



A Message to Our Neighbors

Introducing our new KentHOPE Resource Center for Women and Children

How big a problem is homelessness in Kent?

- In January 2016, the annual [One Night Count](#) survey discovered 165 homeless people living unsheltered in Kent. This represents a growing number of individuals, up 211% from the 2013 count of 53.
- Of our 165 homeless neighbors in Kent, 42 were in cars or trucks and 60 were sleeping in bushes or under growth.
- In November 2015, a homeless state of emergency was declared in King County and continues today.

What is KentHOPE?

KentHOPE is a community organization of neighbors and leaders who work to reduce homelessness in our city. We have existed since 2011 when a group of Kent citizens saw the effects first hand that people experiencing homelessness in Kent had no day services and few overnight options. Since 2013, KentHOPE has been operating the KentHOPE Women and Children's Day Center at 9009 Canyon Drive and in 2014 started providing overnight shelter in partnership with local churches. The KentHOPE Day Center is operated by staff from Seattle's Union Gospel Mission, with 84 years of experience helping people out of homelessness.

What is this new project being proposed?

The City of Kent has amended city zoning to allow KentHOPE and Seattle's Union Gospel Mission to build the **KentHOPE Resource Center for Women and Children** on a portion of land next to the First Presbyterian Church at 9425 S. 248th St. The building will be approximately 6,000 square feet and will be located to the northeast of the church building.

Who will operate the KentHOPE Resource Center for Women and Children?

Seattle's Union Gospel Mission will operate the center according to their time-tested guidelines for the smooth operation of a facility for women and children experiencing homelessness. These guidelines allow us to meet the needs of the guests while minimizing the impact on the surrounding community. KentHOPE will provide all volunteers for the facility, many of whom already volunteer at the KentHOPE Women and Children's Day Center.

If we already have a day center for women and children, why do we need another?

We are serving increasingly large numbers of women and children (an average of 30 women and 3 children every day) in a very small house of 1,400 square feet. We need a larger space. We now shelter women overnight in 11 local churches and transport the women between the day center and shelter churches. Our new facility would have day services and shelter for the night in one place. We cannot provide overnight shelter for children now, but would be able to in the new facility.

How many women and children will we house at the resource center? Will there be men there? Will there be entire families?

We are designing the KentHOPE Resource Center to accommodate up to 30 women and their minor (age 17 and under) children. We are uncertain about the quantity of children that will accompany their moms to the resource center, but anticipate that with the new facility we will be able to effectively serve more children. We are designing a facility that will be flexible for various family configurations, ranging from women with no children to moms with several children. No homeless men will be able to enter the facility and we will not house entire families.

What is the construction timeline?

We estimate the following schedule from the date of approval of the zoning amendment on February 16, 2016.

- 1-3 months: Lease agreement with First Presbyterian Church and Presbytery; includes survey of property and determination of fair market value
- 3 months: Conditional Use Permit process, including a public hearing
- 6 months: Architect programming and design – working closely with City of Kent planning department for code compliance

Our expectation is that construction could begin as early as in a year – perhaps spring of 2017 – largely dependent on funding sources and fundraising.

Will we screen the guests?

All guests will complete an intake appointment upon entry, which requires identification, review & signature of the guidelines of the facility and consequences of not following the guidelines, and a background check. Any individual who brings alcohol or drugs on property, acts violent or aggressive in any way, or steals, will be asked to leave.

How will the KentHOPE Resource Center deal with safety issues?

The goal is that because of the center, the whole neighborhood is safer, not just homeless persons. We will accomplish this in a number of ways.

- First, by having many of Kent's homeless neighbors sleeping inside, in a safe and staff supervised environment, the streets are safer for everyone at night.
- Next, center staff and volunteers will be trained in Mental Health First Aid and de-escalation. They will carefully monitor the area around the center for safety. Illegal/dangerous activity will be reported to the police, particularly drug use or sale. The center must be, and have the reputation of being, a safe place. Only a safe place can achieve the therapeutic value needed to help people overcome the personal brokenness that has kept them homeless.
- Accordingly, staff and volunteers will engage in regular safety walks inside, around, and in the vicinity of the building. These walks occur at all hours, morning, daytime, evening, and night. The sleeping areas and bathrooms are checked twice an hour (or more) throughout the night by staff and volunteers.
- Also, center personnel are available for call-out as a downtown resource. A downtown business proprietor can call the center for assistance with engaging a homeless person, including morning wake-up.

How will you deal with litter such as cigarette butts, etc.? How will this resource center affect the value of my home and this neighborhood?

Our goal is that our neighbors would note an *improvement* in cleanliness with the opening of the resource center. The new building and surrounding landscaping will be designed to look residential, not institutional, and be aesthetically pleasing. There has been no negative impact during the two years that the current KentHOPE Day Center has been open. The people who use the resource center will be responsible, in supervised groups, for keeping the area clean and free from litter. Clean-up and safety walks are a regular part of all Seattle's Union Gospel Mission facilities. Being a good neighbor is critical to success.

What will this project cost the City of Kent? What will it cost taxpayers?

KentHOPE and Seattle's Union Gospel Mission will be completely responsible for the costs of operating the resource center. This includes garbage and utilities, as well as maintenance of the building. The KentHOPE partnership is not asking the City or its taxpayers for any money at all.

If I have a comment or question, what should I do?

Join us for an informational meeting! **First Presbyterian Church and Seattle's Union Gospel Mission will host a neighborhood presentation on Tuesday, March 8 from 7 - 8:15pm at First Presbyterian Church.** You'll have a chance to hear about the upcoming project plans and be invited to share your questions and comments as well as learn how you can be a part of this exciting opportunity to help our neighbors in need.

At any point, you may send an email to us at info@kenthope.org. If you give us a phone number, we will be happy to call you. The complete FAQ will be posted on the KentHOPE website, www.kenthope.org, and you may sign up for our email updates. Seattle's Union Gospel Mission's web site, www.ugm.org, will also provide good information about their programs.

We are hoping to construct a facility that is similar to this resource center in Manhattan, Kansas:

