



## **Housing Statistics of the COVID-19 Hotel Program**

April to the end of December 2020

**Summary:** At the known onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it became apparent that many of the housing deprived would be at-risk for extremely negative outcomes of the virus. It was also very clear that crowded congregate shelters were petri dishes for spreading the virus. The crowded shelters of House of Mercy, Open Door Mission, and REACH knew they must rapidly lower their censuses and socially distance the guests with the underlying conditions that put them at high-risk if they contracted COVID-19. The Monroe County Department of Human Services Emergency Housing Unit stepped up to the plate and secured two hotels (The Radisson at RIT and Rodeway Inn) to safely shelter the at-risk homeless individuals in the shelter system. Within in a weekend, the guests were screened to see which guests were the most vulnerable to COVID-19 and moved to the hotels.

House of Mercy, Open Door Mission, and REACH collaborated to operationalize the new hotel initiative. This unique collaboration was needed to make this hotel idea into a reality. The hotels were rapidly filled with many of our community's most vulnerable people. On top of regular shelter operations, there were a myriad of issues to help the guests with; from physical health, mental health, addiction issues, to just getting used to being indoors and following safety protocols during a pandemic. This work was done with dignity and respect and done well. It soon became apparent that this time of crisis could be an amazing opportunity to assist many of the disenfranchised people in our community.



Shelter managers and social workers at the hotels began to engage with guests and establish the relationships necessary to assist people with meeting the goals they wanted and motivate them towards looking at other goals, as well. Many of the guests began to build supports networks to meet their needs and prepare for appropriate housing. An extraordinary amount of work was done obtaining benefits, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, physical health services, Health Home Care Managers, etc. Even more importantly, guests found peers and staff they enjoyed spending time with and began to build supports that would continue on after they left the hotels.

Many people did leave the hotel for housing. This is the incredible secondary gain of the hotel initiative that was primarily designed to save lives during a pandemic. Many of the individuals sheltered at the hotel were seen as the most difficult to house people in our community. These guests typically ricocheted through the most expensive services in our community (EDs, Jails, Courts, paramedics, Police, etc.) when not in the hotels. The time allowed at the hotels created an environment where people had the opportunity to change the trajectory of their life. There are many incredible stories, many supports gained, but the housing numbers are far beyond what was expected. People were not only housed, they were appropriately housed. There are only a handful of people that were housed who returned to homelessness. The numbers speak for themselves.

*Of the 176 guests at the hotels through the DHS COVID Placement from April to the end of December, 94 have been housed. That means 53% of the guests were housed. That is a pace of almost 3 people a week. Also, 6 guests moved to transitional housing and 10 guests are going to be housed in January 2021. That means that 110 guests from the hotel cohort will be housed (63%).*



These are truly amazing housing numbers that have had an impact on our community. With the assistance of Common Ground Health and the RIT Center for Public Safety Initiatives, there will be a clear analysis of the work done at the hotels. The majority of the original hotel cohort are still in contact with the staff and organizations that worked at the hotels. These strong relationships enabled the hotel staff to continue to help house people that exited the hotels, or switched to other funding at the hotels (Exited from DHS COVID funding, but still stayed at the hotels). These relationships will also help the ongoing evaluation of the hotel program.

**Most importantly, there were no known cases of COVID-19 during this time period; no one died of COVID, or overdoses. The primary goal of safely sheltering some of the most vulnerable people in our community was met.**