

Central Oregon Free On The Outside and Deschutes County Community Justice Housing Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Thank you for your interest in the Wilson Ave. Housing Program. If you have a question, please fill out the form below. Questions will be reviewed by staff. The program's Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated weekly, or on an as-needed basis.

Last updates made Jan. 24, 2024 (to question 15 and a new question 16)

en español

Project Overview:

On December 20th, 2023, Deschutes County purchased a triplex at 640 SE Wilson Ave in Bend with grant funding from the State of Oregon. This property will provide interim and long-term housing for 40 to 50 men each year who are involved with the justice system and would otherwise experience acute homelessness.

The County is partnering with a housing provider – Free On The Outside – that has more than 15 years of experience providing housing for justice-involved individuals.

This will be a managed residential property, with a live-in housing manager. All residents will be required to comply with the conditions of their court mandated supervision and agree to and conduct themselves safely as good neighbors, in accordance with house rules.

All residents will be referred through Deschutes County Adult Parole & Probation and have an assigned Parole & Probation Officer, who will have frequent presence at the home. The Parole & Probation Officer will work with Free On The Outside to ensure the home operates as intended, contributes positively to the neighborhood and increases public safety for our community.

We believe everyone should have the opportunity to better himself or herself, that housing is a basic need that presents a major barrier for many, and that everyone in our community is safer when people involved in the justice system have a stable home in which to take pride and get back on their feet.

Deschutes County Community Justice has developed this Frequently Asked Questions document to help provide information about the project and answer frequently asked questions:

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What was the timeline for this project?

- On May 8, 2023, Deschutes County Adult Parole and Probation submitted an application pending Board of County Commissioners approval for funding provided under [EO 23-02](#) to provide housing for justice involved men on supervision.
- On [May 15, 2023](#) the Board of County Commissioners reviewed the application and provided approval for the grant application.
- On May 31, 2023, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) and the Central Oregon [Multi-Agency Coordination team](#) approved the grant application and awarded Deschutes County \$1,078,518.00 for acquisition and initial operations of the program.
- On June 30, 2023, the County received the sub-recipient agreement from COIC and the Central Oregon Multi-Agency Coordination team.
- On [July 26, 2023](#), the Board of County Commissioners reviewed and signed the sub-recipient agreement with COIC for the housing funds.
- On [August 23, 2023](#), the Board of County Commissioners reviewed and approved issuance of Request For Proposal (RFP) 2023-751. This competitive solicitation was aimed at securing a provider to manage the program.
- On September 27, 2023, the RFP closed.
- On October 16, 2023, a multidisciplinary panel made a recommendation to move forward with selecting Free On The Outside as the housing provider.
- On [October 25, 2023](#), the Board of County Commissioners reviewed the panel's recommendations and issued an intent to award for Free On The

Outside.

- On November 8, 2023, 640 SE Wilson was identified as a potential qualifying property.
- On November 20, 2023, a contingent offer for 640 SE Wilson Ave. was accepted and on November 22, 2023, the required inspection occurred.
- On November 27, 2023, Free On The Outside executive director Mike Cross and his staff visited the 25 residences directly around the potential triplex located at 640, 648, and 652 SE Wilson Ave in Bend, Oregon. This included 6 triplexes, 3 duplexes, and one single residence. Staff spoke with residents at 14 of the residences and left flyers at the 11 residences where no one answered the door. Most residents had no questions at the time they interacted with Free On The Outside and said they would follow up, if necessary, after they reviewed the flyer. One resident asked about reentry services.
- On [December 6, 2023](#), the Board of County Commissioners reviewed the selected property and the community outreach process and gave approval to move forward with the purchase.
- On [December 13, 2023](#), the Board of County Commissioners reviewed and approved the grant agreement with Free On The Outside to manage the program.

2. How was Free On The Outside Selected?

The County used a [competitive solicitation process](#) to identify a housing provider, and Free On The Outside was selected after a panel made up of County staff and community members reviewed their qualifications and application. The Board of County Commissioners approved the application in October 2023.

Free On The Outside has 15 years of experience providing housing for justice-involved individuals. The non-profit currently works with 200 people in more than 20 houses and neighborhoods across the state.

