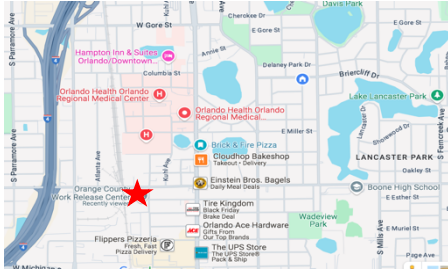


IMPORTANT NOTICE about Your Neighborhood



Orlando City Council has initially approved opening a **new 300-bed homeless shelter for all of the County's unhoused within ~1-mile of your home** at the former Work Release Center on West Kaley Street (across from the Voting Center)

What type of shelter was approved for the Kaley location in SoDo?

- It will be an "Open Access Shelter" offering services 24-hrs/day, 7 days/wk, with low barrier admission, and **open to anyone in the County (or from elsewhere** if they are brought to Orange County by other districts in Florida).^a Services include employment, substance abuse support/medical/mental health, personal belonging storage, beds for those with pets or unmarried partners and access for those without identification^{a b c}
- Following a 5-2 vote on 11/4/2024, Orlando City Council approved taking next steps to assess economic feasibility of the project, with reported plans to notify surrounding neighborhoods in the first quarter of 2025.^{c d}

Who will pay for the facility?

- Orlando taxpayers will cover initial costs to convert the building into a usable space and pay ongoing expenses of operating another big shelter.^d

Why did the Mayor and the County press for another shelter in Orlando?

- The Mayor pushed for shelter approval so that \$626 million in Tourist Development Dollars from Orange County could be secured for investment in Orlando stadiums.^{d e} It was part of a larger deal to end fighting over land annexations between Orlando and the County, despite negotiations being done against interests/presence/knowledge of those directly affected.^{c d} For example, the SoDo location was excluded from earlier discussions on viability of shelter locations, yet added to a land annexation agreement without stakeholder knowledge and without any level of review like the other 23 sites were given.^d The Council "utilized the minimum legally-required timeframe, avoided community feedback, and scheduled a special single-item meeting the day before a major national election."^d
- Before initial approval on 11/4/2024, 23 other locations^{a f} were considered by the Council but rejected, including in Sept 2024 by a community of residents emphasizing the problematic cost of further concentrating resources for the unhoused in one area.^{g h i}

How many homeless shelters are in Orange County? & What does research say about shelters?

- All Orange County homeless shelters are located in one area of Orlando – the westside – with none anywhere else in Orange County.^{d h}
 - **9+ shelters w/ >600 beds are on Orlando's westside**^{j k} (>240 w/in 2miles of SoDo & ~500 beds w/in 3miles of SoDo).^{l m n o p q}
 - **0 shelters are on Orlando's eastside** (after 1 shelter w/ 28 beds closed in 2023^r) despite the eastside's many thriving downtowns.
 - **0 homeless shelters are anywhere in Orange County beyond Orlando City limits**^k.And, Orlando houses 59 of 69 Orange County non-shelter services offered to homeless.^k
- Research and policy makers emphasize problems with this type of resource concentration and instead recommend small dispersed shelters^{s t u}.

Do we have enough beds in Orlando for the homeless?

- According to Orlando officials, 759 homeless live in the County, with more than half already living near downtown Orlando.^a That means, Orlando westside currently has approximately enough beds for all Orlando unhoused. Adding 300 beds in SoDo:
 - is meant to fill unmet needs of Orange County homeless living outside of Orlando,
 - will lead to an excess of beds for the entire homeless population in the County, and
 - will further concentrate resources and burden.

Note that adjacent counties - Osceola and Seminole - have less than 100 beds, suggesting that those counties too may choose to bring their homeless population to the nearest open access hub for the unhoused (i.e., SoDo).^d

What are examples of other "Open Access Shelters"?

- The City of Orlando cited other Open Access Shelters in Florida as models:^a
 - The Urban Rest Stop in Jacksonville (no beds^v),
 - Grace Marketplace in Gainesville (recent reduction in hours and beds after budget cuts, now 90 beds^w),
 - Camillus House Miami (3/4 reduction of beds due to contract disputes over cost, now 90 beds^x),
 - Pinellas Safe Harbor (470 beds, 2.4 stars of 471 Google Reviews^y), and
 - First Step Shelter in Daytona Beach (100 beds but not enough interest in filling all beds^z).

When these facilities downsized or closed, homeless often returned to living on the street^x in the nearby communities. A local example of this type of closure is the Covenant House for homeless youth, which closed in 2023 due to financial challenges.^{aa} Further, even when there are available beds, many choose to stay on the street for various reasons, including fear of theft, assault, and sanitation within these facilities^{bb}.

Why are there concerns about another homeless shelter in SoDo?

- Adding a big “low barrier admission” shelter (requiring no identification and serving all of Orange County) will bring most of the unhoused from across the County to this facility, regardless of their level of stability, willingness to sleep in the shelter, or willingness to comply to the rules. (Examples of non-compliance that lead to refusal from open access shelters are provided in this endnote ^c). Those that do not comply will relocate to the street in the local area. Thus, the SoDo neighborhoods will likely see an influx of individuals living on our streets, especially the most unstable.
- While most homeless are not dangerous, research demonstrates that violent and non-violent crime increases in adjacent neighborhoods of shelters, especially when those resources are concentrated (e.g., > 50 beds) ^{t u s}. Our neighborhoods already experience break-ins, theft, squatting, public urination, indecent exposure, public drug use, aggressive behavior, and attacks on homeowners, due to our proximity to downtown where most homeless live. ^a **We carry ‘our weight.’**
- 5 schools and 5 parks are within easy walking distance (2-mile radius), plus many more if that radius expands a couple of miles.
- Considerable funds/effort were invested to make SoDo (Orange Ave) and Downtown Orlando more walkable and family friendly (e.g., attracting businesses, new construction). The location of this low barrier shelter is counter to these investments. Business owners are already discussing leaving the SoDo area due to the clear ramifications this shelter would have on their businesses.

