

Council to host public hearing on Envision center

- [David McGee](#)

BRISTOL, Va. — The Bristol Virginia City Council will conduct a public hearing tonight about a revised proposal for a Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority resource center.

The authority is seeking a special exception and wants to establish an “Envision center” at 712 Oakview Ave. The center is a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development designation of a facility offering “educational classes, job search assistance and health care services.”

The project originally included a proposed day center for the homeless, but that has since been deleted.

“We wanted to make sure the Envision center does get approval, and we thought, with the day center attached to it, it put that [approval] at risk,” Lisa Porter, BRHA executive director said Monday.

Last week, the Cumberland Plateau Regional Housing Authority in Lebanon announced it is establishing an Envision center to serve low-income residents in that area.

“The Envision center’s services are similar to what we’ve always done, but we’re going to be able to offer it to non-BRHA clients,” Porter said. “This will connect us with resources that we didn’t have before.”

The services to be provided at the Envision center include “educational classes, such as GED, financial literacy and parenting, job search assistance, health services and substance abuse counseling. The services will be available to anyone in the area and not exclusive to BRHA residents,” according to the city’s preliminary staff report.

The site is an existing one-story building near the “five points” intersection that includes Oakview Avenue and Lee Highway, adjacent to Johnson Court apartments. It is zoned R-2 for single and two-family residential, but that zoning doesn’t include a community resource center as an allowed function, according to the report.

“The Envision center program focuses on helping families achieve self-sufficiency by providing a centralized hub for services,” according to authority information included in the report. “The new center will bring resources and programs together under one umbrella and will support families in four areas: economic empowerment, educational advancement, health and wellness and character and leadership.”

The matter is expected to come back later for consideration by both the Planning Commission and City Council.

The meeting begins at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 300 Lee St. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, public access will be limited.

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