

Homes for the homeless

By GORDON JACKSON gjackson@thebrunswicknews.com Feb 18, 2020



The property where the Altama Presbyterian Church currently sits will be the site for a group of tiny houses for the homeless.
Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

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Homeless individuals in Brunswick will soon be getting a roof over their heads.

Assistance will soon be available through an anonymous \$300,000 donation to the local nonprofit Hand in Hand of Glynn, Inc.

The money, combined with other donations, will be used by Hand in Hand to build the first phase of a 60 one-bedroom efficiency “tiny home” complex on property that formerly housed Altama Presbyterian Church on Altama Avenue.

Anne Stembler, the nonprofit’s president, said the majority of residences will be built behind the church building. She said there is plenty of room on the 4.25-acre site for the project and most of the development won’t be visible by passing motorists.

The first phase will include renovations to the church building for services for the facility’s residents. They will include classrooms, a post office and a laundry.

Southeast Georgia Health System and Gateway Behavioral Health Services will provide assistance, including case workers, medical and psychological counselors, financial benefits advisors and a nutritionist.

The site will be fenced, gated and have security.

Stempler said occupants will be single men and women who are among those who have been homeless the longest in Brunswick. They will be screened and required to sign agreements before moving into one of the 240-square-foot residences.

Each building will be like a duplex, with a common roof, open breezeway and porch. The interiors of each unit will include a small kitchen, bathroom and enough space for a bed and chair.

Two community gardens are also planned at the site.

Stempler said occupants will be required to pay a portion of their income to reside in the units and can live in them as long as they comply with the rules.

“They need to know they won’t be transitioned out unwillingly,” she said. “They will be given support and they will have skin in the game.”

The location, near a business district with fast-food restaurants, chain stores and other merchants within walking distance, is ideal, she said. Stempler said she plans to enlist the support of the nearby businesses to provide entry-level jobs to the residents.

The \$300,000 donation is the organization’s biggest single donation, but not the only one. Stempler said Hand in Hand has received several anonymous donations, each more than \$100,000, to support efforts to help the homeless.

“They see a need in the community,” she said. “We are very humbled, pleased and gratified.”

Support has also come from community leaders and elected officials, including the Brunswick City Commission, which approved a conditional use permit for the project last month.

The organization has enough money to build the first 16 units by the end of the year, which means there is still plenty of work remaining to raise the funds to complete the project, Stempler said.

“My goal is for this to be a success,” she said. “This is a major money raising situation.”

Hand in Hand of Glynn is seeking donations of money, materials or services. Go to infer@handin-handofglynn.org for more information or to donate.



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