



COUNTY OF LOUISA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

(540) 967-3430

Fax (540) 967-3486

www.louisacounty.gov

TO: Members, Louisa County Planning Commission
FROM: Christopher Coon, Deputy County Administrator
RE: Proposed Ordinance Amendment – Humanitarian Shelters
DATE: July 30, 2025

Background

Since 2019, the County has required a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for emergency shelters, which were then defined as “a facility providing temporary housing for one or more individuals who are temporarily or permanently homeless.” While this provided a general framework, it lacked detail and created ambiguity for applicants, staff, and the Planning Commission regarding operational expectations and review standards.

In response to increased interest from multiple organizations seeking to establish shelters in Louisa County, the Community Development Department initiated a comprehensive ordinance amendment process to enhance transparency, support responsible shelter operations, and provide clear minimum requirements for CUP applications. This amendment redefines the use as a Humanitarian Shelter and establishes a detailed set of operational and documentation standards to support informed land use decisions by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Purpose of the Update

This amendment serves to:

- Replace the 2019 Emergency Shelter definition with a clearer and more functionally accurate definition of Humanitarian Shelter;
- Establish uniform minimum CUP submission requirements that address operational, safety, and community compatibility issues;
- Provide a transparent roadmap for applicants and decision-makers to evaluate the suitability of proposed shelters;
- Ensure alignment with state and federal codes, without burdening County staff or services with ambiguous enforcement expectations.

Ordinance Development and Review

The ordinance update was developed over a multi-month process involving staff, the Planning Commission, and legal counsel. The initial draft, dated June 4, 2025, introduced the core policy concepts along with justifications for each proposed minimum standard, and was used to guide preliminary Planning Commission discussions. The June 10th, 2025 work session draft translated these concepts into ordinance-ready language for codification within Chapter 86 of the zoning ordinance. Following legal review and Planning Commission input, the July 21, 2025 version

incorporated revised language for clarity, softened provisions where flexibility was needed, and refined several requirements to improve legal defensibility. The final clean version of the ordinance now reflects all accepted revisions and is prepared for public hearing and potential adoption.

Key Updates from 2019 to 2025

2019 Language	2025 Update
Emergency Shelter definition	Replaced with Humanitarian Shelter : "A facility that provides temporary shelter and basic services to individuals or families, without requiring leases or occupancy agreements."
No CUP standards beyond general requirements	Establishes detailed CUP submission requirements including intake/screening policies, supervision, service partnerships, community impact narratives, and good neighbor policies.
No expectation of CUP materials or operational transparency	Requires specific documentation to be submitted with the CUP application to ensure informed decisions by the Planning Commission and Board.

Summary of CUP Requirements in Final Draft

- **Use Expectation:** Humanitarian shelters are generally expected to be ancillary to a principal use. Stand-alone proposals are not prohibited but may trigger additional review and scrutiny.
- **Supervision:** An onsite, authorized representative must be present during operating hours to ensure accountability and resident safety.
- **Intake and Screening:** Applicants must provide written procedures detailing intake hours, ID verification, screening practices, and any disqualification criteria. Updates must be submitted to the County for review and approval.
- **Service Partnerships:** A written plan must outline supportive services and referral partnerships, ensuring operators can meet clients' needs beyond shelter.
- **Community Impact Statement:** The application must include a narrative describing efforts to minimize impact on County services and neighboring properties.
- **Good Neighbor Policy:** Required to promote community relations and include contact information, complaint response procedures, and outreach plans.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Applicants must demonstrate awareness of and intent to comply with applicable building, fire, health, and accessibility codes.

Conclusion

This ordinance amendment enhances the zoning code by codifying expectations for Humanitarian Shelters, reflecting current needs and interest from service organizations. It supports thoughtful land use planning, promotes safe and supportive environments, and empowers the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to make well-informed decisions based on transparent, standardized criteria.