3. How many people will be served?

Approximately 40-50 men per year. The home will provide a combination of short-term and long-term residential opportunities dependent on need, currently estimated at 12 short-term and 4 long-term residential opportunities at any given time. All men must be on supervision with Deschutes County Parole & Probation in order to receive housing services. The program will provide interim housing while it helps individuals to locate permanent housing. Each individual will work with their Parole & Probation Officer and Free On The Outside to create a plan for permanent housing depending on their circumstances, but will likely range from 90 days to up to a year or more if they are still on supervision and a permanent housing option has not yet been identified.

4. Shouldn't people who commit crimes be in jail?

Almost all individuals who are sentenced to prison or jail are released and live in our community. Parole & Probation's sole service population are individuals on probation or post-prison supervision. The courts and Oregon law have determined these individuals have served their time and are now eligible for community supervision. As of January 1, 2024, Deschutes County had almost 1000 people who are on supervision with Adult Parole and Probation.

5. Why is Deschutes County spending public money this way?

Deschutes County applied for and was selected to receive a state grant based on Governor Kotek's 2023 Emergency Order on Housing, which created funding for areas where there were high rates of unhoused individuals and deficiencies in the housing continuum.

Almost all individuals who are sentenced to prison or jail are released and living in our communities. When they are, everyone – their families, friends, employers, neighbors – and the entire community is safer when they have a safe and stable place to live, recover, learn new skills and become productive members of society. Homelessness keeps them at a survival level where poor choices, stress, access to substances and negative people are easier to find than rehabilitation opportunities. They often sleep in public spaces and are not able to be productive. This makes the community feel less livable and unsafe for everyone.

6. Will this program draw people who don't live in Deschutes County?

Only individuals on community supervision with Deschutes County Parole & Probation who would otherwise be homeless in Deschutes County will be eligible to

be referred. All individuals on community supervision with the County have been ordered to supervision in this County because they lived here before or when they committed the offense for which they are on supervision. People who are not on supervision with Deschutes County will not be eligible to be referred to receive housing services from this program.

7. Is this a program for sex offenders? Is the program required to accept all sex offenders regardless of whether they have a restriction that cannot be accommodated?

Because people on community supervision with conditions that restrict proximity to minors and/or require them to register as sexual offenders experience among the highest level of homelessness, this was the program's original target population, and it remains a priority population. Due to the selected property's size and ability to provide additional living space, however, it will not be the only population. Additionally, while the program will not restrict consideration of any referrals based on crime type or designated severity level, if supervision conditions or restrictions exist for a person that the court or parole board deem impermissible for this location, the property will not be an option for them. At this time, people with Level 2 or Level 3 sexual offender classifications will not be denied consideration if their individual case meets the criteria described, however with consideration for any current tenants, individuals on supervision for sexual offenses will not be referred until the property is vacated.

For example, if a Parole & Probation Officer is looking for a placement for a person who has a parole board condition that they cannot reside near locations where children are the primary occupants or users (ORS 144.641), the parole board and the Parole & Probation Officer will look at the address of the property and its proximity to qualifying locations, and determine if this address would allow the person to meet the conditions of supervision. If by residing at the property, the person would *not* be able to fulfill their conditions of supervision, the Parole & Probation Officer would not be able to refer to the program. The program's availability does not supersede the person's supervision requirements.

Additionally, if individuals are not able to agree to house rules this property will not be an option for them. The program will consider referrals based on the greatest need. If over time needs change, the County may amend program provider agreements.

8. How is a neighborhood with parks and children an appropriate location to provide a home for people with criminal histories, especially sexual offense histories?

People on supervision live in all communities and neighborhoods in Deschutes County, including in the specific and broader neighborhood of Bend in which this property is located. Some risk of harm is unfortunately ever-present in all neighborhoods, even within our own homes, where many crimes including sexual offenses take place (for example, in Oregon in 2019, 91% of sexual assault victimizations were committed by someone the victim knew [[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)]).

Many interim and group homes are located in traditional neighborhoods, especially neighborhoods that are close to public transportation, employment opportunities, and services to help residents reintegrate and meet the conditions of their supervision. Residents of the selected property have the same needs and rights as other residents. When, however, Parole & Probation Officers are working with individuals who have conditions of supervision that cannot be met if they reside at that address, or they are not able to agree to follow house rules they will not be referred and will not live at this location.