What are the concerns about how this plan was approved?

- The County has leveraged \$626 million as contingency for Orlando’s adoption of this major open access shelter for OC’s homeless population ^d as a response to a recent Florida law that took effect on 10/1/2024 prohibiting sleeping/camping on public property and permitting governing bodies to be sued for non-enforcement. ^{a d} Although commissioners voiced concerns about the deal favoring the County and not Orlando residents’ interests, the plan was approved after a push from the Mayor citing fear of losing the County’s funds to invest in stadiums. ^d
- Despite initial plan approval, no steps have been taken to review recommendations made by research/policy holders, to engage the community, to listen to voiced concerns by commissioners/residents, to determine safety/security measures, or to identify: ^{d a}
 - who will operate the shelter,
 - what steps will be taken if unstable individuals are turned away from the shelter due to non-compliance,
 - what steps will be taken if there are more homeless brought to the shelter than capacity can handle, and
 - where will the new population of unhoused go if reduction in funds require partial to full closure of the facility in the future.

The fact that no other municipalities (eg, Winter Park, Winter Garden, Ocoee, Maitland) volunteered for this shelter and that OC needs to leverage \$626M to convince Orlando to adopt it implies it will not have the positive impact the Mayor suggests it will.

Orlando is and will be the only location for Orange County to move their unhoused. If community action is not taken now, we will concentrate all of Orange County, likely more, homeless in our neighborhood. This hurts our homeless, hurts our community, hurts our City. **Go to www.StopSoDoShelter.com for more info and how to get involved.**

^a www.orlando.gov/Our-Government/Mayor-City-Council/Buddy-Dyer/Mayors-Key-Priorities/Caring-for-Those-Experiencing-Homelessness/Open-Access-Shelter

^b <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2024/09/04/city-of-orlando-aims-to-invest-75m-toward-247-homeless-shelter/>

^c www.wesh.com/article/orlando-vote-homeless-shelter-sodo-neighborhood/62805480

^d <https://www.youtube.com/live/DUnheGbigxo?si=JmTd9Ox3-S1LhP>

^e <https://newsroom.ocfl.net/media-advisories/press-releases/2024/10/statement-from-orange-county-mayor-jerry-l-demings-on-the-proposed-interlocal-agreement-between-the-city-of-orlando-and-orange-county-october-25-2024/>

^f <https://mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2024/11/04/orlando-orange-county-interlocal-agreement>

^g <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2024/09/04/neighbors-blast-proposed-orlando-homeless-shelter-city-may-back-away/>

^h <https://www.cfpublic.org/housing-homelessness/2024-09-06/orlando-halts-proposal-for-massive-homeless-shelter>

ⁱ <https://mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2024/09/03/city-of-orlando-considers-open-access-homeless-shelter-in-district-5>

^j <https://libguides.ocfl.info/support/shelters>

^k https://www.ocfl.net/Portals/0/resource%20library/county%20commission/district%206/2024_06_HSNResourceGuide-CERT.pdf

^l <https://www.centralfloridahomeless.org/about-us#OurCampus>

^m <https://rightservicefl.org/node/18228>

ⁿ <https://rightservicefl.org/node/18229>

^o <https://db.ministrywatch.com/ministry.php?ein=591035082>

^p <https://zebrayouth.org/programs-services/housing/>

^q <https://rightservicefl.org/node/16502>

^r <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/news/orlandos-covenant-house-to-close-its-shelter-for-homeless-youth-this-summer-34326272>

^s Meni, D. Washington DC’s transitional housing plan: An analysis of externalities and sources of neighborhood opposition. *Policy Perspectives*, 24.

^t Galster, G., et al. (2002) The impact of supportive housing on neighborhood crime rates. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, 289-315.

^u Faraji, S., Ridgeway, G., & Wu, Y. (2018) Effect of emergency winter homeless shelters on property crime. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14, 129-140.

^v <https://urbanreststop.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

^w <https://www.gracemarketplace.org/news/grace-reduces-services-due-to-budget-cuts>

^x <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article295196409.html>

^y <https://homeless.cnsmaryland.org/2020/11/03/forerunner-of-new-federal-plan-to-combat-homelessness-didnt-work-as-expected-in-florida/>

^z <https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/news/local/volusia/2023/10/05/daytona-beach-homeless-shelter-can-now-handle-up-to-100-residents-at-a-time/71053447007/>

^{aa} <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/news/orlandos-covenant-house-to-close-its-shelter-for-homeless-youth-this-summer-34326272>

^{bb} <https://www.npr.org/2012/12/06/166666265/why-some-homeless-choose-the-streets-over-shelters>

^{cc} The open access shelter in Jacksonville – Urban Rest Stop (URS) - has the following written on their website: “Our staff are given full discretionary authority to deny service to any individual. If a staff member deems a patron to be too intoxicated, or otherwise incapable of using the service in a time efficient manner, then staff may turn them away for the day. If intoxication or inability to stay on time in our showers or laundry becomes habitual behavior, it may result in a longer term bar. Agitation towards staff or other patrons is never tolerated, and depending on the severity of the behavior may result in up to a lifetime bar. And of course direct acts of violence will always result in a lifetime ban from all URS facilities.” ^{cc}