

City of Valparaiso Supports Respite House Project

As part of the City of Valparaiso's recently introduced plan for allotting ARPA funds, \$150,000 was allocated for a project being spearheaded by Mitch Peters and Respite House. The ambitious project is to build and manage a residential facility for at-risk men on property donated by the City of Valparaiso on Don Hovey Drive. "This facility addresses an existing need in our community, and we're pleased to support a worthwhile project with a proven partner," said Mayor Matt Murphy.

The new facility will include 12 beds, plus a center for case management, along with a kitchen that will begin by offering one meal a day, according to Respite House co-founder Mitch Peters. It will also serve as an emergency warming center when needed. Since 2009, Respite House has been assisting men in recovery from substance use disorder and related situations, providing shelter, education and recovery support. They currently operate two locations in Valparaiso, on Chicago Street and on Union Street. The new facility will complement existing services offered by Respite House, serving men experiencing homelessness, poverty or other hardship, assisting them in establishing long-term independence.

The \$150,000 in funding is a portion of the funds allotted to the City of Valparaiso through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). "We're excited about the new facility for what it will allow us to do and for its accessibility to transportation and other resources. It offers clients both a sense of privacy and of community and we appreciate the City's support," said Peters.

Currently men experiencing homelessness are provided emergency shelter and affordable housing through Housing Opportunities, when capacity allows. In addition, New Creation Men's Center facilitates an overnight shelter program rotating nightly through participating Valparaiso churches. The new facility will provide a consistent location and offer services to promote independence.

"Providing shelter, a warming center and other resources, such as counseling and access to recovery support, have been an ongoing struggle for this segment of our community," said Valparaiso Police Chief Jeff Balon. The VPD has recently added a social worker to assist the department in serving the community and at-risk populations. "The city's current Respite House facilities are excellent neighbors. Residents are there willingly and must respect rules in order to continue receiving services," he said.

Respite House is in the process of designing the new facility and leading fundraising efforts for the project, estimated to cost \$1.2 million, according to Ryan Peters, president of the Respite House board of directors. To learn more about Respite House, visit RespiteHouse.org.