

# Planning still underway for Bristol day center, but no visible progress yet

[Leif Greiss](#) August 30, 2020

BRISTOL, Va. — Nearly two years after the Bristol Community Day Center was announced, there has been no visible progress on the project — no site has been selected, no construction is underway and no opening date set.

The center, envisioned as a resource hub for the Twin City's homeless, was announced in December 2018. It would provide needed services to the city's homeless population, those at risk of becoming homeless and anyone else in need.

Lisa Cofer, executive director of United Way of Bristol and spokeswoman for the day center, said subcommittees were formed in August 2019 to handle organizing and planning the center, and some changes have occurred.

One such change is that the center has become a program under Family Promise of Bristol, which will allow it to provide additional resources for the day center and tap into the existing resources the organization has for helping homeless and low-income families.

The day center was proposed by a community coalition of city government officials, business, religious leaders and service providers.

There are shelters where the homeless can go at night in Bristol, but nowhere for them to stay during the day. As a result, many turn to the Bristol Public Library, which is not equipped to serve the city's homeless population.

Those involved are still searching for the right location.

“Nothing is nailed down, we are not sure how quickly this will happen,” Cofer said.

Briefly, she said they hoped to open the day center at the Bristol Redevelopment & Housing Authority's EnVision Center on West Mary Street in Bristol, Virginia. That didn't work out, but the EnVision Center will provide social work services at the day center once it opens, Cofer said.

Recently, Melissa Roberts, a program coordinator for Bristol's Promise, was brought in as a consultant. The mission of Bristol's Promise is to mobilize the community to meet the needs of each child.

Roberts said she is also working on creating a pandemic plan and providing some assistance with site acquisition along with other tasks to help get the center up and running.

“I've been brought on to help put this together, get everything moving in an organized direction and get it done,” Roberts said.

Once it's open, the center will provide a place where the homeless can do their laundry, take a shower, have a snack and get case management services. Lynn Pannell and Lisa Porter, of the Housing Authority, said through the EnVision Center, social workers will help visitors at the center obtain government identification, find housing, look for employment and connect them to agencies in the community that can help them.

Some limited medical services will also be provided through Crossroads Medical Mission.

Johnson City has had a downtown day center since 2006 and in Kingsport, the Appalachian District of the United Methodist Church operates Shades of Grace, which offers services to homeless people during the day.

“We have to make this happen, for our community, we have to have a facility for our folks that are going to the library or hanging out downtown and don’t have anyone to help give them guidance and direction,” Cofer said. “That’s what the day center is going to do.”

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