

June 5, 2024

To the Mayor and City Council:

Those of us leading or supporting efforts to address houselessness write to urge you to include renewed funding in the City's FY25 budget to support the year-round Johnson Street Temporary Emergency Shelter.

We are grateful to the City for your past funding and understand the challenges and complexities involved in supporting the Johnson Street shelter. Until our community successfully addresses the affordable housing shortage, however, the need for safe, legal shelter year-round for Missoula's unhoused citizens at the Johnson Street location is clear. In 2023, the facility provided 20,099 nights of shelter to 905 unique individuals (588 men, 249 women, and 8 transgender individuals). This is a 14% increase over winter 2022-23. Nearly 200 people served (198) were veterans. The shelter also served 33,484 meals to 1,267 unduplicated individuals.

The Poverello Center and YWCA of Missoula's shelters are full and cannot accommodate the growing number of individuals seeking shelter. More than 250 people are on the waiting list for a pallet shelter at the Temporary Safe Outdoor Space, which is also full.

Maintaining the 165 additional shelter beds at the Johnson Street location meets multiple short-term goals including:

- 1) Providing a safe and warm 24/7 environment to keep neighbors safely sheltered, especially during adverse weather events across seasons (extreme cold, snow, wildfire smoke, extreme heat, extreme wind);
- 2) Providing a centralized location for service providers across the community to connect with unhoused neighbors to offer resources and support; and
- 3) Increasing Missoula's overall sheltering capacity, helping to enable City departments to maintain clean and safe public spaces across the community.

The Poverello Center will continue to staff and operate the shelter if funding is available. Public and private funding has made possible the construction of improvements to the shelter, such as improved bathroom facilities. While we recognize that the Johnson Street location is not ideal for a permanent shelter, it currently represents the best option for providing shelter to unhoused Missoulians, particularly during severe weather conditions. Missoulians for whom Johnson Street is the only option include elderly and disabled people, veterans, and working people contributing to our tax base and economy who simply cannot secure housing in this challenging market.

Regrettably, despite a record budget surplus, the state has offered little support for local communities dealing with the shelter crisis. The nonprofit sector alone cannot shoulder the responsibility for supporting year-round shelter. We need and respectfully request continued City funding for the Johnson Street shelter.

We express our gratitude to the Mayor and City Council for your demonstrated concern for your unhoused constituents and the organizations and programs assisting them. We urge you to include renewed funding for year-round shelter in the City's FY25 budget. Thank you for your consideration and your dedicated service.

Sincerely,



Susan Hay Patrick, CEO, United Way of Missoula County

On behalf of Missoula Houseless Leaders:

Jill Bonny, Executive Director, Poverello Center  
Ruth Burke, Executive Director, Human Resource Council  
Jen Euell, Executive Director, YWCA of Missoula  
Jim Hicks, Executive Director, Hope Rescue Mission  
Sam Oliver, Executive Director, Missoula Housing Authority  
Lara Salazar, CEO, Partnership Health Center  
Shannon Therriault, Interim Director and Health Officer, Missoula Public Health