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# Light House Shelter to triple its size

## New building will serve more families and will have room for daytime services

By **ANDREA F. SIEGEL**

By this time next year, the Annapolis area will be served by a new Light House Shelter for the homeless, one that can house three times as many people as the existing shelter and adds daytime services for those in dire situations as well as expands programs to help people improve their lives.

"We were turning away so many people," said Harry Cole, executive director of the Light House Shelter, recalling a decision a few years ago by the shelter's board of directors. "We did not have the capacity to serve the needs."

The existing two-story building in the city of Annapolis has about 5,000 square feet of shelter space, with 15 beds and two family apartments.

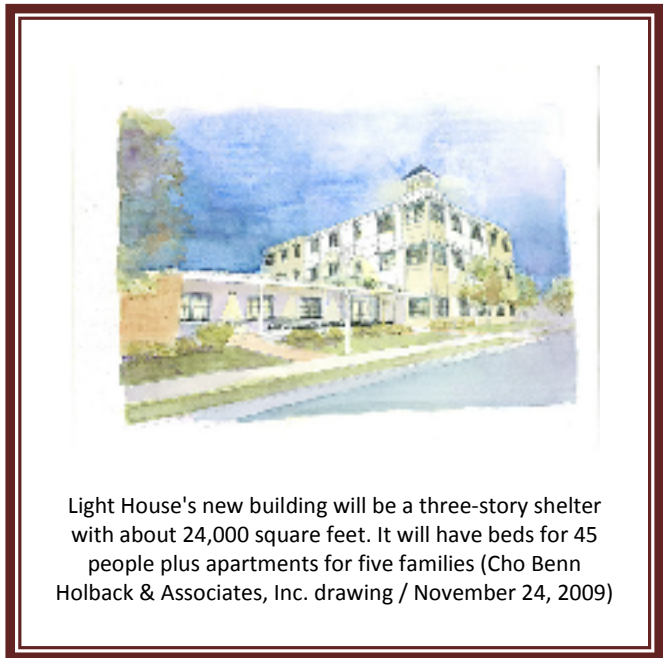
The new three-story shelter that will straddle the city-Anne Arundel County line is about 24,000 square feet, and will have beds for 45 people plus apartments for five families, Cole said.

The current shelter lacks space for much programming and training. The new one will include space dedicated to expanded programming and serve more people.

During the day, a resource center will offer job preparation, education, counseling and more.

Also new will be a center for chronically homeless people to shower, eat, obtain medical care and receive mail and other services, Cole said.

On a bus line and near shopping and businesses, the new shelter is near the intersection of West Street and Route 2, which will make it convenient for its residents, Cole said.



Light House's new building will be a three-story shelter with about 24,000 square feet. It will have beds for 45 people plus apartments for five families (Cho Benn Holback & Associates, Inc. drawing / November 24, 2009)

The Light House has a waiting list of about 300 people, and a shelter in the northern region of the county is always full as well.

The new shelter "will certainly expand the county's and city's capacity," said Marcia Kennai, director of the county's Department of Social Services.

The three major shelters serving Anne Arundel County are the Light House in the Annapolis area, the Arundel House of Hope in the Glen Burnie area, both run by ministerial organizations that also operate emergency shelters during cold weather; and Sarah's House, operated by Catholic Charities on Fort Meade, mostly for women and children. In cold winter months, churches provide emergency shelter as well, Kennai said.

The City of Annapolis has chipped in \$400,000 toward construction of the new shelter plus more than \$100,000 in waived fees, said Mayor Ellen O. Moyer.

"It has many programs for the people who need the social benefits and support when times get really tough for them," she said.

The Light House this month received a \$1.2 million state grant toward its new facility. So far, with the addition of money from businesses, organizations, religious groups and individuals, Cole said, the shelter has reached \$6.2 million of the roughly \$8.2 million cost of the building and land. It recently embarked on a public fundraising campaign.

Anne Arundel County is putting \$250,000 toward Light House construction over three years, said County Executive John R. Leopold. He said he made a commitment that if an anti-panhandling bill was passed in the General Assembly for the county, "I had a responsibility to help the homeless." The bill passed the legislature in 2007.

The new building, designed by the Baltimore architectural firm of Cho Benn Holback & Associates Inc., also will include many energy-efficient features, geothermal heat and a reflective roof among them.

The larger space also will allow the shelter's staff to reclaim offices they've been sharing with a younger crowd.

"The kids don't have anywhere to play. They come into our offices with their toys," Cole said.

The 1.4-acre property will feature a playground, he said. A garden is also in the plans.

Run by Annapolis Area Ministries Inc., the shelter was begun in 1989. Two years later, it moved into its current building on West Street a few blocks from the downtown hub of Church Circle. That building is for sale, with proceeds earmarked for the new building.

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