

## SULLIVAN COUNTY SOBER HOUSING PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs):

### 1. Where is this project located?

The current proposal is to purchase and renovate the building at 19 Sullivan Street in Claremont.

### 2. What is sober housing?

“Sober housing” is a type of transitional housing facility for people who have completed substance use treatment to help them continue their transition to living in the community. **To be clear, this facility is for people who have already completed a substance use treatment program.** In order to continue living in this facility residents will be required to participate in weekly urinalysis screenings and meetings with recovery coaches, clinicians, and case managers. **It’s a voluntary decision to live in this facility**—it is not mandated by the court system, Dept of Corrections, or Probation and Parole. **People will choose to live here because they want to make a positive change in their lives.**

### 3. Why do we need a sober housing facility?

The Sullivan County Dept of Corrections TRAILS program graduates about 65-75 people per year. Nearly half of these individuals do not have safe, affordable housing to return to upon release from jail. The lack of structured, supportive environments to live in jeopardizes the significant taxpayer investment to help them get sober. Based on information from other sober housing facilities in NH, if a person can maintain sobriety for 12 months after treatment, their chances of long-term success are 95% or better. This facility will play a key role in helping people in recovery return to the workforce and to being productive members of our community.

### 4. What does TRAILS stand for?

TRAILS stands for Transitional Re-entry and Inmate Life Skills and the program features an intensive 90-day substance use rehabilitation program in addition to counseling, education, and training. Everybody sentenced to the TRAILS program will have a job prior to being released. Having the option to reside in a sober housing facility will provide safe, affordable housing so they can continue working on their sobriety while working at their jobs.

### 5. How many people will live there? Will it be men and women?

The design of the building is in progress but the plan is to have a maximum capacity of 14 women and 24 men to be housed and supervised on site—although we expect the steady-state occupancy rate to be less than that. Men and women will be housed on separate floors with controlled access for security and safety. Also, a peer recovery coach will live on site to provide after hours supervision and support for the residents. The facility will have video surveillance both inside and outside of the facility and grounds.

#### 6. Where will these people come from?

Most of the residents will be graduates of the TRAILS program and a majority of them are from Claremont. Other potential residents of the sober housing facility could come from other treatment programs if space allows and if they meet eligibility requirements.

#### 7. Why Claremont? Why not Newport, Unity, Sunapee or some other town?

Claremont is the most logical location for a few reasons. First, most of the people in TRAILS are from Claremont. Second, Claremont has access to all the services residents need to make sure they succeed in recovery. These services include health care, mental health counseling, access to the recovery center, community corrections, case management and clinical connections are all available in Claremont. Keeping the residents connected to the clinical team from the Department of Corrections is a vital part of the recovery process (their words). Third, the greatest opportunities for continued success are in Claremont including access to education (River Valley Community College), training, and the most important factor—jobs. The Dept of Corrections has great relationships with dozens of employers who are eager to hire TRAILS graduates.

#### 8. Are families allowed?

Families will be allowed to schedule visits and there will be visitation spaces provided separate from the living quarters. Maintaining (and in some cases re-establishing) contact with families is an important part of the recovery process.

#### 9. How is the county paying for the project?

The County is submitting for grants through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, New Hampshire Housing (NHH) Special Needs Housing program, and possibly through the Dept of Justice Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) program to pay for the purchase and renovation of the facility. The County is also contributing \$500,000 to serve as matching funds to make the grant applications competitive. Ongoing operations, utilities, and upkeep of the facility are expected to come from revenue generated by the residents, who will pay rent of approximately \$100 per week to live there. The total project cost has not been determined at this time—a preliminary design is underway and a total cost estimate is expected by the end of July 2019.

#### 10. What will these people do all day?

All residents will be required to have a 40 hours per week obligation of work/educational training or community service and will be expected to work, volunteer and participate in structured “after care” programming activities. The Sullivan County Dept of Corrections Community Corrections Officer and Case Managers will assist as needed to coordinate employment, education, and volunteer activities. This will not be a facility where residents are allowed to sit around all day and watch TV.

#### 11. How long will they be allowed to live there?

We expect an average length of stay will vary from several months to a year. Some residents may be permitted to remain in the facility longer than 12 months based on their circumstances. This facility will not become a permanent home.

