



Frequently Asked Questions About Supportive Housing & Mason Place

What is happening with the Midtown Arts Center?

Housing Catalyst is building 60 apartments with support services, called Mason Place, for people with a disability who are homeless. The community is designed based on a supportive housing model to provide affordable homes along with concentrated support services for the most vulnerable people in our community. This model has proven to be the most effective way to solve homelessness in cities throughout the country.

Housing Catalyst purchased the Midtown Arts Center in January 2018. The Center will continue its programs and remain open through August 2019. Redevelopment of the building will begin in late 2019 and conclude in late 2020. Housing Catalyst will add one more floor to the top of the current building height, which is now two stories tall. The three-story building will contain 60 apartments along with a community rooms, laundry rooms and offices for staff and services.

What is supportive housing?

Supportive housing looks and functions much like any other type of housing. People have their own apartments, which they are responsible for, just like other members of the community. In addition, they have a case manager onsite to help them build independent living skills and connect them with health care, treatment and employment services. Supportive housing is a nationally recognized model to help end homelessness and reduce social services costs.

Is this a homeless shelter?

No. Mason Place combines housing and services for people who need support to live stably and independently in their community. It is a permanent solution to homelessness, rather than a stop-gap, emergency solution that only provides a place to sleep for the night.

Is this free housing?

This is not free housing. Residents are required to pay 30 percent of their income, which includes income from employment, social security, disability and related benefit programs.

How will residents be selected and screened?

Prospective residents must have been experiencing homelessness and have a disability. An assessment tool is used to determine vulnerable individuals. It includes indicators such as high mortality risks, health conditions, mental health disorders, and lack of social supports. Resident screening includes a criminal background check and an intake interview. We do not accept registered sex offenders, people convicted of violent crimes, nor anyone convicted of manufacturing methamphetamine. Applicants must also demonstrate a commitment to living within the supported community and meet federal income guidelines.

How long do people stay in supportive housing?

Residents may live in their apartment as long as they pay their rent and abide by their lease agreement. Our experience has shown the positive effect that supportive housing has on the lives of formerly homeless individuals. At our supportive housing community, Redtail Ponds, over 93% of residents are still in their apartment after one year.

What services will residents receive?

Case managers are available for each resident. The goal is to provide residents with the skills and strategies necessary to achieve long-term stability and self-reliance. Case management services range from the simple (using the bus system, proper personal hygiene, or cooking) to the complex (accessing treatment for mental health issues, applying for a job, or obtaining healthcare benefits).

What are your smoking policies?

Smoking is prohibited inside all of Housing Catalyst's homes. Designated exterior smoking areas are established at each property.

How will this affect property values?

Study after study has found no connection between supportive housing and any effect on the property values of neighboring homes. Mason Place will be a well-designed, attractive building that will be well-maintained. Housing Catalyst owns and manages many other properties in Fort Collins and we demonstrate high standards for keeping our properties attractive and well-maintained.

Will this increase crime in the area?

Research across the country has shown that rather than contributing to neighborhood crime, supportive housing can even decrease crime in an area. Mason Place will increase the security of the area with improved exterior lighting and security cameras. The presence of 24-hour staff will give more "eyes on the street." Loitering will not be permitted on the premises and criminal activity by any residents will not be tolerated.

How will you address panhandling?

Panhandling is protected speech under the First Amendment and is legal in Fort Collins. Housing Catalyst cannot include a prohibition against panhandling in resident leases, however, staff do discourage it. With a place to live, a base of support services and help obtaining eligible benefits, our experience has been that residents do not engage in panhandling.

The City of Fort Collins Panhandling Ordinance does prohibit panhandling (defined as knowingly approaching, accosting, or stopping another person in a public place and soliciting for a gift of money or thing of value) if it involves any of the following conduct:

- In a manner that is threatening, intimidating, coercive or obscene
- Touching or grabbing the person being solicited
- Directing fighting words at the person being solicited
- Obstructing free passage of pedestrians on public sidewalks

If you encounter any of these prohibited behaviors, you may call 221-6540 and report it to Fort Collins Police Services.

How is the building staffed?

The building will have staff onsite 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is our experience that supporting residents at all times is a critical piece to their success in this setting. The onsite staff includes case managers, resident support staff, property management, and a program manager. All staff are trained in this population's special needs and how to respond appropriately.

Why was this site selected?

This site was a prime opportunity based on its proximity to public transportation, retail, recreation and employment opportunities, in addition to its bicycle and pedestrian accessibility. The development of this property fits well with the City's adopted Midtown Plan, which states that housing, in the form of apartments and townhomes, should be developed to take advantage of the MAX transit system and to make more efficient use of land that is close to the city center.

How will this project be funded?

Funding for the project's development and construction will be provided primarily by housing tax credits. A combination of other funds such as HOME dollars (federal funds allocated by the City of Fort Collins and the Colorado Division of Housing), and funds from the State of Colorado Marijuana Tax fund and City of Fort Collins Affordable Housing fund, rent paid by the residents, as well as federal and state housing vouchers.

Will the project attract other homeless people to the area?

Mason Place will not be providing any services for people who are not residents. Non-residents cannot loiter, receive goods or services or even apply for housing there. Additionally, we have specific guest policies that differ from most apartment communities. Guests will be required to produce a photo I.D. and sign in and out as a guest and they must also be escorted by a resident at all times. Residents are held accountable for the behavior of their guests and visitors. Guests cannot arrive earlier than 8 a.m. and must leave by 11:00 p.m. or they will be counted as overnight guests. Residents are limited to 14 overnight guests per year, which is a HUD regulation and can be enforced through the lease.