

# **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): TVCCA Cold Weather Shelter Special Zoning Permit Proposal**

This document serves as an informational FAQ regarding the Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA) application for a Special Zoning Permit to re-zone and operate an overnight cold weather shelter at 248 Broadway in Norwich, Connecticut (St. Mark's Lutheran Church). For further questions, please contact TVCCA CEO at his work points of contact, 860-425-6684 or [josh.kelly@tvcca.org](mailto:josh.kelly@tvcca.org).

*Last updated: July 17, 2026 | 11:11 AM*

## **General Overview & Background**

### **Q: Who is proposing this project?**

The project is proposed by the Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA), a grassroots community action agency founded in 1965 that serves Eastern Connecticut with programs ranging from Meals on Wheels, to Head Start, to housing assistance. A full array of services can be learned about on their website at [tvcca.org](http://tvcca.org).

### **Q: What exactly is being requested in the application?**

TVCCA is applying for a Special Zoning Permit to allow a Philanthropic Use alongside the existing Religious and Office uses at 248 Broadway so that they may operate an overnight cold weather shelter during the coldest months of the year.

### **Q: Why is the proposed overnight cold weather shelter necessary?**

As of the last count, Norwich had over 80 residents in its borders that were without housing; that's ~35% of southeastern Connecticut's entire homeless population. The next nearest locations with cold weather shelters are New London, Danielson, and Windham. Eight unhoused individuals died in Connecticut in the first six weeks of 2026 alone due to exposure to the cold. We have a moral obligation to help these individuals in need, and requiring all Norwich unsheltered residents to leave the city they know and love to go to New London, Danielson, or Windham is not feasible logistically for a variety of reasons.

### **Q: What is the history of TVCCA's cold weather sheltering in**

## **Norwich?**

TVCCA was contacted by City officials in late 2024 to open an extreme weather shelter at the Buckingham building (307 Main Street). It opened in December 2024 and operated until mid-March 2026 (through two full cold weather seasons). In the 2025 - 2026 season, it operated nightly. While successful in its limited capacity (only 16 guests at max capacity), the Buckingham building was too small and segmented to handle the overwhelming need.

### **Q: How is this program funded? Will it increase local taxes?**

No, no taxes will be increased. While the first year relied on private donations and city partnership, the State of Connecticut appropriated funds in June 2025 to expand shelter capacity. This state funding keeps the operational costs completely off the backs of Norwich taxpayers.

### **Q: Federal programs are being cut and TVCCA has lost funding due to these federal cuts; will this impact TVCCA's ability to operate the overnight cold weather shelter?**

No. TVCCA's funding for this shelter comes from the State of Connecticut's biennial budget; federal cuts will not impact this funding or TVCCA's ability to deliver the services for our community.

### **Q: Is this program adequately funded?**

Yes and no. Yes, an operating budget that can feasibly operate the shelter has been allocated. There are some components of an improved program, however, that would require more funding. For example, the allocated budget does not include funding for a bus or van to be able to take individuals directly to and from the shelter, and the budget can only accommodate so much staffing on average each night before the program would be out of money. More advocacy and conversations with the state are needed to make sure this funding continues to improve as we move forward.

## **Site Selection & Facility Logistics**

### **Q: Why was St. Mark's Lutheran Church (248 Broadway) chosen?**

248 Broadway offers an ideal location and layout. It is close to public transit, close to downtown, and large enough to nearly quadruple the original Buckingham Building shelter capacity. Additionally, homeless individuals already visit St. Mark's for community meals and are residing in this neighborhood, making the partnership natural. Utilizing this space keeps an active church

building open rather than letting it close and become a nuisance.

### **Q: Were other locations in Norwich considered?**

Yes. TVCCA physically and code-reviewed multiple sites across the city, including locations near St. Vincent De Paul Place, the old train station building, and other church structures. None presented realistic options due to prohibitive costs, logistical barriers, zoning restrictions, and/or insufficient space capacity. Other locations continue to be evaluated as they are brought to TVCCA's attention. To date, the property at 248 Broadway is the only one that is properly zoned, properly sized, close enough to key areas of the city, and that is affordable for TVCCA given the budget that has been allocated by the State of Connecticut.

### **Q: How will the building space be shared?**

| <b>Proposed Use</b>      | <b>Area &amp; Function Within 248 Broadway</b>                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Philanthropic Use</b> | TVCCA will utilize the rearmost room of the church building strictly for the Overnight Cold Weather Shelter (overnight during the coldest months of the year) and daytime multipurpose activity. |
| <b>Religious Use</b>     | St. Mark's Church will continue to use all major main areas around the facility for worship and religious events exactly as they always have.                                                    |
| <b>Office Use</b>        | St. Mark's will maintain a small office footprint, while TVCCA will fill other designated offices with staff to administer the shelter and related services.                                     |

### **Q: What is the capacity of the new shelter?**

Based on the square footage as calculated by the City of Norwich, the absolute maximum capacity allowed under the specifications is 60 individuals total, guests and staff all included. For example, if there are three staff working, only 57 guests would be permitted to enter at maximum capacity. However, based on the 2025–2026 shelter operations, the maximum managed on any peak night was 45 guests, and the nightly average was far fewer than that. TVCCA maintains a minimum of two (2) staff on at all times at the shelter, but can scale-up as shelter use increases.