9. What will the property look, sound and feel like when walking by?

Grant funding includes funds for significant repairs and maintenance. We expect to improve upon the property from its current condition, including front and backyard clean up, and new exterior paint.

House rules will include but are not limited to courteous and legal parking for those who drive, curfew, quiet hours, no drugs and alcohol on property and lawn/yard upkeep. The program will be similar to the dozens of interim and congregate homes that already exist in the county including in this part of Bend, offering people on supervision a structured and monitored environment where they can re-enter the community and become productive members of society. The property will not serve the public at large. Residents and visitors coming to and from the property will be regulated, approved, and primarily occur during business hours. This will be the assigned home for residents, some for a long time, much like other residents in the neighborhood, and by and large residents will simply be living their lives, and/or getting back on their feet and making plans for their next move. Parole & Probation Officers will make routine home visits to support this progress and ensure it is happening, as they do with all people on community supervision

whether they are living individually, part of a family, or in a congregate living environment on an interim basis. Visits consist of speaking with all residents who are home at the time of the visit, ensuring rooms and spaces are orderly and that residents are complying with their individual requirements.

10. Does having a group of offenders at one location increase the risk of harm to those in that neighborhood?

People who have committed crimes in the past have different likelihoods of reoffending in the future, there is no one size fits all and having committed a crime in the past does not mean that the person will inevitably commit a new crime.

Of all the crime types that people are on supervision for, people with sexual offenses often have the lowest likelihood of recidivism, especially when engaged in effective treatment ([National Institutes of Health](#)).

People with the same crime type can have different levels of risk to re-offend and Parole & Probation supervises and monitors cases accordingly. The lack of stable housing is associated with increased risk of recidivism ([National Institutes of Health](#)), but even more importantly, the type of housing and other factors matter. Creating a positive (law abiding, sober and rehabilitation-oriented), structured, monitored living environment as this program will establish, is one of the biggest strengths that a person on supervision can have, since simply providing a place to live is not enough: the type of housing, supervision rules, and peer influence should all be taken into consideration ([Recidiviz\[OBJ\]](#)). For this reason, programs like this can maintain or improve safety from already existing risks.

This property will have additional security elements such as video surveillance cameras, house rules, a house manager who understands and ensures that rules are followed, and visits by trained Parole & Probation Officers whose vocation is to protect the public, reduce risk and create opportunities for people on supervision to rehabilitate and become productive citizens. Neighbors are encouraged to stay in touch with the contacts listed on this FAQ should issues arise that they feel need attention.

There are people on supervision living everywhere in Deschutes County, including in the specific and broader neighborhood of Bend in which the selected property is located. Most people walk by, share the bus, wait in the grocery store line, and attend restaurants and workplaces alongside people on supervision. Some risk of harm is unfortunately ever present in all neighborhoods, even within our own

homes where many crimes including sexual offenses take place (for example, in Oregon in 2019, 91% of sexual assault victimizations were committed by someone the victim knew [[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)]).

11. The County's original grant application said the property should be 1000 feet from parks, but this property is less than 1,000 feet from Kiwanis Park – did the County not abide by its own criteria?

Proximity to a park is not a general restriction for sexual offenders. The courts and/or the Parole Board determine a person's conditions of supervision on an individual basis. Proximity to a park may or may not be defined as part of a specific person's conditions of supervision.

The original grant application the County submitted to the state identified public concern and restrictive conditions as a challenge to locating an appropriate property that could serve the most people. In the original grant application, staff referenced a 1,000-foot distance as a potential restrictive distance. However, that reference was not linked to any state-wide regulation that restricts where sexual offenders may live or to any grant requirement.

As the County moved into the next phase of the process (program provider and location selection), the County specified that a qualifying property must be a "location that can accommodate clients who have legal restriction in terms of their proximity to minors and where their residence can be located" in relation to applicable laws. This means that if the property's address is determined to be able to accommodate a restriction, the provider may not restrict or deny based on that crime type or restriction. Any person on supervision whose restrictions (and therefore their conditions of supervision) cannot be accommodated by residing at the identified property, however, will not be referred and will not live at this location.

