



City and Borough of Juneau
City & Borough Manager's Office
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TO: Chair Woll & Assembly Finance Committee
DATE: May 7, 2025
FROM: Robert Barr, Deputy City Manager
RE: CARES Sobering Center

In July of 2023, CBJ provided \$150k to St Vincent de Paul (SVdP) to construct needed improvements to space we rent from them for CARES Sobering Center operations. This was after an attempt to do the project internally. Quotes for this work came in at approximately \$600k, significantly above our initial estimates. SVdP has approximately \$105k remaining, post-design.

The current space we rent at SVdP shares space with the free clothing store and compromises privacy for both staff and clients, has regular pest and plumbing issues, and does not have separate restroom/shower facilities for staff and clients. Staff frequently need to clean/disinfect the restroom/shower area after each use. Further, there is no secure area for staff to retreat to in the event of client aggression.

Given the high renovation cost, we have been exploring alternative options for sobering center operations. We first attempted and have been unsuccessful in attempting to find suitable commercial space for rent. In general, commercial landlords have been unenthusiastic about sobering center clientele in their space. We moved on to CBJ owned options, which include:

Option 1 – Proceed with SVdP renovation project (currently have a 7 year contract, SVdP is amenable to long-term extension discussions). Given existing funds and cost escalation, we estimate new costs for this option at \$530,000.

Option 2 – Renovate the middle section of Thane Warehouse, centralizing the sobering center with the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter. This option would require moving items currently stored in the warehouse, likely to Marie Drake and that additional project has not yet been estimated and would be in addition to the current estimate of \$800,000, after the use of existing funds.

Option 3 – Utilize existing facility space in the old Rainforest Recovery Center at BRH. Renovation costs are lower for this option as the space is already largely designed for this use. Some work would need to be done, including replacing carpet with hard surfacing, installing access control equipment, and separating the space from the orthopedic clinic utilizing the west wing of the facility. Given currently available funding, we do not believe an additional appropriation would be necessary for this option.

This option would preclude and/or make more difficult BRH's plan to offer new clinical services (tentatively/potentially cardiology, dermatology, and/or neurology) in this space.

Recommendation

Seek additional information from BRH on option 3, if desired, and provide direction. Given cost, logistics, and current unknowns, staff recommend option 1 or 3.