

# Nonprofit hospice to add 12-bed inpatient floor at its Colorado Springs headquarters

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*Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care is remodeling the first floor of its building at 2550 Tenderfoot Hill St., in Colorado Springs, to create a home-like, 12-bed in-patient program for hospice patients and respite care services. (Debbie Kelley/The Gazette)*

Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care — which holds the titles of the region’s only nonprofit hospice and the only inpatient provider of end-of-life services — is adding 12 family suites for inpatient care at its headquarters in Colorado Springs.

“The benefit of us being able to design something on our own is it removes that hospital-type setting and makes it a homelike experience,” said Andy Petersen, executive director of the Pikes Peak Hospice Foundation, the organization’s separate fundraising arm. “It’s going to be a great service for the community.”

The first floor of the organization’s large two-story building at 2550 Tenderfoot Hill St. off Lake Avenue will undergo an \$8.5 million renovation and be transformed into an Inpatient Care Center.

The in-house program will accommodate chronically and terminally ill patients who are nearing the end of their lives and whose families no longer can care for them at home. It also will offer 24/7 short-term respite care for families who need a break. The organization will continue to provide palliative care, which relieves pain and other symptoms of serious illness with monitored medication.

With an array of amenities and a homey feel, the freestanding Inpatient Care Center “will serve as a refuge for patients seeking comfort,” said Dawn Darvalics, president of Pikes Peak Hospice and Palliative Care.

A wall-breaking ceremony — an interior version of a ground-breaking but replacing shovels with sledgehammers to smash walls — will take place at 10 a.m. Thursday at the site, signaling the start of construction. The work is expected to be completed in March, officials said.

The project originated when the COVID-19 pandemic led to the organization losing access to 16 in-patient beds it had leased on the sixth floor at Penrose Hospital north of downtown Colorado Springs, Petersen said. The hospital simply needed the beds for COVID patients.

Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care initially began renting beds for inpatient hospice care at Penrose in 1982, after the organization opened in 1980.

The organization purchased a home and operated it as a hospice-care residence from 1986 to 1996. It also opened a hospice wing at a local nursing center and opened an inpatient unit at another hospital in town, St. Francis, which is now defunct.

The current hospice unit opened at Penrose Hospital in 2011.

For the past few years, the nonprofit's board of directors debated how to create its inpatient facility once again, Petersen said.

The beds at Penrose Hospital almost always have a waiting list, Petersen said, with 473 patients using the unit last year.

This can result in delayed care, or worse, no care at all, Darvalics said.

About half of the people die in the unit and half return home under continuing hospice assistance, she said.

“The people we care for are terminally ill, often with advanced dementia, cancer, liver, lung, cardiac or kidney disease,” Darvalics said.

“Most are frail, and all need symptom management, personal cares, emotional and spiritual support.”

However, the hospital floor “is not really a comfortable place to be,” Petersen said.

In addition to individual suites, the renovated ground floor of the organization's office building will feature a great room overlooking the city and an outside garden, two kitchens that families can use, an interfaith chapel, a veterans' reflection area, and room for families to spread out, bring photos and other personal belongings from home and surround their loved ones with their presence.

The environment will improve the quality of life and provide dignity for patients and their families, Petersen said.

In all, Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care served nearly 1,800 patients last year, with about 1,400 using hospice, which can be dependent on the Medicare and Medicaid systems of insurance coverage. The organization covers El Paso, Teller and Elbert counties.

There are about a dozen for-profit hospices in the Pikes Peak region, Petersen said, but just one nonprofit.

A campaign to raise \$2.5 of the \$8.5 million anticipated cost of the Inpatient Care Center recently launched, with a \$500,000 pledge from El Pomar Foundation and individual donations coming in, Petersen said.

The organization's foundation contributed a \$3.5 million lead gift and will lend another \$2.5 million to the project, he said.

The community's help will complete needed funding, officials said. To donate, go to <https://pikespeakhospice.org/donate-today/> or call 719-633-3400.