gateway Center is to get people permanently housed. An emergency shelter can ease the burden on law enforcement, the paramedic system, and emergency rooms by giving first responders a place that can provide housing and navigation to services for the unsheltered homeless.

**Q: Are most homeless people suffering from a behavioral health issue?**

A: According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20 to 25% of the homeless population in the United States suffers from some form of severe mental illness. In Albuquerque, the Coalition to End Homelessness indicates approximately 38% of people who are unsheltered and chronically homeless have a serious mental illness, 36% have a substance use disorder, and there are no clear data on co-occurrence of these conditions.

**Q: If a homeless shelter is located in my community, will there be a rise in crime?**

A: A study by the University of Pennsylvania found a 56% increase in most property crimes (car burglary, car thefts) within about a two block radius of emergency shelters with a decrease in break-ins of commercial establishments of 27%. This same study found that these crimes could be mitigated with sufficient presence of security and law enforcement and that the correlation could be associated with the high crime rate areas where shelters are often located. It should be noted that according to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council people experiencing homelessness are 25 times as likely as the general population to be the *victims* of violent crime.

**Q: If the emergency shelter is low-barrier and permits persons that use drugs, will there be any safeguards against discarded needles, intoxicated people, or other drug-related risks in my community?**

A: Low-barrier is a term of art that indicates that people who are intoxicated can enter a shelter -- they do not have to prove sobriety to enter. It also means that pets are accepted. Low-barrier does not mean that the shelter will allow drug paraphernalia, drugs or alcohol into the shelter. Wherever the location, the Gateway center will have a screening process and any weapons, drugs, drug paraphernalia or alcohol would be confiscated. People in need of detoxification or substance abuse treatment would be shuttled to the appropriate health care facility to receive that treatment. If the Gateway Center is located on UNM property, having professional security on duty along with

increased law enforcement presence around the site will be a requirement to safe-guard against any risks.

**Q: What services are provided at the Gateway Center vs. services provided at other locations?**

A: The University’s understanding is that the Gateway Center will provide basic medical care, behavioral health care, case management navigation, and some food to individuals who are staying at the shelter. The Gateway Center will work in an integrated manner with existing services providers and shelters, including Healthcare for the Homeless, HopeWorks, and substance abuse programs. Substance use disorder treatment, clothing, job programs, educational programs, childcare, and other services would be provided at offsite locations that residents would be transported to from the shelter. This will be a low barrier emergency shelter that will provide a central location for first responders and law enforcement to take individuals to be triaged. Such a Center will allow law enforcement and first responders to much more quickly get back in the field.

**Q: Who is served, and for how long will they reside at the site?**

A: The Center will serve children, young adults, families, and single men and women. This is intended to be an emergency shelter with the priority being placed on finding more permanent or supportive housing. They will be at the site until other housing is found, within hopefully 48 hours, or until they choose to leave. Departures by foot travel would be discouraged by visual design and through the provision of bus or shuttle service off the site – this would be a requirement of using UNM land. UNM would also require that laws around the shelter, such as no walking on the frontage road, be strictly enforced. Additionally, this will not function as a day shelter, like HopeWorks, so there will not be services available for people who are not staying at the shelter overnight.

**Q: For services provided at other locations, how will clients transit to those locations.**

A: As part of UNM’s requirements for utilizing university land we would require the city to commit to design and pay for extensive transportation systems to take residents to other sites for the majority of services and bring them back to the Center.

**Q: Why is UNM considering providing the land for the Gateway Center?**

A: Hosting the Gateway Center on UNM land helps the City address one of the most serious issues threatening our community’s growth and economic well-being, and the Center’s success could support a thriving, safe city for our students, staff and faculty. The Gateway Center’s existence might lead to homeless individuals who currently spend time on the campus and proximate areas to have an alternate place to go and receive the services they need to become permanently housed. In addition, co-locating this facility next to the State’s flagship university

and only academic medical center provides the opportunity for innovative learning experiences for students in various fields of study such as: education, community planning, medicine, and nursing. According to City of Albuquerque data, approximate 6900 homeless people were transported to the UNMH Emergency Room over a 12-month period and only 110 needed any kind of treatment; thus this facility could lead to far fewer transfers and assessments. It will also provide an appropriate location for discharge for both medical and behavioral health patients who no longer need hospitalization or intermediate care and would reduce the likelihood that they would wander around campus or the surrounding neighborhoods. Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable amongst us is wholly in line with the values of our academic health center, and the educational value is in line with the University's mission. Placing the Gateway Center on UNM land would be contingent on a host of assurances including additional law enforcement and security resources.

**Q: How is security ensured?**

A: Security within the site would be provided by the City. The City plans to conduct a professional security assessment and to provide professional security staff. They are also committed to using smart design to reduce the chances of crime, including fences, barriers, security cameras, and creating access that is limited to shuttles. Use of the UNM-owned site would be contingent on the City obtaining a security assessment from an independent expert and providing the staffing recommended by that study, including support for additional UNMPD resources that might be needed around the site.

**Q: What are the potential costs to UNM, including indirect collateral costs? How will UNM cover these costs?**

A: A potential serious cost is a further decline in enrollment because of students' and families' perceptions that the Center located on UNM land poses a safety risk to the entire Albuquerque campus. Other potential costs include the need to hire additional police and security personnel and lost opportunities on future development of the land for health care services or other high priority needs of the University over the next few decades. The City has expressed a commitment to mitigating potential costs and to involving both the University and any interested neighborhoods in the design process.