When considering the neighborhood's concerns, the County is aware that parks and schools are located at various distances around the property. However, the County considered that the property does not have a direct line of sight to Kiwanis Park and is not on the way to the nearest bus stop, and avoidable should an individual have a restriction prohibiting him from frequenting the park.

12. What safety measures will be in place to prevent individuals from re-offending?

For those living at the property, the biggest safety measure in place is the resident's relationship with their assigned Parole & Probation Officer, who will have frequent contact, know the resident well, and has the ability to search their rooms, cupboards or person, and investigate any issues.

In addition, because the Parole & Probation Officer can easily locate the person by knowing where they live, the assigned Parole & Parole Officer will be better able to prevent or intervene if a condition of their supervision is not being met.

Additionally, Free On The Outside will install cameras and a security system. Other accountability measures may also be put into place on an individual basis, including electronic monitoring when ordered.

Free On The Outside has a model that has proven success – compassion and accountability. With their establish housing program they report an extremely low resident recidivism rate, especially for people with supervised sexual offense conditions. Of 900 residents over 15 years in operation, one person has been convicted of a new sex offense – public indecency - while they lived in a Free On The Outside residence, which is less than a 1% recidivism rate. Free On The Outside and County staff will be available to immediately address issues or questions that neighbors may have and provide rapid response and engagement when needed.

13. Will the neighborhood or community be informed when individuals enter the program?

People on supervision in Deschutes County reside all across the county, as renters, homeowners, or relatives and friends of renters and homeowners. With some exceptions, these individuals are not required to notify neighbors of their status, and authorities do not have a legal right to make such notifications. When notification is required, the Oregon State Police will conduct that notification. Due to these factors, Adult Parole & Probation will not provide specific notifications to neighbors about individual residents or their status. Individuals who are admitted to the program will continue to be subject to any reporting/registering requirements that they have including with the [Oregon State Police registry](#). The public will continue to have the same level of access to information about individuals residing in the program as they would if the person was residing on their own in this or any other neighborhood.

14. Was this unit actively for sale and were there tenants in the triplex?

When the County purchased the triplex, it had been on the market since August 2023 and tenants were renting each of the three units.

Free On The Outside and the County worked with the seller's agent to offer current tenants monetary incentives for the tenants to end their leases early. All three tenants accepted the monetary incentive. One unit was vacated before closing. Tenants in the remaining two units will vacate their units in January. Tenants were not required to terminate their leases early. The existing terms of their tenancy would have been honored if they choose to not accept the monetary incentive.

Having access to all three units will help Free On The Outside with program operations and design and will also allow more flexibility for repairs and maintenance of the property. Free On The Outside and the County are committed to ensuring that the property is well maintained and have plans to enhance its curb appeal and positively contribute to the neighborhood.

With consideration for existing tenants, the County will not consider referrals or admit individuals to the program who have conditions that restrict their proximity to minors until all tenants have vacated.

15. Is the program operational?

The program is operational. It placed its first resident on January 5, 2024. **At this time, we are not considering an alternate location for this program.**

16. Will the county change the program's service population?

The Parole & Probation department has now finalized program referral criteria and processes including a screening process designed with consideration for the impact of the program on the neighborhood.

- Candidates will be formally screened by Parole & Probation staff for safety and readiness to participate, and will not be considered for placement if the screening process indicates they are not likely to be successful in following program rules, supervision conditions, or conducting themselves safely as good neighbors.
- Screening will assess the totality of the individual's circumstances including the reason they are on supervision, level of remorse and readiness to

improve their lives, current compliance with supervision, past performance on supervision, and their readiness to agree to and abide by house rules.

- Candidates will additionally need to demonstrate readiness for or evidence that they are already in treatment, seeking employment or are employed, and are actively pursuing recovery from substances.
- Once participating, Parole & Probation Officers will provide high levels of monitoring and support to individuals, which will look like home visits, office visits, phone calls to treatment providers or employers, responding to community members and ultimately can result in quick action to return an individual to court or to jail for program violations.

17. Who do we contact if we need to talk to someone about the program?

- Mike Cross is Executive Director of Free On The Outside.
 - 503-383-1834 mikec@freeontgeoutside.org or admin@freeontheoutside.org.
 - Website: www.freeontheoutside.org
- Deschutes County Community Justice: Adult Parole and Probation Division
 - 541-385-1708 or housing@deschutes.org