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THURSDAY • APRIL 3, 2025

\$2.50

EAU CLAIRE AND THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY'S LEADING NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1881

Volume 55 • Number 67 • 1 section • 32 pages

Western Dairyland chooses location for Day Resource Center for the homeless

Hope Gospel Mission to operate center as continuation of Community Haven House



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Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council (WDEOC) is looking to purchase this building in downtown Eau Claire to house a Day Resource Center as well as their housing and family services programs. Currently, the building is used by three departments for the State of Wisconsin.

ANGELA CURIO
Leader-Telegram staff

EAU CLAIRE — Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council (WDEOC) has chosen a site for the Day Resource Center for the homeless that has been in the works for the past three years.

Located at 610 Gibson Street, the facility will be renovated to not only house the Day Resource Center but will also provide space for housing and family service programs to help connect members of the homeless community to other services they may need.

“The building was not originally for sale, but the seller very much wants to support the project and wants to sell it to us,” said WDEOC CEO Anna Cardarella. “Currently its office space for three departments for the State of Wisconsin. They have been looking for a while for a smaller footprint building.”

Currently WDEOC is in its pre-campaign phase for a \$5.725 million capital campaign to purchase and renovate the building.

“We are establishing committees of local leaders — everything from a steering committee to a communications

committee, building committee — to bring this all together,” Cardarella said. “It really truly takes a village, like the library a few years ago. Pre-campaign, we secured about \$1.4 million, but we need to raise about \$5.7 [million].”

The building was chosen after a lengthy process of considering several buildings and was chosen because of its walking distance of needed services, is outside the downtown retail district, close to city bus lines, requires relatively minor upgrades, and is in a safe location.

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"This building is perfect," Cardarella said.

Partnering with Hope Gospel Mission, which will rent out the space, operate and staff the community resource center, the aim is to provide something more than what is currently offered in Eau Claire.

"We don't want to create a community recreation center," said Hope Gospel Mission Program Director Chris Hedlund. "We want to create a space where [the homeless] can connect with the resources they need. We're going to provide connections with the agencies. We're going to provide case management. We'll have laundry and showers and will provide some enrichment activities, [but] we will use those to develop relationships."

In the meantime, Hope Gospel Mission took over Community Haven House on Tuesday, which had been previously operated by Catholic Charities.

"Community Haven House has been around for about three or four years now," Hedlund said. "The Haven House was operated by Catholic Charities but the contract was running out. There wasn't enough funding to continue from Catholic Charities."

When Hope Gospel Mission moves into the new space, they will take the name Community Haven House with them "to honor the folks that started it," Cardarella said.

"This is our opportunity to say, 'Let's take the space that already exists and let's try to get it to the next level,'" Hedlund said.

Cardarella said that Community Haven House typically has about 60 people utilize the facility a day. The new facility will be able to fit more.

"It's going to be so much more than [the current] warming and cooling shelter," she said. "I don't know if you've been in the building down there, but it is not great. This will be a modern facility with laundry and showers and storage."

Those that wish to help support WDEOC or Hope Gospel Mission in this project can visit their websites for further information and to donate.

"We're just so excited," Cardarella said. "This is a long time coming to be able to announce this location and get moving closer to the goal."