

COMMUNITY

# Shelter plan moving forward in Schenectady

State aid will allow Bethesda House to build second site

By Pete DeMola

## Schenectady

After two unsuccessful attempts, a recently awarded state grant has put Bethesda House of Schenectady over the top for its long-planned new homeless shelter.

Bethesda House has received \$6.2 million in state grant funding for its proposed second location.

A new three-story building, dubbed Cara House, will be constructed on a city-owned vacant lot near the existing location at 834 State St.

The \$7.8 million project will have 26 permanent efficiency apartments and 16 emergency shelter beds for the chronically homeless and formerly incarcerated individuals re-entering the community — an update that will significantly increase the shelter's capacity, which currently consists of 30 beds,

14 of them emergency units, with 10 additional beds located at a satellite site in Mont Pleasant, as well as a handful of others scattered throughout the city.

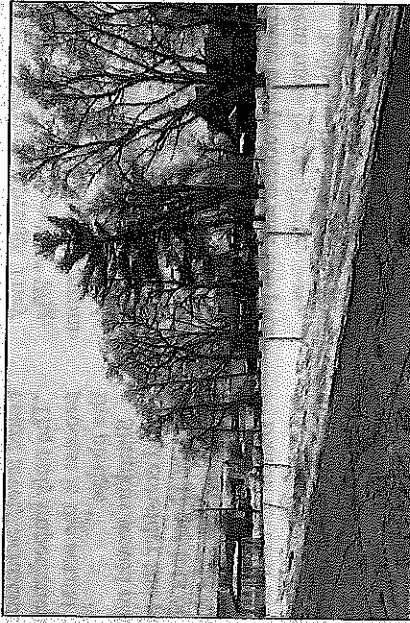
As part of the application process, Bethesda House had to demonstrate the increased need. "There's a serious lack of affordable housing in Schenectady," Kimarie Sheppard, Bethesda House's executive director, said. "With lower-income people in need of housing, there's not

readily available units."

More beds will mean fewer people will be sent outside of the county due to shortages, particularly during cold-weather events, a practice that drew ire from advocates for the homeless last winter.

Proximity to the existing site is critical to facilitate easy access to programming, including meal and clothing distribution, as well as to case managers and other

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This city-owned lot at 917 State St. in Schenectady, seen Monday, will be the site of Bethesda House's new shelter, with 26 efficiency apartments and 16 emergency beds.

Paul Buckowski/Times Union

## BEDS

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health care providers who will ideally expedite the next step to more permanent supportive housing, Sheppard said.

Job training and mental health services will also be provided and are critical to stabilizing vulnerable people and keeping them housed long term, she said.

The funds announced earlier this month by Gov. Andrew Cuomo are part of \$90 million allocated for the state's Homeless

### The Schenectady

County Department of Social Services will play a supporting role in facilitating the emergency beds.

Once the state signs off on the building plans, Bethesda House will seek site plan approval from the city planning commission, a process Sheppard estimates will take between two and three months.

"We're hoping for groundbreaking sometime in June, with an opening in July 2022," Sheppard said.

The new facility will

due.

An additional 300 units at Yates Village are being redeveloped, with a second phase poised to develop 211 units in 15 new buildings.

Authorities pledged those units will be affordable, and no residents within the completed redevelopment will pay greater than 30 percent of their adjusted gross income on rent and utilities as per U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines, officials said.

City Mission will also build 10 new transitional