

## **Tamar's Center Need for a New Location**

### **The problem**

We need a new location for Tamar's Center in downtown Cincinnati. The Philippus United Church of Christ building where Tamar's is located has been sold to a developer. We have until early to mid-2022 to find another location. We have been seeking a new location without success for five years.

Tamar's clients are women who are homeless and without transportation. Many are addicts or involved in sex trafficking. They walk to our current location which is on the edge of the downtown.

### **Current trends in Cincinnati**

Cincinnati's downtown is in a period of renaissance. Many old buildings are being purchased and renovated. People are moving to the downtown area. There are many new, trendy businesses catering to a young and affluent population.

### **Buying versus leasing**

Leasing/renting property to a social service ministry that works with the people that Tamar's serves is unwelcome to building owners seeking tenants. In fact, few non-profit agencies that serve similar populations lease their space. They own their buildings. We have visited many possible rental locations including those that meet our needs and are in decent condition, but their owners are not interested in leasing to us. They either don't return our calls or say that someone else is interested.

We have found two spaces that would lease to us. One was a house in terrible condition and the owner could not afford to upgrade. The other space is owned by the County government and has been vacant and unfinished for many years. It requires well over \$100,000 in building costs, a five-year lease, plus unspecified monthly rent. The executive committee of the board concluded that this would be a foolish investment in something that we didn't own. For the same amount of money, we could go far toward investing in our own property.

Currently property prices keep rising in Cincinnati. We believe that a former house in a transitional neighborhood, with the right zoning that would allow us, would be a good investment and a good solution. We believe the property would very likely appreciate and be a valuable asset that could be sold in future as needs change. The conclusion of the board and two task forces is that it is more practical and feasible for Franciscan Ministries to own a property for Tamar's Center.

### **Stability**

Purchasing a property would give Tamar's stability and allow staff to focus on program strengthening rather than worrying when we will have no home and no program. The current situation has been stressful for our staff. Also, foundations and other grantors will not invest in a program that might be closed at any time due to lack of location. Considering a looming deadline to relocate, failed efforts to lease, we are in an urgent situation for the survival of Tamar's Center.

### Summary of activity in search for a location

2016	Proposal submitted to St Francis Seraph Ministries and the Franciscan Friars to co-locate Tamar's Center and Haircuts from the Heart within the St Anthony Center. Request denied due to "lack of space".
	Tamar's moved from one room space to larger space on third floor of Philippus Church.
2017	Task Force of the Board was formed to look for space for Tamar's. Met monthly and discussed possible options and made contacts.
2018	Calls and requests made to neighboring churches and other non-profit agencies such as St Vincent De Paul to co-locate or if space was available, began looking at real estate listings
	Began negotiations with Philippus Church leadership to renovate and rent two floors of the education building with a long term lease. Worked with architect, tradesman, and began negotiating a lease. After months of work the church leadership decided to sell instead.
	Talked with Homeless Coalition about co-locating in their old first floor unfinished storage space. Space was far too small; women would have to enter through an unsafe alley space needed complete renovation. Decided that it was not feasible.
2018 - 2019	Worked with another social service agency, the Welcome Home Collaborative to try to co-locate. Explored several properties and one adjoining St. Anthony Center. It would need to be purchased and totally renovated. Neighboring Mary Magdalen House (where Haircuts is located) agency questioned that the women would cause problems in an already troubled area. Thought that the partner agency might buy and rent to us, but cost was too high.
2019	Board Task Force reconvened.
	Found a building called the Mockebbee, with old underground caverns, they seemed willing to lease to us, then told us that an investor was buying the whole building.
	Talked with the Model Group a local developer to ask for help. They advised us to be careful about zoning. No further assistance provided, though sympathetic.
	Talked with another developer, 3CDC, they were unsympathetic and said they could see why we were having a problem and offered no help.
	Tried to secure realtor for leasing. No response back.
	Through another agency we were referred to the owner of a large house that might be leased. We thought it could be shared with Welcome Home Collaborative. Had tradesmen check and condition was very bad, floors were rotted. Owner could not afford to repair and wanted high rental fee.
	Application to suburban parish for funding with Welcome Home—to buy a property. We were in group of finalists for their parish fundraiser, but would have to buy, they would help renovate. Told we couldn't buy property. COVID cancelled parish's plans.
2020	Found a government owned storefront property for lease in good location for our work. Several meetings and phone calls were held. Cost to build out the unfinished

	space was over \$100,000. Determined this was unwise, also upper floor (which were finished and used for housing) leaked sewage into the space, they acknowledged this happens but that they will immediately fix.
	Met with Model Group, new owner of Philippus Church, to again ask for help finding new location and to ask when we would be evicted.
2020 - 2021	Meetings and communication back and forth with St Francis Seraph and the Friars about possibly space---might be possible or not years in future. Friary is for sale/under contract with developer.
2021	At January Board retreat, Board determines finding a new home for Tamar's Center a top priority.
	Grant proposal (due March 15, 2021-once a year opportunity) for \$40,000 written to the Sisters of St Francis Sacred Heart to buy a \$180,000 house in a good area for Tamar's. We had to withdraw proposal due to inability to purchase.
	Continued searching for a property to lease--no call backs, found three great places, no response from realtor/owner after multiple attempts to secure.
	Tried to get help from a realtor, no help.
	Continuing to look in advertisements for space.