

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Office of the Director

February 29, 2016

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman of the Council
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

In response to your letter dated February 19, 2016, regarding the Council of the District of Columbia's consideration of the proposed Bill-21-620, the Homeward DC Omnibus Approval of Facilities Plan for Short-Term Housing for Persons Experiencing Homeless Act of 2016, please see below.

- **A description of the Department of Human Services' role in assessing and selecting potential shelter sites**

The Department of General Services (DGS) worked in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop the criteria for the Short-term Housing Replacement Solicitation for Offer (SFO). The SFO was created in September of 2014 to solicit sites that could be identified as replacements for units at DC General family shelter.

All responses to the solicitations were directed to DGS. After a collective decision between DGS and DHS that a site met basic site qualifications, DGS arranged a site visit with DHS and the developer. DHS' Capital and Operations Management Division and the Family Service Administration (FSA) then visited each site location to determine if the site met all necessary program requirements.

Upon the decision that specific sites met both site qualifications and program requirements, DHS made recommendations to DGS to move forward with lease negotiations.

- **A description of the Department of Human Services' role in creating a budget for the construction and lease of each anticipated site**

During the FY16 Capital Budget submission process, DHS submitted a formal capital project request for \$40 million to build four new short-term family housing sites to help replace DC General. DGS estimated the budget for each site would cost approximately \$10 million per building. Twenty million dollars was approved in the FY16 budget and \$20 million for the FY17 budget. This budget was approved with DHS as the program agency and DGS serving as the implementing agency. DGS led the negotiations for each proposed site.

- **An explanation of the factors that led to the selection of each proposed site**

To acquire the 270 – 280 replacement units needed to close DC General, DHS and DGS developed criteria for the SFO. To achieve the programmatic goals and objectives of creating smaller-scale (no more than 50 units per site), dignified, attractive and service enriched facilities, we considered the following factors: roughly 30,000 square feet, preferably close to public transportation and other services and amenities, economically feasible, and could be developed within a 24-30 month timeline. In addition, the District’s Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) convened a diverse group of experts and stakeholders to provide recommendations on design requirements. The ICH recommendations and new Homeless Services Reform Act requirements¹ were incorporated into the negotiations with developers to ensure that the prospective site could meet or exceed these standards.

We started by looking at District-owned properties in the city’s inventory. Once we had exhausted that inventory, we looked for properties to purchase or lease. We released an RFP in late 2014 to get the best proposals from the community, and then last summer, we hired a broker to help us identify sites in wards where we had not yet identified feasible sites. In total, we reviewed 28 responses from all eight Wards. This was a rolling RFP process, so sites were evaluated upon submission. Because District government had committed to finding a total of 270 – 280 units, we could not bring the full package of sites to the Council or the public until we had agreements in place for each site—otherwise, we would not have met the 270 – 280 unit goal needed to close DC General.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information, and I look forward to the hearing on this bill scheduled for March 17, 2016.

Sincerely,



Laura Green Zeilinger
Director

cc: Yvette Alexander, Chairperson, Committee on Health and Human Services
Brenda Donald, Deputy Mayor, Health and Human Services
Christopher Weaver, Director, Department of General Services

¹ D.C. ACT 21-251 <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/34470/B21-0352-SignedAct.pdf>