

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

Department of Family and Community Services
Carol M. Pierce, Director



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

January 31, 2020

Mr. Terry Babbit
Chief of Staff
Office of the President
University of New Mexico

Ms. Teresa Costantinidis
Senior Vice President
Finance & Administration
University of New Mexico

Ms. Loretta Martinez
Chief Legal Counsel
University of New Mexico

P.O. Box 1293

Ms. Chamiza Pacheco de Alas
Chief of Staff
Office of the Chancellor
UNM Health Sciences Center

Albuquerque

New Mexico 87103

Dear Mr. Babbit, Ms. Costantinidis, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Pacheco de Alas:

www.cabq.gov

Thank you for the opportunity to meet on Thursday, January 16th regarding the Gateway Center for people experiencing homelessness. We appreciate the frank discussion regarding the UNM community's concerns and conditions if the new Gateway Center were to be located on UNM property.

The Gateway Center will provide emergency shelter and support services to people experiencing homelessness, and will serve as a gateway to permanent housing and other community resources. The Gateway Center will be open 24 hours a day year-round, will be low-barrier and will address common obstacles to shelter (i.e., storage for personal items and capacity to accommodate pets). While the Gateway Center will serve as an access point for those experiencing homelessness to other resources, it will not function as a "drop-in" day shelter, such as the one that HopeWorks offers downtown.

This letter provides our written response to the concerns and conditions we discussed, which centered on security, design and construction, and operations.

Security

We recognize that providing a safe environment for students, employees and faculty is a priority for the UNM community.

Encampments

We understand that UNM is concerned that encampment activities may increase in the area surrounding the Gateway Center. In other cities we have visited, the opposite effect has actually occurred, as people who were in encampments had ready access to indoor shelter. However, to the extent there may be increased encampment presence, the City has a well-established and clear process for addressing homeless encampments. A Public Outreach Program Manager, who is housed within the Department of Family & Community Services, is responsible for coordinating the City's response to encampments on public property. The Public Outreach Program Manager engages encampment residents and provides referrals to shelter and other needed services, notifies the residents that camping on public property is not allowed, and coordinates with other City Departments to clean up the encampment area. The City recently created a new position to support the Public Outreach Program Manager, in order to increase our capacity to respond to encampments in a timely manner. For encampments on private property, the Planning Department works with private property owners to address encampments. These resources would be part of the strategy to address any encampment activity in the area.

Panhandling

We understand that UNM is concerned about the impact of panhandling activities on the UNM community. In 2017, the City of Albuquerque passed the Pedestrian Safety Ordinance, which would have banned anyone from standing inside travel lanes, along interstate entrance and exit ramps and on certain medians. It also would have prohibited any physical interaction or exchange between pedestrians and occupants of vehicles in traffic lanes. In July 2019, a federal judge ruled that this ordinance was unconstitutional. The City is appealing this ruling.

In the meantime, the City continues to take other steps to proactively address panhandling. Of course, APD is still able to take enforcement action when people cause safety threats, obstruct traffic, or violate other laws. In addition, the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) staff, a civilian component of APD's Crisis Intervention Team Unit, interact with panhandlers to offer resources and referrals. The City has four Mobile Crisis Teams (MCT) that connects a licensed clinician with a crisis intervention police officer that respond to priority one mental health related 911 calls. If necessary, COAST may do additional follow up to track referrals and connect people to services. In addition, the City funds street outreach programs that can also work with panhandlers.

The Department of Family and Community Services funds the Better Way program, which provides day labor employment to 20 people a day who would otherwise likely be panhandling. This program is a partnership between DFCS, the Department of Solid Waste, and Steelbridge Ministries.

Criminal Activity & Calls for Service

We understand that UNM is concerned that locating the Gateway Center on UNM property may increase criminal activity at that location and in the surrounding area.

Regardless of where the Gateway Center is ultimately located, the City intends to hire a security expert to conduct a comprehensive security analysis. We feel confident that many potential security issues can be mitigated through smart planning and design. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a set of design principles used to discourage crime and promote building security, with a focus on natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement and maintenance. These design principles, which the City has adopted in other projects, will be integrated into the design of the Gateway Center and surrounding area.

