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**Oregon's Project Turnkey Reaches Milestone:  
\$4.2 Million Grant Aids First Motel Purchase to Shelter Community  
Members Displaced and Impacted by Wildfires**

*Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA) Leverages State Funds to Transform  
Ashland Motel into New OHRA Center*

**Ashland, Ore. – February 4, 2021** – Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) today announced that Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA) has been selected to receive the first Project Turnkey grant of \$4.2 million in state funds to purchase and transform an Ashland motel into the new OHRA Center – a resource center and facility to safely shelter community members negatively impacted by wildfires and COVID-19 pandemic.

In November 2020, the Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board allocated \$65 million in state funding to purchase financially distressed motels across the state to deliver safe shelter in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfires. These properties may ultimately be converted into long-term housing. OCF is administering the funds and convening a statewide community advisory committee to select qualified applicants to ['Project Turnkey.'](#)

“Last year’s wildfires were devastating. Many survivors lost everything,” Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney said. “The Emergency Board stepped in with funding. That was just the first step. Now this project will give them a place to stay. I am happy to see Project Turnkey hard at work.”

The new OHRA Center will provide stable shelter to Ashland area community members who have been negatively impacted by wildfires. Those in greatest need, including people with disabilities, veterans and people who are currently unhoused and unemployed, will be given priority assistance by OHRA.

“The opportunity to acquire a Project Turnkey facility is a game changer for our work with homeless individuals and families, including those displaced by the September 2020 wildfire,” said Oregon State Representative Pam Marsh, District 5 - Southern Jackson County. “For far too long our shelter providers have had to scramble to find a place for people to come in from the

cold. Now we have a permanent location in the community that will serve as a base to help individuals regain their footing. I am thrilled — and deeply grateful.”

The number of people seeking services through OHRA ballooned from 20-25 to 60-90 people per day over the last year. “There is a huge need for the new OHRA Center, given the triple impact of wildfires, economic impact from Covid-19 and the shortage of affordable housing in the great Ashland area,” said Michelle Arellano, executive director of OHRA. “We’re ecstatic to be able to meet this demand and make a difference in our broader community.”

Arellano cited a few of the key benefits of the new OHRA Center:

- Capacity for more staff to help more people move from crisis to stability.
- A host of services, including a Job Match program, which includes mentorship and coaching unemployed persons.
- Healthier, safer accommodation of 20-30 additional people versus the current OHRA shelter, which can only accommodate a maximum of 44 people in a common room. The new building will offer greater safety to guests as they will have individual rooms, where communicative diseases are less likely to spread.

Located at 2350 Ashland Street in Ashland, Oregon, the new OHRA Center anticipates limited use beginning in March 2021, when it plans to open up a block of rooms to the most vulnerable community members. OHRA has work to do to remodel parts of the building, including installing an ADA accessible elevator and converting some rooms to offices.

OCF has been studying Oregon’s dual crises of homelessness and affordable housing for two years, beginning with research commissioned from [ECONorthwest, “Homelessness in Oregon”](#) which provided statewide analysis of the disproportionately large homeless population in Oregon. When funds became available from the state for this project, OCF convened a diverse statewide advisory committee to create an equitable review process of applicants. Working with urgency, and with counsel from real estate development experts, the selection committee has condensed a complicated real estate transaction into a 6-8-week process.

“Each property under consideration is unique to the community and requires a level of due diligence, such as: zoning regulations, support from the community, how many shelter beds already exist in the area, connections to referral services, to name a few,” said Megan Loeb, OCF Program Officer. “The Project Turnkey Advisory Committee enthusiastically supported the funding of OHRA, as the first of many applicants to successfully conclude the due diligence process and be a place that the community can champion and support for years to come.”

### **About Project Turnkey**

The Oregon Legislature allocated a total of \$65 million for Project Turnkey for the purpose of acquiring motels/hotels for use as non-congregate shelter for people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. Two discrete funds were provided by the state: one totaling \$30 million to be awarded in counties and tribal communities impacted by the 2020 wildfires; and one totaling \$35 million for the remaining 28 counties in the state. Oregon Community Foundation is administering both funds through an application and selection process, with guidance from an Advisory Committee of state, local, and community stakeholders. For more information, please visit [Project Turnkey](#) online.

### **About Options for Helping Residents of Ashland**

Founded by a group of concerned community members, Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA) began operations in February of 2014 when it opened a resource center funded by a grant from the City of Ashland. The center focuses on providing basic services such as telephones, computer access, mail, driver's license, identification, and other pre-requisites to acquiring housing and jobs. It has since added a laundry/shower trailer and Job Match, an employment assistance program. Three years ago, it assumed management of the Ashland Emergency Winter Shelter, previously operated by an all-volunteer force. OHRA's key service is navigation, the support and guidance its caseworkers provide for those in need, helping individuals find the right social service, program or other pathway to move out of crisis. Since 2014, OHRA has placed 232 unhoused families or individuals in new housing and protected the housing of 667 families or individuals. Its management believes that when its new facility is fully staffed and operational, it can increase these numbers by 20%. For more information about OHRA, please visit: [helpingashland.org](http://helpingashland.org).

### **About Oregon Community Foundation**

Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) puts donated money to work in Oregon – more than \$100 million in grants and scholarships annually. Since 1973, OCF grantmaking, research, advocacy and community-advised solutions have helped individuals, families, businesses and organizations create charitable funds to improve lives for all Oregonians. Impactful giving–time, talent and resources from many generous Oregonians–creates measurable change. For more information about OCF, please visit: [oregoncf.org](http://oregoncf.org).

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