



December 6, 2021

CC: HOME ARP Public Hearing  
City of Great Falls  
PO Box 5021  
Great Falls, MT 59403

Dear City of Great Falls Commission,

My name is Sherrie Arey, I am the Executive Director for NeighborWorks Great Falls – we are a non profit organization that has worked tirelessly for over 40 years to revitalize the Great Falls community and provide quality, affordable housing opportunities.

As we all are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had, and continues to have, immense impact on family's economic stability. This impact was amplified for those most vulnerable in our community and those on the fringe of homelessness. The economic implications of COVID-19 forced individuals and families into tough positions that impacted their families, their jobs, their already tight finances and as a result – their homes. The HOME-ARP funds are a vital tool that we urge you to utilize to create, preserve and support affordable housing development.

NeighborWorks Great Falls, along with our partner Homeword and many other community stakeholders are pursuing the redevelopment of the historic Baatz building. This project will create permanent supportive housing for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. We believe the power of quality affordable housing combined with supportive physical and behavioral healthcare, employment assistance and independent living services will create long term solutions for those most vulnerable in our community. This project is just one example of the type of change and progress that can be made with dollars such as the HOME ARP funds.

We thank you for your time and encourage you to use these funds for the creation and preservation of affordable housing and the services needed to support the residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherrie Arey".

Sherrie Arey  
Executive Director  
NeighborWorks Great Falls



My name is Jeff Wakeley and I am the Pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Great Falls. We are located at the corner of North Sixth Street and Second Avenue North. I am sure you are all aware of what has taken place at First United Methodist Church this past Spring, Summer and Fall with our allowing those who are homeless to gather on our property and even to spend the night and sleep on the property. The only thing we have asked them is not to drink alcohol on the property. If they have to drink they can do it elsewhere.

I understand that allowing the homeless to be on our property rather than running them off has upset people and businesses in the downtown area. It has even upset the church which is across the street from us. There are many reasons for what we are doing most of them are biblical and centered on following Jesus' example and commands. The simplest explanation we can give is that it is part of what we do. It's our business, but this is not the time and place to discuss that.

What this time is for is the opportunity to begin to deal with the issue of homelessness and its impact on the community. There are several ways to look at this issue, but the bottomline is that there are not enough places for the homeless to sleep in Great Falls. Either everybody, regardless of their socio-economic status, has the basic human right to sleep every night in a bed or they don't. It is obvious that the City does not believe that this is a basic human right that they are responsible for protecting. They have instead relied on the private non-profit business of The Union Gospel Mission to take care of the problem. The problem is that the Mission has only so much room available and they reserve the right to deny services to whomever they don't want to help. Let me be clear that there is nothing wrong with what they do but they cannot be expected to be the answer to Great Falls homeless and housing problems. The City needs to step up and create a homeless shelter for not only those who the Mission won't help but also for the many more who are sleeping in their cars and having to sneak into a friend's apartment for a few nights. There are simply not enough places for the homeless. The Great Public School System has said that there are 600 children in their schools that are homeless. There are not 600 places in Great Falls for them to sleep, much less live. Another homeless shelter that services everyone who is homeless regardless of whether they drink or couples live together outside of marriage or have pets is needed.

Addressing the homeless problem must be the basis of dealing with any kind of housing issue. Addressing issues of transitional housing and affordable housing will not be successful since many of the clients often find themselves falling through the cracks into homelessness. Most of them have a hard time digging out of the hole they find themselves in. Providing a place for them to live and sleep will begin to fill that hole up and make their lives less chaotic as they are now. It's in the City's best interest to bring all the pertinent social and housing agencies as well as churches together in creating more homeless shelters.

At a recent neighborhood council meeting, one of the attendees accused me and my church of enabling the homeless and their behavior. What I realize now is that it is our Church which has enabled the behavior and attitudes of the City Council and its leaders, both public and private, for their unwillingness to deal with the Community's homeless problem. The criticism leveled at

First United Methodist much of this past year has served as a distraction for their lack of dealing with the problem. The simple observation that there are homeless living on our property shows that there are not enough safe places for them to sleep and to live. And so I urge the City Council to take money from the ARP and build more homeless shelters that do not discriminate but rather recognize that every person no matter who they are or what they have done has a basic human right to a place to sleep and live in peace. This should and must be the starting place of any reasonable plan to address the lack of affordable housing in Great Falls.



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## Librium/Chlordiazepoxide inappropriate mistreatment towards inmates

