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VALLEY NEWS

Nonprofit plans to build housing in Hanover for adults with developmental disabilities



• An artist's rendering of the proposed Hanover, N.H., location for Visions for Creative Housing Solutions on Park Street. The organization provides housing for adults with developmental disabilities. (Courtesy Studio Nexus Architects + Planners) —

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HANOVER — A nonprofit organization that provides housing for adults with developmental disabilities is closing in on the groundbreaking for its newest location.

Visions for Creative Housing Solutions, which has locations in Enfield and Lebanon, is in the final stages of the permitting process with the town and plans to begin construction at 11 Park St. in mid-March, said Sylvia Dow, founder and executive director of Visions.

Once the three-story residential building is completed, 12 individuals will move in.

“We’re just in the process of resident selection,” Dow said, adding that there are around 50 people from the Twin States on the organization’s waitlist. “Unfortunately, there are not enough options in our state. I think (New Hampshire) is a little bit behind in making sure we have enough options for individuals when they turn 21 and age out of the school system.”

There are 11 people each living at Visions’ Enfield and Lebanon locations. Visions Hanover is being built on the site of the former Outreach House, an assisted living facility that closed in 2019. Its board donated the property to Visions. The old building was demolished last spring to pave the way for the new structure.

On Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m., Visions will host an open house at Church of Christ at Dartmouth College, located at 40 College St., for residents to learn more about the project. March 1 also marks the launch of the public stage of Visions’ fundraising campaign to support the Hanover location.

“We want people to come learn about our project and get excited with us and be part of it at every different level, whether its donating, volunteering, spreading the word, sharing in our excitement and building community,” said Kim Estes, operations manager at Visions.

The original estimate for Visions Hanover was around \$2.6 million, said Lucinda Brown, development manager at Visions.

Now, that total stands at \$3.9 million, Visions has raised 3/4 of its projects.

“It just keeps creeping up because of inflation, because of supply chain problems,” Brown said. “It’s just been very challenging in that way but the support from the community has been amazing.”

Dow said the goal is to raise around \$4.2 million, as the \$3.9 estimate does not include items like solar panels and furniture.

Funding has come from a variety of sources. Among them are an \$819,000 workforce housing grant from InvestNH, a \$650,000 from the Affordable Housing Competitive Funding Program distributed by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston and around

\$700,000 from individual donors, as well as other grants. Visions is also benefiting from the state Community Development Finance Authority's business tax credit program.

The goal is to have residents move in by May 2024, Brown said.

"We would like to raise the remaining amount by the end of the year," Estes said.

The response from the Hanover community has been largely positive and neighbors have expressed support for the project.

"I feel like the community that rallied around Outreach House is rallying around Visions and really wants us to succeed," Dow said. "I think people recognize the need."

Dow frequently hears from parents who have children with developmental disabilities about the need for more housing options and has continued to advocate for more assistance. Around four years ago, Visions received a grant to write up a blueprint so that other organizations can replicate what Visions has done. Since then, groups as far away as Arizona have pursued Visions' model, Dow said.

"I never knew how powerful that would be," she said.

The majority of people who have reached out to her are parents who have children with special needs, like Dow is herself. Her two daughters live at Visions in Enfield.

"While that is wonderful and empowering for parents like myself it's also exhausting and it's daunting and quite frankly it doesn't seem fair," Dow said. "It's a lot of hoops to jump through and for families it's daunting, but there's no one else seemingly to step up."

Dow is looking forward to forming stronger — and new — connections with businesses and institutions in Hanover, particularly Dartmouth College.

"There's so many things we're excited about," she said.

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