

# Two new homeless shelters to open in Lowell

City investing \$2M in two Community Teamwork projects



By [MELANIE GILBERT](#) | [mgilbert@lowellsun.com](mailto:mgilbert@lowellsun.com)

PUBLISHED: March 14, 2024 at 4:06 a.m. | UPDATED: March 14, 2024 at 4:06 a.m.

LOWELL — The city of Lowell is investing a total of \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding for two new homeless shelters, including one that will be focused on supporting the needs of unhoused women.

“Councilors, this is a really exciting time,” City Manager Tom Golden said during [Tuesday’s City Council meeting](#). “There have been many people who have come to the microphone saying the city of Lowell is not doing what we can. This is something that this council has talked about, been very aggressive on. The proof is certainly right here in the pudding.”

Community Teamwork Inc. bought the former rooming house property at [275-277 Summer St.](#) in November 2022, and renovated it into 19 efficiency apartments. Each unit will contain its own bathroom and kitchenette. The nonprofit is also working to open the [Lotus House for Women](#), a 50-bed shelter for homeless women on Church Street.

CTI Director of Individual Homeless Services Renata Rourke and Chief Planning and Development Officer Ann Sirois presented an overview of the two projects to the council, saying shelter and housing needs will be prioritized based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s [Coordinated Entry program](#). “For the placement for the 19 units on Summer Street, everyone will have to go through Coordinated Entry, due to our [continuum of care funding](#),” Rourke said. “Coordinated entry is a scoring system for homeless individuals, which makes it equitable — the most vulnerable get top-picked to go in there.” Rourke said Lowell’s coordinated entry region includes Dracut, Billerica and other surrounding towns, and eligible individuals could come from Lowell, as well as other communities.

“Looking at the coordinated entry list, out of the top 10, about seven of them are either coming out of a CTI shelter or Lowell Transitional (Living Center),” Rourke said. “... I can’t say that they are all living in Lowell, but the majority are residing here within our shelter system, within our community.”

Councilor Kim Scott supported the housing plan, but bristled at the idea of Lowell continuing to bear more than its fair share of the response and expense to the homeless crisis.

“Obviously, we need shelter,” she said. “We certainly need to do more. When we saw numbers in Lawrence that had 20 shelter beds, Haverhill 30 shelter beds, and we’re using taxpayer money here in Lowell to fund these shelters — it doesn’t feel right to me that there isn’t some kind of impact fee that these other towns and cities have to provide when they place people here . . . . It’s just concerning that the cities and towns aren’t doing enough.”

Residents of the Summer Street property will benefit from a permanent supportive housing model which will include addressing their transportation and health care needs. They will also have access to employment and educational opportunities, financial literacy and help accessing state benefits and legal support.

The building sits across from South Common Park in the city’s Back Central neighborhood, and between the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office and [Eliot Presbyterian Church](#).

Last March, the [state-funded program](#) that used emergency COVID-19 relief money since 2020 to expand both shelter and hotel beds for unhoused residents ended, and the city and its service providers saw an [increase in need](#) with the number of unhoused people in Lowell swelling to at least [300 unhoused people](#). The increased population [stressed available shelter bed spaces](#) in the city, and combined with numerous [encampment sweeps](#), the area around the South Common Park saw an uptick in the space being used as a de facto [homeless encampment](#). CTI has historically provided emergency shelter and services for families, and increased its housing capacity for homeless adults during the pandemic. Bringing nearly 70 more units online continues its mission of addressing the housing and homeless crisis in the city, said CEO Karen Frederick.

“These two projects, Summer Street Apartments which will provide 19 units, and Church Street, which will provide 50 beds for Women only, demonstrate our commitment to develop housing for those individuals in our community most in need,” Frederick said by email. “We are grateful to the City of Lowell for their partnership and \$2M investment of ARPA funds, along with our other Funders, Massachusetts Alliance for Supportive Housing, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, The Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation, and Santander Bank for helping to bring these much needed housing projects to fruition.”

After two years of planning and construction, the organization will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Summer Street Apartments, on March 22, from 10 to noon at the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office, 291 Summer St. The event is open to the public. An open house and tour will follow.

CTI is accepting donations of bedding and other essential items for the Summer Street residents. Visit [bit.ly/3vkKffE](https://bit.ly/3vkKffE) for more information.