

Bellingham Recovery House – 2019 Rotary Club of Bellingham Major Project Funds Request by Opportunity Council

Mission Statement: *Opportunity Council helps people improve their lives through education, support, and direct assistance while advocating for just and equitable communities.*

Purpose of the request: Capital funding is needed to rehabilitate two facilities for the purpose of creating much-needed housing to support people who are committed to their recovery and are participants in Whatcom County and Bellingham therapeutic courts. To date, 84% of the \$1.9 million needed has been secured. RCOB financial support will go a long way toward closing this gap.

A high community priority: The Recovery House fills high priority needs in response to our community's expressed goals: prevent incarceration, reduce homelessness, help individuals struggling with opioid addiction.

The Whatcom County Health Department completed extensive behavioral health facility needs assessments looking at current gaps in service and high readmission rates to Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health inpatient treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders.

Every recent assessment showed the need and community support for a Recovery House. The lack of local, evidence-based residential services is a factor in unsuccessful treatment outcomes here and throughout the North Sound region. A Recovery House located in Whatcom County is a critical component of an effective continuum of care.



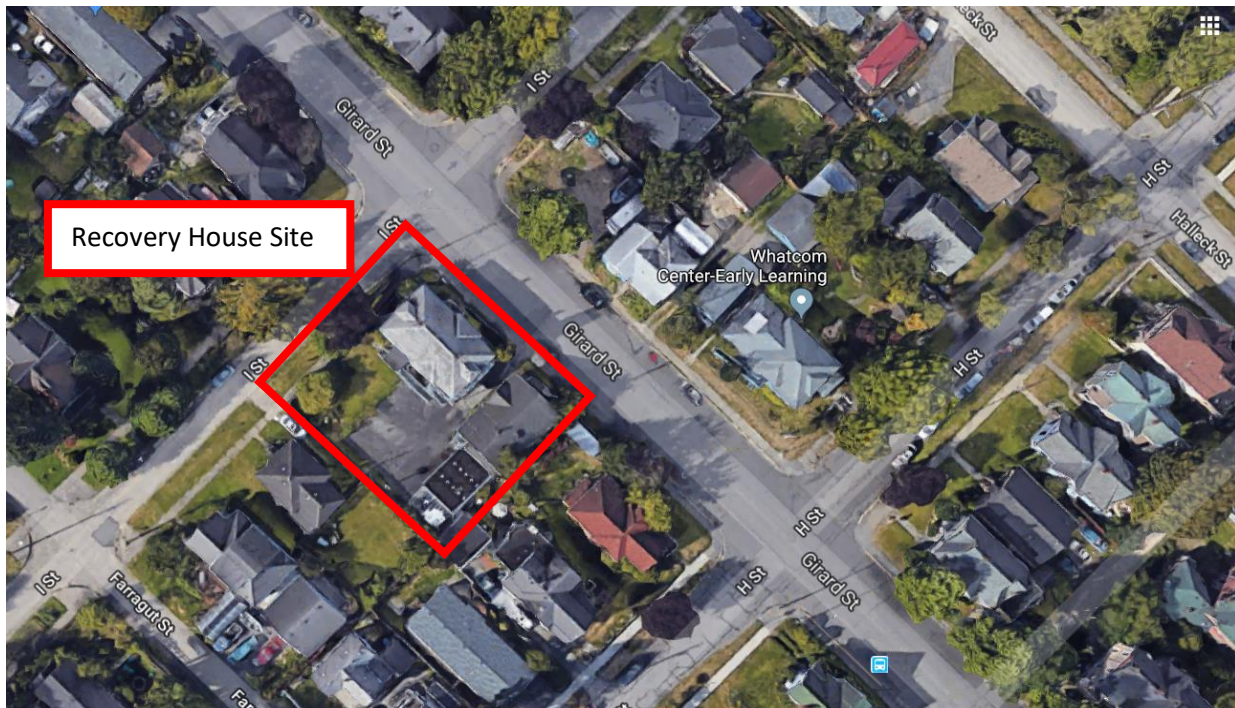
The Recovery House program model: Recovery House services are substance use disorder residential treatment services that provide a program of care and treatment with social, vocational, and

recreational activities to aid in individual adjustment to abstinence, relapse prevention, recovery skills development, and to aid in job training, employment, or participating in other types of community services. Opportunity Council will partner with Lifeline Connections, a nonprofit, licensed behavioral health treatment provider, to provide the 24/7 mental health and addiction treatment services (WAC 246-341-1112). The primary referrals into the program will be participants in Whatcom County and Bellingham therapeutic court programs (e.g. Drug Court and Mental Health Courts).

