

# SANDERSON APARTMENTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q. What are you building in our community?**

**A.** The Mental Health Center of Denver is building 60 one-bedroom permanent supportive apartment homes on the vacant lot at the corner of S. Federal and W. Iowa to provide Denver's homeless citizens with safe, affordable housing while addressing the underlying causes of homelessness, including mental illness and substance abuse.

**Q. What is permanent supportive housing?**

**A.** Permanent supportive housing looks and functions much like any other type of housing. People living in supportive housing have a private and secure place to make their home, just like other members of the community, with the same rights and responsibilities. The difference is that they can access, at their option, services designed to address their individual needs and preferences. These services may include the help of a case manager or counselor, help in building independent living skills, assistance with integrating into the community, and connections to community-based health care, treatment, and employment services.

**Q. Why are you using the permanent supportive housing model?**

**A.** Permanent supportive housing is nationally recognized as a proven solution to end homelessness and reduce social services cost. A study by the [Denver Housing First Collaborative](#) shows that permanent supportive housing in Denver reduced the emergency-related costs (emergency room care, detox services, incarceration, etc.) borne by the community by 73 percent annually, or approximately \$30,000 per homeless person served.

**Q. What will this building look like?**

**A.** This three-story structure will consist of 60, one-bedroom/bath, furnished apartments with on-site amenities, including library, recreation spaces, workout room, laundry, basketball court and community garden. Residents will live independently and have access to services to address their individual needs.

**Q. How will the apartments work?**

**A.** The building will be staffed 24/7. Each resident will pay rent equivalent to 30 percent of their income, which includes income from employment, social security, disability and related benefit programs. Residents may live in their apartment as long as they pay their rent and abide by their lease agreement. Residents will be held accountable for the behavior of their guests and visitors.

**Q. Why was this site selected?**

**A.** A review of vacant lots within Denver was conducted and this site was chosen for its proximity to neighborhood amenities, including public transportation, shopping, recreation and green spaces. These are all important attributes for locating safe, affordable housing and to integrate the building and residents into the surrounding community.



**Q. Is this a homeless shelter?**

A. No. Sanderson Apartments is an example of a permanent supportive housing model that combines housing and services for people who need support to live stably and independently in their community. It is a permanent solution to homelessness, rather than a stop-gap, emergency solution that only provides a place to sleep for the night. Sanderson Apartment residents may live in their apartment as long as they pay their rent and abide by their lease agreement. Permanent supportive housing has been shown to be an effective model to help the most vulnerable achieve housing stability, mental wellness and sobriety.

**Q. Who will be the typical resident?**

A. There is no “typical” resident. Homelessness is an issue that impacts people of all ages, from all walks of life. We know the most vulnerable homeless tend to have mental or physical disabilities, are homeless for longer than a year and are high users of public services. Residents will need to fit the selection criteria of being disabled, homeless and income qualified to be eligible to reside in the apartments.

**Q. How will residents be selected?**

A. Potential residents must willingly commit to this permanent supportive housing program. Eligible residents must earn at or below 30 percent of area median household income, be chronically homeless and have a disability. We will adhere to all fair housing laws and complete background checks on all residents to ensure eligibility. As with any federally funded housing project, registered sex offenders will not be eligible.

**Q. What qualifies as a disability?**

A. A disability includes:

- Mental illness (bipolar, depression, etc.)
- Chronic substance abuse disorder
- Physical disabilities, including those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS
- Others

**Q. How long will residents stay?**

A. Each apartment has a one-year lease and there is no time limit on a resident’s length of stay as long as they abide by the lease agreement.

**Q. What are the sources of the funding?**

A. The construction costs are anticipated to be financed through a mix of funding, including low income housing tax credits through Colorado Housing Finance Authority, Denver’s Office of Economic Development, Colorado Division of Housing, and capital funding from the Mental Health Center of Denver. Monthly rental costs will be subsidized through project-based Section 8 vouchers.



**Q. How will the building be secured?**

A. The safety of our residents, the building and the surrounding area is important to us. We will have around the clock staffing, video surveillance and safety patrol officers. A staff person with authority to respond to issues will be available on-site 24/7. Building access will be restricted to residents and staff. Guests will be limited according to the lease requirements regarding visitation.

**Q. Will staff be armed?**

A. No. For the safety of our staff and residents, the Mental Health Center of Denver is a weapon-free organization. There will be a trained safety officer on-site and the building will be monitored and staffed 24/7.

**Q. My child is enrolled at the Children’s Learning Center on Iowa and I’m concerned for my child’s safety.**

A. The building site is being carefully designed to maximize privacy for both residents and the neighboring properties. The Mental Health Center of Denver and the Sanderson Apartments staff are committed to having an open dialogue with the staff and parents of the Children’s Learning Center during construction and beyond. Parents should know that the apartment building will be staffed 24/7 and safety officers will be on-site. Also, as with any federally funded housing project, registered sex offenders are not allowed.

**Q. Does the Mental Health Center of Denver have experience providing housing and services to people who have experienced homelessness?**

Yes. For more than 25 years, we have successfully worked with Denver’s most vulnerable residents with complex needs resulting in a 75% success rate of helping people live healthier, more productive lives. Part of that success rate has been providing housing to those most in need. We’ve chosen a permanent supportive housing model to complement our existing housing solutions as we continue to find solutions to end homelessness.

**Q. What services will residents receive?**

A. Each resident will be assigned a case manager. The goal is to provide residents with the skills necessary to achieve long-term stability and self-reliance. Case management services range from the using the bus system, proper personal hygiene, or cooking to accessing treatment for mental health issues or substance abuse, applying for a job, or obtaining healthcare benefits.



**Q. Will this project get panhandlers off the streets?**

A. Panhandling by Sanderson Apartment residents will not be condoned. Not all panhandlers are homeless, but those who engage in such activities often have difficulties earning an income due to chronic health problems, a physical and/or mental disability, and other barriers to employment. No one can reasonably know that the number of panhandlers on Federal will decline once this project is built; however, residents of Sanderson Apartments will not be reliant on panhandling for their survival. With the support of case managers, residents will be able to access basic services such as food and clothing. Case managers will also help residents access benefits such as Social Security or disability payments, providing a minimal, but vital source of income that can help to increase self-reliance.

**Q. What is a Good Neighbor Agreement?**

A. A Good Neighbor Agreement is a written document that contains terms agreed upon by two or more parties, usually a neighborhood association and a business, and defines how to resolve problems that may arise to minimize the impact to the livability and safety of the neighborhood.

**Q. Will a Good Neighbor Agreement be used?**

A. The Mental Health Center of Denver has successfully owned and managed properties across Denver for more than 25 years and we continually work to positively integrate them into their neighborhoods. We use a good neighbor agreement as a best practice for our properties and will work with the neighborhood to put one in place for Sanderson Apartments.

**Q. How can I find out more about Sanderson Apartments?**

A. Visit our website at [www.mhcd.org/sandersonapts](http://www.mhcd.org/sandersonapts) for more information. You can sign up for email updates or send us a message.