**Q: The people of Norwich value how this neighborhood looks. Will this building and parcel remain presentable?**

Yes, TVCCA is fully committed, in partnership with St. Mark's Lutheran Church as they continue to use the building for their purposes, too, to maintain the structure and grounds of the building to equal or greater levels than they are right now. TVCCA wants to be a good neighbor; anything we can do to help beautify will be explored, and TVCCA will be responsible for all exterior maintenance of the space including keeping litter off the lawn and properly managing municipal solid waste (trash and recycling).

## **Shelter Operations & Support Services**

**Q: Who is eligible to stay at the cold weather shelter?**

The shelter is strictly for single adults (ages 18 and older) who self-identify as needing overnight protection from extreme cold elements.

**Q: Can families with children stay here?**

Families will not be sheltered at this location. Instead, any families seeking shelter will be immediately connected by staff to dedicated family shelters where they can be better accommodate and appropriate regional wrap-around services (such as WIC and Family Bridge).

**Q: What is the step-by-step process for guests each night?**

1. **Self-Identification:** Individuals learn of the shelter through community partners and arrive during scheduled evening opening hours.
2. **Intake:** All guests enter through a single controlled door. Staff collect personal information and log the encounter into management databases to track shelter usage.
3. **Security Screening:** Staff conduct security checks using metal detectors to screen out possible undesirable items from entering the space.
4. **Sleep/Rest:** Guests are invited to rest. Quiet activities like reading or eating a snack are permitted briefly.
5. **Departure:** Guests wake up and exit early. Staff log the exit of all guests before final building closure.

**Q: Are meals cooked on site?**

No meals will be cooked on site to serve shelter guests. Only pre-prepared food and light snacks will be made available.

**Q: What additional assistance is provided to help guests transition out of homelessness?**

The shelter operates on a Housing-First stability model. While on site, individuals are actively connected with case management, regional housing programs, and employment resources through partnerships with the American Jobs Center and the Department of Labor (DOL).

## **Safety, Security & Community Impact**

**Q: How much staff will be on site to manage the shelter?**

TVCCA will have multiple awake staff members on site (no fewer than two) through all operational hours of the shelter, maintaining the same continuous supervision standard utilized over the past two years.

**Q: What physical security measures are being implemented?**

In addition to screening individuals as they enter the facility, the main entryway and primary components of the shelter will feature a dedicated security camera recording all entries and exits. Furthermore, St. Mark's Lutheran Church is fully amenable to installing additional perimeter security cameras around the exterior property lines.

**Q: Will this facility overwhelm local emergency services?**

Data shows a low projected impact on emergency services. Out of 105 nights of operation during the 2025–2026 season (averaging 16 guests a night), only 11 total calls went to 911. Of those, 4 were self-reported medical needs, 1 was a mental health crisis, 1 was staff-initiated medical assistance, and 5 were for disturbances. This equates to less than a 1% statistical chance that a given guest required emergency intervention on any given night.

**Q: How will the shelter prevent negative neighborhood impacts, such as loitering?**

- **Early Departure:** The final shelter closure time is 7:00 AM, meaning all guests enter after most after school activities have concluded and depart well before the nearby Norwich Free Academy (NFA) and other nearby schools start their school day at 7:30 AM.
- **Neighborhood Directives:** Guests are instructed to travel directly to and from the facility and are strictly prohibited from lingering or loitering in the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Strict Enforcement:** Any shelter guest who violates neighborhood behavior expectations or city ordinances is subject to permanent removal from the program.
- **Transportation Goals:** TVCCA is actively working to secure dedicated funds to transport

guests directly away from the site to keep them out of the elements and off dangerous sidewalks.

**Q: What happens when guests arrive late or want to exit the shelter early?**

Many individuals who are homeless in our community work one or multiple jobs, and they often have to wait for public transit or walk to and from their job(s). When a guest arrives late, they are expected to maintain quiet through the neighborhood as they travel to the shelter and they are put through the same screening as anyone else. If a guest leaves early, whether to go to work, an appointment, or for another reason, they are generally informed they will not be permitted to re-enter later, but they are welcome to exit at a time that they see fit; they are members of our community, not prisoners. They continue to be evaluated for adherence to community standards of quiet and respect for neighbors and will be barred from the program if they do not adhere to said standards. Guests that want to step outside without leaving the premises for the night will be able to do so in an interior courtyard.

**Q: Who can neighbors contact with feedback or questions?**

TVCCA and St. Mark's are committed to being proactive, grassroots neighbors. For immediate questions or to provide operational feedback, community members can reach out directly to:

**Josh Kelly, CEO**

Work Email: [josh.kelly@tvcca.org](mailto:josh.kelly@tvcca.org)

Work Phone: 860-425-6684