#### 12. Is this only for Sullivan County residents?

Sullivan County residents and graduates of the Dept of Corrections TRAILS program will take priority. If there is capacity available we will partner with other agencies such as TLC Recovery Center and Headrest to provide housing to eligible individuals in recovery provided they have been through treatment. Probation and Parole may also refer people to sober housing as needed.

#### 13. Claremont is trying to revitalize Pleasant Street, how is putting a bunch of junkies and ex-convicts close to downtown supposed to help?

First off, no “junkies” will be allowed to live in the facility. See FAQ #1 above. These residents will have completed treatment and are dedicated to maintaining their sobriety. Second, although it’s true most residents will have come via the county jail, their offenses were deemed to be primarily drug-related and they will have paid their debt to society by completing their sentence and the TRAILS program.

As for the Pleasant Street revitalization, we believe this facility will actually help those efforts. The sober housing residents will be responsible for maintaining the exterior of the facility and keep it looking good. Additionally, they will be required to perform community service which could include projects to positively impact the entire downtown area of Claremont. Plymouth House sober living in Portland, Maine has had a similar impact on downtown Portland. We intend to replicate their success in Claremont. Finally, because employment is a key part of their recovery and a requirement to remain in the house, having these residents be within walking distance of shops and restaurants is a good thing.

#### 14. The County doesn't have to pay taxes, won't this hurt Claremont's tax rate?

The County understands the sensitivity of taking a property off the City’s tax rolls and has had preliminary discussions with the City about establishing a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) plan to mitigate the impact on taxpayers. This agreement will be explored further during the planning and coordination process.

#### 15. Why does it need to be located downtown?

The location is vital as it would give residents an opportunity to walk to work or utilize the bus service. Most of this population does not have a driver’s license or reliable transportation. Most of the services including transportation, educational opportunities, employment and healthcare are all located close to downtown. The proximity to the Recovery Center is an important link to additional services for the recovery population.

#### 16. How have other sober housing projects impacted local neighborhoods?

Residents of other sober houses make positive contributions through volunteer community service projects and by spending money at local businesses. Plymouth House in Portland, Maine has done an incredible job improving the neighborhood through beautification projects. Live Free Structured Sober Living continues to be successful and has been an asset to the community of Manchester (and is located across the street from a charter school). Bonfire Recovery Services currently has two facilities in Dover and have been successful in integrating successful and sober individuals back into communities in NH. Riverbank House in Laconia continues to expand and buy additional properties. They continue to have a positive impact in the Lakes Region.

#### 17. What is the timeline for this project?

The project is currently in the preliminary design phase to determine the initial cost estimate and floorplan to make sure the project is viable. The CDBG funding application (see FAQ #7) is due at the end of July. If the cost estimates are acceptable and the County decides to go forward with the grant applications, the renovation project will begin in the Spring of 2020 and be completed about 8 months after that. Throughout this process we will be conducting additional engagements with City of Claremont officials and citizens to gather feedback and answer questions about this project.

#### 18. Will this project help or hurt the local economy?

We firmly believe this project will absolutely benefit the local economy. Sullivan County's economy is strong—since 2016 the unemployment rate has hovered around 2%. **The #1 factor limiting growth is availability of people.** We do not need to attract new businesses because we don't have the workforce to support them. We need to help our existing businesses grow—but they need more people to do it! Given the demographics of our aging population and the difficulty in attracting people to move here from other parts of the country, the best opportunity to grow our economy is to focus on the underemployed segment of our population. **Helping people in recovery reintegrate into the workforce as well as the community not only gives them a second chance at living a productive life, it will also help meet the workforce needs of local business so they can grow.**

#### 19. Who can I contact to ask questions, learn more about this project, or tell you why I think it's a bad idea?

Please feel free to contact Dept of Corrections Superintendent Dave Berry at [dberry@sullivancountynh.gov](mailto:dberry@sullivancountynh.gov). 542-8717 ext. 435. Or you can contact the County Manager, Derek Ferland, at [dferland@sullivancountynh.gov](mailto:dferland@sullivancountynh.gov) or call at 863-2560.