As the property owner, developer, and property manager, Opportunity Council intends to rehabilitate a property in Bellingham for the purpose of creating the Recovery House. The project breathes new life into a property on Girard Street, formerly the site of a recovery house and detox program when it was owned by PeaceHealth. Vacant for over ten years, the two buildings will be rehabilitated to WA Dept of Health standards for a Level 4 Recovery Residence (as specified by the National Alliance for Recovery Residences) that will be home to 16 residents for an average stay of six months.

This type of program provides peer-supported services plus life skills and clinical programming by a licensed treatment provider. This level of care includes a high degree of daily structure and 24/7 staffing. In addition, the program includes mental health services onsite provided by mental health professionals on staff. This project adds a significant, missing component to our local continuum of care. The emphasis of this level of care is equipping participants for the next phase of recovery, which could be another residential level of care, or independent living and employment.

This project was inspired by recommendations from Whatcom County's Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Taskforce, the Drug Court program staff, and Superior Court Judge Montoya-Lewis, who approached Opportunity Council seeking solutions to the extreme housing stability challenges of Drug Court participants.



Demonstrating the need through stories: The following two stories about recent Drug Court participants helps demonstrates the need for specialized recovery housing that provide professional and peer support to help residents achieve their goals, hold residents accountable to their recovery, and accept people who receive medication-assisted treatment.

Sam's story: Sam was a good kid, but as he says, 'I just made a lot of bad decisions. His family moved around a lot. His father was absent and his mother worked two jobs. As Sam got older he started running with a group that liked trouble. He began smoking cannabis at age 12 and methamphetamine at the age of 14. Sam dropped out of high school in the 9th grade. By age 17 he was injecting heroin and methamphetamine. By the time he was 19 he had his first felony conviction. He had been pulled over for a traffic infraction, the police found a bag of methamphetamine in his pocket.

If you asked Sam what he wanted out of his life he would tell you time with his son. He would tell you he wanted a healthy, clean and sober life with his girlfriend. He would say he wanted to teach his son new things, to watch movies with his family and build bicycles. He would say he wanted to go back to school, get his license, get a good job and find a home for his family.

At age 29, Sam entered Whatcom Drug Court in March of 2018. He was in jail on a number of drug related felony charges, and was facing prison time. Drug Court sent Sam to inpatient treatment. At the time of his return, he was homeless and his housing options were very limited. Sam was initially able to stay with his longtime girlfriend, however she was struggling with her own addiction and her subsidized housing would not allow him to stay for more than a couple of nights. Sam moved onto the streets and found shelter in church doorways and homeless camps around town. Remarkably, he was able to remain clean and sober while he waited almost one month for a clean and sober housing opportunity.

Once in clean and sober housing Sam was able to fully engage in outpatient treatment as well as spend time with his young son. Sam was fortunate to get into a Christian-based clean and sober house that provided the structure and accountability he needed. He was willing to follow the house's Christian principals and requirements. Fortunately, Sam was not on Medication Assisted Treatment, such as Suboxone, as this house does not allow certain medications. Soon thereafter, he found employment with a local fish processor to cover his rent. He moved in with his girlfriend after working with the housing provider to allow him to be on the lease. By that time his girlfriend was clean and sober and in treatment. The mother of Sam's young son, who was also in active addiction, "dropped his son off" for Sam and his girlfriend to take care of. Sam now has his 'family' together and he is working on the things that matter most to him.

Today Sam has over a year clean and sober, he completed outpatient treatment, found a good full-time job, set up a savings account, and began working on completing his GED. He has his son full-time and is working with CPS to be the permanent placement.

Joe's story: Joe was taught from a young age to never talk about what goes on in the home. Joe's parents were in active addiction and their life revolved around drugs, crime, violence, and prison. Joe had a high level of distrust for law enforcement and the court system. To this day he struggles with the truth. By the time Joe was 15 he was a full-blown alcoholic, heroin and meth addict. Joe dropped out of school in the 11th grade. He got his first drug related felony charge at the age of 16, and his first felony conviction by the time he was 25. He has since been to jail numerous times as well as prison.