Key features of the design will include but not be limited to sufficient lighting, fencing, and technology (such as security cameras). These appropriate fencing, landscaping and other design features will be designed to ensure curb appeal and low visual impact. The Gateway Center will have security staff on-site. We will include any other security needs that the security expert identifies in her analysis in our ongoing operating budget for the Gateway Center.

We understand that UNM is concerned about increased calls for service, and the strain that this may place on the UNM Police Department. We are fully committed to working out the details on how APD, UNM Police Department, Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department and the NM State Police can collaborate in order to respond to calls for service, which may include cross-deputization. The City has positive experience with cross-deputization in areas where the enforcement concerns exceed one jurisdiction's resources, including the All Indian Pueblo Council properties and the NM State Fairgrounds. We also recognize that all of these entities need to recruit additional law enforcement personnel, and that this is a challenge we are all dealing with.

We know from local experience and our visits to similar facilities in other cities that criminal activity and calls for services can be reduced through strong operational policies and procedures, and by creating a culture of safety and respect where shelter residents help maintain and enforce rules that keep everyone safe.

With that said, it is important to note that we currently have several year-round emergency shelters in our community that generate fewer calls for service than an outsider may expect. Below are calls for service for several emergency shelters in Albuquerque in 2019. The Westside Emergency Housing Center, which serves between 300-450 people each night, received 143 calls for service.

Emergency Shelter Name	Population Served	Number of Beds	Calls for Service in 2019
Albuquerque Opportunity Center	Single Adult Males	65	20
Barrett House	Single Adult Females, Females with Children	30	14
Good Shepherd Center	Single Adult Males	75	75
Westside Emergency Housing Center	Single Adult Males and Females, Families with Children	450	143

Source: Report from the APD Real Time Crime Center, 1/28/2020

Since May 2019, through collaboration with the University of New Mexico Health Science Center, the New Mexico Medical Reserve Corps, First Nations, Albuquerque Healthcare for the Homeless and Centro Savila, Presbyterian Healthcare Services, health and behavioral health services have been provided at the Westside Emergency Housing Center 2-3 nights per week. This service began once a week in May and has recently expanded to three nights per week. The goal is to have a seven day a week health presence. A preliminary review of the Albuquerque Fire Rescue 911 calls resulting in a transfer to an emergency room indicates a reduction in calls when medical and behavioral health providers are available on site.

Ultimately, we believe that the creation of a Gateway Center on UNM property has strong potential to reduce the burden on the UNM campus and system. Over a recent 12-month period, the City received over 17,000 “down and out” calls. Of these calls, 6,952 resulted in transports to the emergency room resulting in millions of dollars in emergency room costs, but only 110 of those people were identified in the field as having a life-threatening medical condition. The Gateway Center will provide an alternative to first responders and a more appropriate response for many of these “down and out calls” that can better address underlying needs. In addition, the Gateway Center will provide medical recuperative beds for people who have been discharged from the hospital or have an illness/injury and could avoid a hospital stay with a higher level of care. We anticipate this will be an important resource for UNMH, as it will provide an appropriate discharge option for patients experiencing homelessness and will reduce the number of people who are then re-admitted. We know that many of those we serve at the Gateway Center will have high behavioral health needs, and close coordination between the Gateway Center and the new Crisis Triage and Psychiatric Replace Hospital will be critical to meeting the needs of those residents. We strongly believe that close proximity between these two facilities will greatly strengthen the effectiveness of that collaboration.

Clery Act

We know that UNM must be mindful of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, which requires UNM to report crimes that take place on or near UNM Property. We understand that your legal department is looking into how the Gateway Center could impact these requirements, and we are committed to addressing any issues that are identified.

Design and Construction

If the Gateway Center is located on UNM property, the City commits to ensuring that UNM will have representatives on the design team and will have a role in final approval of the design. We understand that the Gateway Center design will need to be consistent with UNM design standards.

