



The Gathering Place®
a refuge for rebuilding lives

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CONTACT: Megan Devenport, megan.devenport@tgpdenver.org

The Gathering Place announces the unplanned closure of 24/7 Emergency Shelter
Successful shelter model helped more than 114 guests achieve long-term housing in three years of operation.

DENVER, CO. – Today The Gathering Place announced that the City and County of Denver is closing a 24/7 non-congregate shelter that serves women, transgender, and non-binary individuals on August 31, 2023. On May 11, The Gathering Place informed the shelter's 76 current guests that they must exit the facility by August 24. The closure will also displace 32 full- and part-time staff members.

In 2020, Denver Housing Authority (DHA) purchased the former Rodeway Inn Motel in partnership with the City and County of Denver, and The Gathering Place has been working with other nonprofits to staff and operate the shelter. In recent weeks, The Gathering Place learned that DHA would not renew the lease and instead plans to repurpose the site and reinvest those funds into other development efforts. The Gathering Place hoped that the City would identify another facility to provide shelter operations, but the City is no longer prioritizing gender-specific, non-congregate shelters at this time.

In Metro Denver, women, transgender, and non-binary individuals make up 39% of the population experiencing homelessness. Many guests at Rodeway are survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault and feel unsafe staying in places where cisgender men also live. Transgender and non-binary individuals are among the most vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and harm while living unsheltered.

According to the City's Department of Housing Stability Five-Year Strategic Plan, "Both adults and minors who identify as LGBTQ+ and experience homelessness face challenges within the shelter system, particularly with regard to safety and gender-affirming supports and can be at a heightened risk for violence. Transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals are also more likely to be unsheltered. While 26% of men and 19% of women counted in the 2020 Point in Time count were unsheltered, 32% of transgender individuals and 53% of gender non-conforming individuals counted were unsheltered."

As this shelter closes, the 76 current guests and the larger unhoused population will no longer have access to this population-specific resource.

Currently, the Rodeway non-congregate shelter allows all 76 guests to have private rooms. This shelter model was implemented during the pandemic as traditional congregate shelters didn't allow safe spacing for guests. What shelter providers have since learned is that the non-congregate model aids in better outcomes for guests. People are better able to regain independence and are more likely to transition to long-term affordable housing. The non-congregate model is now considered best practice. At the Rodeway shelter, the model helped more than 114 guests achieve stable, long-term housing in its three years of operation.



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Guests of The Gathering Place report feeling safer when they don't have to sleep next to dozens of strangers, and where they can close and lock their own doors and use a private bathroom. Qween, a Member at Rodeway for two-plus years, is now housed. During an interview earlier this year, she shared, "I'm so grateful. Really, mostly what I would like to say is that I am grateful for this place being here. It has been a blessing. It's been like no other shelter I've ever been at . . . I hear a lot of women saying they don't feel like they're in a shelter here. They feel like, you know, they're home . . . It feels like a home."

The Gathering Place is committed to serving women, transgender, non-binary people and their children. "We know resources are limited. Therefore, we choose to focus on the needs of those most at risk. We are disappointed that the City and County of Denver has chosen to discontinue a needed, and proven successful, shelter model. The Gathering Place will continue to operate our day shelter services while also pursuing opportunities to recreate the Rodeway model in a new location," states Megan Devenport, CEO of The Gathering Place.

The Gathering Place is working with the City and County of Denver and The Salvation Army to attempt to transition guests to long-term housing solutions before the closure of the shelter. A top priority is to avoid returning women, transgender, or non-binary individuals to the street. The Gathering Place is also working with its 32 staff members to prepare for the elimination of the Rodeway staffing positions.

Devenport said, "The Gathering Place urges the City and its partners to invest in culturally responsible shelter care, development and public ownership of deeply affordable housing units, and a commitment to swift action in support of our unhoused neighbors."
