



BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Proposal for transitional housing facility moves ahead in Belfast



by [Sasha Ray](#) February 25, 2025



Belfast United Methodist Church, located at 23 Mill St. in Belfast, has been proposed as the site of a transitional housing facility by the Midcoast Maine Housing Coalition. Credit: Sasha Ray / BDN

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A proposal to convert the lower level of a Belfast church into a temporary housing facility will soon go back to the full City Council after the Planning Board gave its initial endorsement to the project earlier this month.

While one neighbor spoke out against the project and officials have raised questions about how it would work, the forward progress has highlighted growing recognition about the need for alternate housing solutions in the region.

Under the proposal, a group called the Midcoast Maine Homeless Coalition would run the transitional housing project at United Methodist Church on Mill Lane. It would provide lodging, food and supportive services for three to four homeless families at a time, according to documents provided to city officials.

The coalition has said the program would follow federal guidelines for transitional housing programs, including screening families before they enter and requiring them to sign an agreement to work with case managers and, as necessary, receive mental health and substance abuse counseling.

Transitional housing facilities are different from traditional homeless shelters in that they provide supportive services to help residents stabilize their lives and move into permanent housing, according to [the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#).

The proposal was first discussed by the City Council in early January, and will head back to the group at a meeting on March 4. It was considered by the Planning Board because the city does not currently have rules specifically allowing transitional housing or homeless shelters.

Officials have raised some about the proposed facility, including how the private living spaces would be separated from the public areas of the church, and whether the property, which is on the east side of the city and more than a mile from most of its shopping and other services, is the most convenient location for people who would live there.

“Obviously, it would make more sense in a perfect world, transitional living like this would make more sense to be in a walkable area closer to amenities,” Planning Board member Shannon Shimmer said, during one of the meetings when it was discussed. “But that’s also not being proposed, and no one else is trying to do anything like this except for them. So for me, I think, for a lot of reasons, this is a good place.”

Another Planning Board member responded that the location away from downtown could help avoid pushback from nearby residents.

There is one neighbor of the project who has come out strongly against it. During a Planning Board meeting on Feb. 12, Charlene Vish, who lives a few doors down from the church on Mill Lane and expressed concern about the people who would be staying there.

“I don’t want these people living on my street,” Vish said. “No one can be there 24 hours a day and watch these people. They can go anywhere they want! I don’t want people nosing around my property. I don’t want that stuff in my neighborhood.”

But officials heard at least three other comments from people who support the project, given the housing shortage that has made living in the midcoast increasingly difficult for lower-income people in recent years.

“I’m very much in favor of this proposal,” said Dorothy Colcord, who lives on Bayview Street. “I think it’s a wonderful opportunity to help well-intentioned people, who are working hard and doing their very best, afford to live, and need a place to stay, sometimes only for a short while.”