1 message

**Josh Butterfly** <butterflyjosh4@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 4:30 PM

To: jesseslaughter@cascadecountymt.gov

I am with Project Opening Doors. On 06/18/2020 Carrie Burrafato was bailed out of Cascade County Detention Center shortly after 6:00 pm. When she got home it appeared that she was intoxicated. She was slurring her words and was very unstable. When I asked her if she was intoxicated she told me that she was not. She proceeded to tell me about her experience at the Cascade County Detention Center. She claimed that she was given a drug called Librium also known as Chlordiazepoxide that was administered by the medical staff with the assistance of booking officers. I took her to the emergency room and it was discovered that Librium/Chlordiazepoxide was in her system and she was suffering side effects. The medical staff and booking officer called it "DETOXING". When Mrs. Burrafato asked to use the phone on several occasions she was instructed to wait for the next shift after 5 pm. She made complaints to corrections staff and medical staff about the combination of two benadryl pink in color and four librium and how it made her feel given to her every 4 hour. I contacted the commissioners office regarding information on who I need to contact regarding this situation. I was instructed to contact Jesse Slaughter or Cory Reeves. Upon doing so I spoke with corrections worker Gary Poor who gave me the run around and collected my phone number instructing that you will call me back. However, this is not the first complaint that I received regarding the inappropriate mistreatment at the hands of corrections workers at the Cascade County Detention Center. There needs to be a level of respect when dealing with inmates especially those that are vulnerable such as little to no education, pre existing addictions, race, sex, and association. Mrs. Burrafato was given all her medication upon release by medical staff. They did not afford her the right to adequate medical treatment placing her at risk during her incarceration at the cascade county detention center. I am requesting that an investigation be conducted regarding this mistreatment of inmates especially Native Americans, African Amreicans and Mexicans. Thank you for your time.

Sheila Rice, 913 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

At a recent presentation to the State Financial Modernization & Risk Analysis Study (MARA), a researcher from the Pew Charitable Trust presented this information:

The pandemic proved that rents rise and fall quickly as incomes rise and fall

Homelessness is on the rise as families spend an increasing portion of their monthly incomes on rent and utilities. There is a direct correlation between higher rents and homelessness.

In 2019, Montana had the 14<sup>th</sup> highest homeless rate and the 4% largest increase in homeless rate of all the United States.

Supply shortage and increasing rents are caused by many factors, including private equity firms buying rentals and manufactured housing communities, rentals being transformed into short term vacation rentals and the imbalance between households being created and new apartments and homes available. The demand has outstripped supply.

The good news is this: there is an answer to homelessness:

Three words: permanent, supportive housing

Permanent – a person moves into the supportive housing and stays there.

Supportive – many services, including behavior and physical health services, social service navigation, employment support, transportation and other basic services.

Housing, or better put, a home. Low barriers mean that the individual or family experiencing homelessness receives a key to their home first; not after they have met certain rules and regulations. It is very hard, if not impossible to change behavior while you are still living on the street.

Does it work? Let's examine the Denver project, where 375 people were offered housing first – homes with supportive services. The program evaluation lasted 3 years and was conducted by a third party not affiliated with the project. The

evaluation was a comparison of people in the Denver project versus people not in the project.

Among the findings, the evaluators determined:

### **Housing Stability**

- **When people experiencing homelessness were offered housing, most took it and stayed for the long term.** Of those housed through the program, 86 percent remained in stable housing at one year. At two years, 81 percent remained in stable housing, and at three years, 77 percent remained.
- **The SIB significantly increased participants' access to housing assistance.** Over three years, people referred to supportive housing received an average of 560 more days of consistent housing assistance per person than those who received services as usual in the community.
- **SIB participants spent significantly less time in shelters.** People referred to SIB supportive housing experienced a 40 percent reduction in shelter visits and a 35 percent reduction in days with any shelter stays when compared with those in the control group.

### **Criminal justice system outcomes**

- **The SIB helped people reduce their interactions with the criminal justice system.** In the three years after being randomized into the evaluation, people referred to supportive housing had a 34 percent reduction in police contacts and a 40 percent reduction in arrests because of supportive housing when compared with those who received services as usual in the community.
- **SIB participants spent less time in jail.** In the three years after being randomized into the evaluation, participants referred to supportive housing had a 30 percent reduction in unique jail stays and a 27 percent reduction in total jail days when compared with those in the control group.

### **Health services outcomes**

- **Supportive housing helped people use less emergency health care and more office-based health care.** Two years after SIB participants were referred to supportive housing, they had a 40 percent decrease in emergency department visits, a 155 percent increase in office-based visits, and a 29 percent increase in unique prescription medications to support their wellbeing when compared with those who received services as usual in the community.

- **The SIB helped people reduce their use of short-term, city-funded detoxification facilities.** In the three years after participants were randomized into the evaluation, they had a 65 percent reduction in the use of detoxification facilities, which aren't equipped to provide follow-up treatment, when compared to people receiving services as usual in the community.

While the final payment to investors signifies an end to the formal program, Denver is continuing to invest in and support the supportive housing implemented through the Denver SIB through the City's General Fund budget. The City recently extended contracts with providers and evaluators to further deliver supportive housing and evaluate its outcomes for all current participants in SIB to remain housed and eligible for supportive services in 2021.

"This research proves what we know from our tireless efforts to resolve homelessness: when you combine housing with services, it works, it saves us money, and we need to do more of it," said Britta Fisher, Executive Director of the Denver Department of Housing Stability. "We are excited to put these findings to work in pay-for-performance investments going forward as we provide housing and services to people in need."

By shifting its focus from providing costly emergency services, to offering preventive care, the city saved money in the long run, program leaders said. "It has really confirmed everything that we as an organization have known about housing with supportive services, and that is, that it is the most effective way to house people who were experiencing homelessness — and keeps them housed," said Cathy Alderman, chief communications and public policy officer for the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, which provided housing to 260 participants.

I urge the City of Great Falls to make the HOME-ARP plan broad in scope, to allow for many uses of the funds. I further urge the City to allow the funds to be used for operations. Permanent supportive homes are more costly to operate than apartments that do not offer supportive services. The increased costs can be paid with HOME-ARP funds because the Federal Government recognizes the need for operations funding as well as construction funding.

Thank you for your time tonight.