Joe came into Drug Court with eight prior felony convictions – all related to his addiction. He has struggled for years to try and turn his life around. He entered Drug Court in September of 2018 and was referred to inpatient treatment. While in treatment Joe was prescribed Suboxone to help treat his heroin addiction. Joe has since been back to inpatient treatment two times. One of the biggest obstacles to staying sober was a lack of clean and sober housing that would allow him to be on his medication, and hold him accountable. These placements are limited and in demand. While waiting for a bed Joe lived with his wife and in-laws. His wife was in active addiction.

Drug Court was able to get Joe into a clean and sober placement; however, the placement had very limited supervision. Joe was not held accountable to the house and continued to struggle with relapse. He struggled to engage in outpatient treatment and was eventually discharged for non-compliance.

Joe is now with a new outpatient provider and appears to be making some meaningful changes, however he continues to struggle and his placement with Drug Court is tenuous. Joe would benefit greatly from a recovery house placement. He needs the supervision and accountability of a Recovery House program to learn new clean and sober living skills. He needs to be in a placement that understands Medication Assisted Treatment.

Important facts:

- When completed, this will be the only evidence-based recovery house program in Whatcom County.
- All residents will have made a commitment to recovery and graduated from inpatient treatment programs. Most will be participants in Therapeutic Specialty Courts, which are programs they must voluntarily opt in to - in other words, they've made a commitment to change, and they want to succeed.
- The vast majority of Drug Court participants are homeless at program entry.
- Ten percent of people in the US acknowledge they're in recovery- do you know someone?
- For every dollar spent in drug court, five dollars is saved down the line.
- Research shows people with behavioral health disorders are far more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.
- Research shows the longer a person is retained in treatment, the better the outcomes.



Project status: Whatcom County Health Department and North Sound Behavioral Health Organization collaborated on securing a \$970,000 capital grant from WA State Dept of Commerce in summer of 2018. Shortly thereafter, PeaceHealth donated its Girard Street properties to Opportunity Council for the purposes of this project (\$586,500 appraised value). Earlier this year, Whatcom County Health Department and Lifeline Connections secured start-up and operating funds that are committed to this project.

Opportunity Council has conducted neighborhood outreach, received unanimous support for the project from the Lettered Street Neighborhood Association Board of Directors, and presented the project at a general Neighborhood Association meeting.

Opportunity Council has procured the services of Ron Wright and Associates Architects to design the rehabilitation plan in close coordination with the WA State Dept of Health.

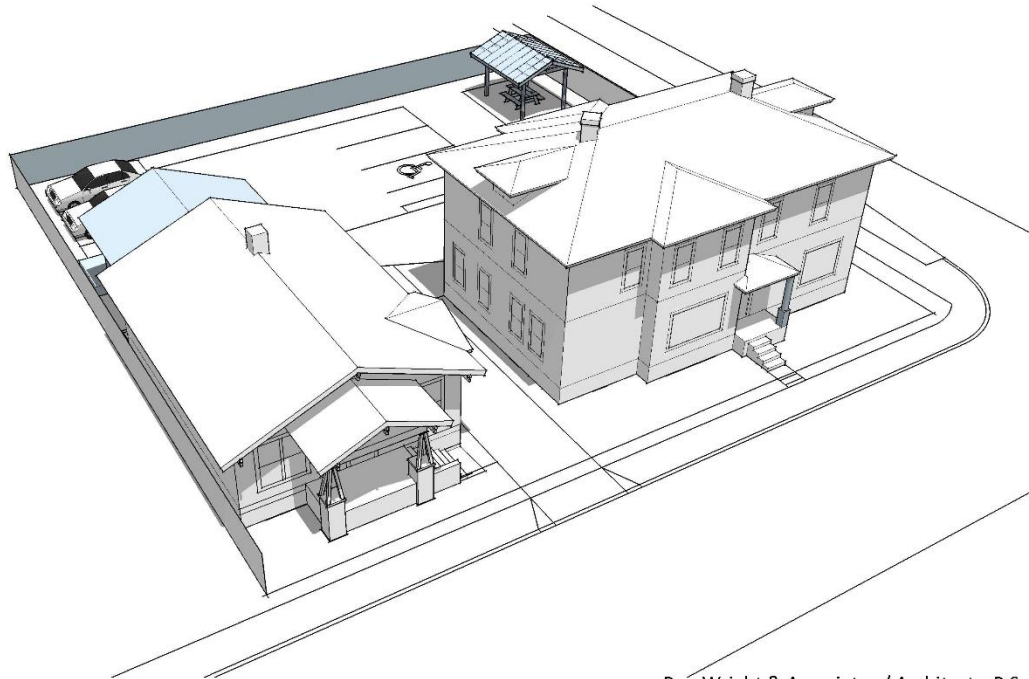
Opportunity Council has briefed City of Bellingham staff on the Recovery House project and intends to request approximately \$200,000 from the Bellingham Home Fund to complete the project.

