



Community News

Safe Harbor moves ahead with Gordon Street Mill shelter plans

Mike McMillan · April 6, 2022



This rendering shows the exterior of the new Safe Harbor headquarters at Gordon Street Mill.

Greenville County is No. 1 for incidents of **domestic violence** in South Carolina, and the state is consistently ranked in the top 10 in the nation for deaths of women by men. In order to meet the growing needs, **Safe Harbor's** century-old shelter is getting an upgrade.

New facility in the works

The organization is planning a 5-acre facility at **Gordon Street Mill**, which is situated between Gordon Street, North Georgia Avenue, 20th Street and 8th Avenue in the Parker neighborhood. The development will house a 116-units of affordable housing and Safe Harbor's new headquarters in a public-private

partnership with developer **M Peters Group**. M Peters’ website said the net income generated by the housing development will be used to help support Safe Harbor.

Safe Harbor **executive director** Becky Callaham said she first envisioned a new shelter that would have 30-34 beds, which would double capacity. Instead, the new facility is going to be bigger – the shelter at Gordon Street Mill will have 56 beds and contain the counseling and administrative offices. The project is expected to be completed in the next couple of years.

“We need to have a place where families coming in will have privacy and their own space to heal,” she said. Pre-COVID arrangements forced strangers to share rooms, which she said wasn’t ideal. The housing complex will have 10 units to be leased rent-free, along with space for transitional housing apart from the shelter.

“It will be a space with dignity and respect for those being served,” Callaham said.

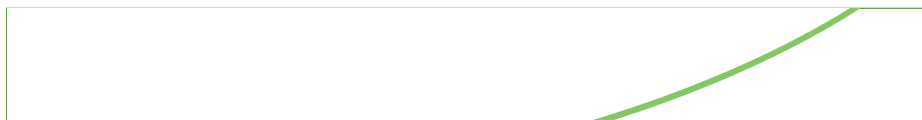


This rendering shows the new Safe Harbor headquarters and a 116-unit affordable housing complex at Gordon Street Mill.

Calls for help have increased

Callaham said Greenville’s population growth has exacerbated Safe Harbor’s space crunch and the pandemic increased isolation and stress. With concerns about unemployment, the purchases of weapons and the symptoms of mental health problems, domestic violence is on the rise.

“Each person who calls, we’ll answer that call with a real-life person,” Callaham said. The shelter works with every caller to plan to get to safety, even if that plan doesn’t involve a victim staying in a Safe Harbor shelter. That plan might involve meeting with a counselor or getting a family to a hotel. Victims are also sometimes referred to another shelter, only to find the same lack of space there.



Not only is the current amount of space at Safe Harbor inadequate, but the time families also stay in the shelter is increasing. The average stay used to be 30-45 days. Now, that’s up to 60 days – and can last even longer if there are issues like language barriers or lack of a support system, Callaham said.

Federal funding grants have been slashed by 40%, but Callaham said the CARES Act helped a bit. She’s hoping more stimulus money will be available.

“We’re working upstream to change the numbers,” she said.

Domestic violence statistics

1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men in the U.S. report experiencing abuse from a spouse or intimate partner.

South Carolina has historically been in the top 10 deadliest states in the nation for men killing women. S.C. has been No. 1 several times as recently as 2015. The [latest Violence Policy Center report](#), released in September 2020, showed that for the first time since they have been keeping track, S.C. ranks 6th in the U.S. for men killing women.

Greenville County often has the highest number of reported domestic violence incidents in S.C. annually.

The rate of Black women murdered by men is more than two times that of white women.

1 in 3 teens report knowing a friend or peer who has been physically abused by a partner.

Women of color and immigrant women often face additional barriers, such as discrimination or fear of deportation, making it more difficult to seek help.

Source: Safe Harbor



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