

LOCAL

Early look at Strafford County's 150-unit affordable housing plan in Dover



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Key Points

- Strafford County commissioners are planning to build 150 affordable housing units on county-donated land in Dover.
 - The project is estimated to cost \$45 million, which the county hopes to fund through grants with no impact to taxpayers.
 - The county plans to partner with a nonprofit organization that will operate the housing complex once it is completed.
 - The proposed site is behind the county jail and adjacent to a new warming center currently under construction.
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DOVER — Strafford County commissioners are looking to proceed at full speed on their plan for [affordable housing](#) on [land](#) it would donate behind the county's House of Corrections. The site is adjacent to the new [warming center](#), which is under construction.

Commission Chair George Maglaras on Aug. 27 told the commission he received preliminary information on what the housing might look like. He said Hutter Construction and Warrenstreet Architects, which have worked with the county before, donated services to look at the feasibility of building 150 affordable housing units in three buildings. The county would work with a nonprofit agency, which would take over operations of the new complex once completed.

Maglaras said a request for quotes (RFQ) process is planned to identify a nonprofit to operate the housing.

"We have a half dozen groups already expressing an interest," he said.

Maglaras said Hutter donated the estimated pricing structure for the project, which would go out to bid. He said Warrenstreet donated preliminary site plans and an initial drawing of the proposed buildings.

Maglaras said Warrenstreet made some layout changes from the original concept as a result of trying to meet parking requirements. He said Warrenstreet already has all the soil and wetland analysis information from when the county was researching a plan to build a new nursing home in the same area.

Grants would be sought for project estimated at \$45 million

Hutter Construction estimates the project would cost about \$45 million, with about \$250,000 for each unit, plus parking lots and other infrastructure.

Maglaras stressed the information is only a concept at this point. No contracts are in place.

"Both of these firms were willing to work on their dimes to help us have a better idea of what we are looking at," said Maglaras. "We need to write an RFQ, need help from our nonprofit sector to see if anyone has experience working with [New Hampshire Housing](#). They finance projects of this nature. Grants are competitive, but I think this type of project would rank very high on their scale."

Strafford County Administrator Ray Bower said NH Housing staff look for affordability and land availability.

"Our land is at no cost," Bower said. "Technically we do not pay taxes. and we already have power, city water and sewer services available."

Bower will write the RFQ working with other state experts. He mentioned seeking help from Strafford County Regional Planning and possibly Betsey Andrews Parker, CEO of Community Action Partnership of Strafford County, who he said is skilled in grant writing for this type of project.

Affordable housing a dire need in Strafford County

In talking about the need for affordable housing, Maglaras said even county employees have told him they are interested.

"They can't afford rent easily; it's so high now," said Maglaras. "We are trying to help. I have been seeing on social media that people say the housing should not be for warming center folks, coming to do drugs. That is not what this is but maybe we can help some of them get on the right path. People do not realize we run a transitional housing program here already for people coming out of jail with no place to go. We do discharge planning and we have a waiting list. We try to make sure they have a job, and for a time they are going back to transitional housing." Maglaras said the commissioners goal is to do this project with no impact to taxpayers.

"I think this will be a great addition to the county complex," he said.

He said the county's delegation of state representatives in the New Hampshire House would need to approve the project by a majority vote.