Capital budget			Secured to date	
Property acquisition	\$589,000		PeaceHealth	\$586,500
Construction	945,000		WA Commerce	\$970,000
Soft costs	244,500			
Replacement reserves	20,000			
Other development costs	58,000			
Total	\$1,856,500			\$1,556,500

Amount of RCOB request: \$100,000

RCOB recognition: RCOB’s support will be advertised on Opportunity Council’s website and social media; there will be two opportunities for media coverage at both the groundbreaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies (to which RCOB members will be invited); a permanent plaque recognizing RCOB’s and its major donors will be placed in a place of prominence at the Recovery House.

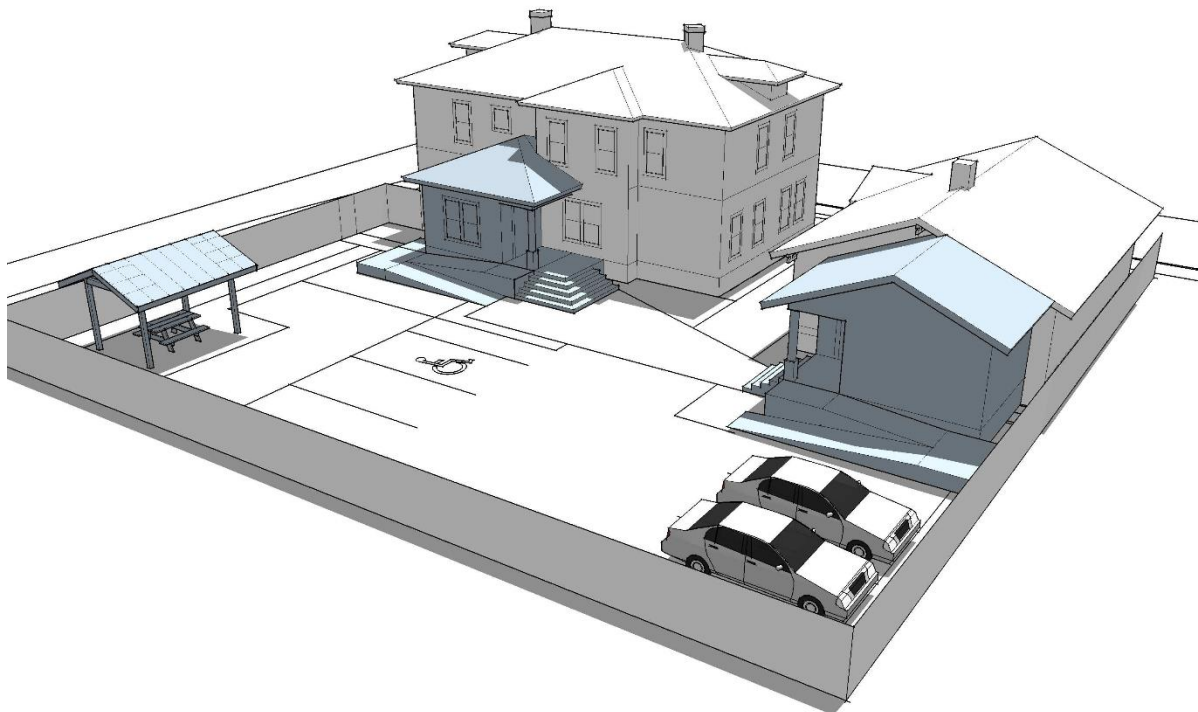
Volunteer opportunity: Opportunity Council intends to build volunteer and material donation opportunities into the property rehabilitation plan. Most likely this will involve work parties organized by our general contractor, and the opportunity for RCOB-involved business owners/managers to donate building materials to the project.



Recovery House

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Ron Wright & Associates / Architects, P.S.
2003 Western Avenue, Suite 610
Seattle, Washington 98121



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