The City has experience designing project in cooperation with key stakeholders, and we believe that this type of collaboration can produce the best design possible. A recent example is the development of a single site permanent supportive housing project in the Wells Park Neighborhood. This project will provide permanent supportive housing, with onsite supportive services, to some of the most vulnerable people in our community who are experiencing homelessness and have a behavioral health disability.

This project is a partnership between Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque (who are funding the project), HopeWorks (who will own the project and provide the services) and YES Housing (who will develop the housing). In addition, the Wells Park

Neighborhood Association has been an active voice in the development of the project. Initially, neighborhood residents expressed deep concern about this project, particularly given the existing impacts of homelessness on the Wells Park neighborhood. In order to secure support for this project, the City had to work closely with all stakeholders to develop a design process that gave neighborhood residents a meaningful voice in the design process. We were successfully able to accomplish this, and we believe that this experience provides a roadmap on how we can best work with key stakeholders during the design of the Gateway Center. A Good Neighbor Agreement has been an effective tool to demonstrate partnership commitment for the project to be aligned with the neighborhood, the non-profit, the City and the developer. The same architect that is designing the single site permanent supportive housing project has been selected to design the Gateway Center. This gives us full confidence that our selected architect has the capacity and skillset to work with key stakeholders.

Operations

We understand that locating the Gateway Center on UNM property presents many opportunities, as well as challenges.

Center of Excellence

From the beginning, we have been excited about the opportunity to create a facility that, in responding to a crisis in our community, becomes a center of excellence. We envision a facility that offers research, scholarship and internship opportunities for UNM faculty, students and staff, which will deepen our understanding of homelessness while also greatly expanding the services and supports available to address this crisis. The UNM Children's Campus for Early Care and Education is an excellent example of what we hope the Gateway Center can be. The Children's Campus meets a core need for high quality early childhood services while also providing opportunity for UNM student and faculty research, observation and practicum.

We see the Gateway Center as one part of a broader system that can meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our community, and contribute to a city where everyone can thrive. We believe there are more collaborative opportunities with UNM that extend beyond the Gateway Center itself. UNM Departments such as the College of Education, School of Architecture and Planning, the Civil Engineering Department and the College of Population Health, to name a few, all offer opportunities for community outreach to address the needs of low-income populations, to create affordable housing opportunities, to develop sustainable transportation strategies; and to address the health for all community residents.

UNM Students Experiencing Homelessness

We understand that the UNM community also wants to better serve students experiencing homelessness, and the Gateway Center offers an important opportunity to do so. We know from conversations with community partners that we need to be thoughtful and proactive in order to create a space within the Gateway Center that young people, including UNM students, would feel safe accessing. We look forward to working with UNM and other community partners that serve young people to create a Gateway Center that can meet the needs of young people experiencing homelessness.

Transportation

We recognize that one of the key operational details we will need to address, wherever the Gateway Center is located, is transportation. We fully anticipate a shuttle system in and out of the facility, and will need to ensure that we are not encouraging foot traffic in and out, regardless of location. We know that any community will be concerned about increased foot traffic and migration through the neighborhood where the Gateway Center is located. We know that when people do not have a home and are living outside in public spaces, this migration can have a negative impact on neighborhoods. We believe that by keeping the Gateway Center open 24/7 and by providing services on site, including meals, we can reduce this foot traffic. However, people will still need to come and go, just like the rest of us. We recognize that planning for and designing a transportation system to and from the Gateway Center will be absolutely critical. We are fully committed to doing a careful assessment and design of that transportation system, seeking partnerships to contribute to the system, and funding it at the level needed. This includes looking at transportation arrangements for existing emergency shelters (such as the Albuquerque Opportunity Center) as well as other communities.

Contractual Details

We understand that any lease would need to have appropriate length time, appropriate indemnification and would need to include provisions that address a change in use or unexpected cessation of operations. We would leverage our risk management program to manage unanticipated costs and risks, and are open to addressing this through the use of a reserve.

The Gateway Center is a critical opportunity for our community to better meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, many of whom are struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues. Again, we deeply appreciate the open discussion last week. We hope this letter demonstrates that we take the UNM community's concerns seriously, and that we sincerely intend to address these concerns from the start.

We look forward to the continued conversation.

Sincerely,


Carol M. Pierce