



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2024

CONTACT

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW CATHOLIC CHURCH TO SERVE AS NEW FAMILY SHELTER
IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL, INTERFAITH AGREEMENT**

The shelter will be operated by the Zakat Foundation at no cost to the City of Chicago.

CHICAGO – The City of Chicago, Cook County, the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the Zakat Foundation have come together to establish a new family shelter at St. Bartholomew Catholic Church (St. Bart's), leveraging philanthropic resources to support new arrivals in need.

"This initiative represents a remarkable example of what can be achieved when the public, private, and non-profit sectors collaborate towards a common goal," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "My administration's Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights brought together an intergovernmental and an interfaith coalition to the table to work out this agreement. I'm proud to work in partnerships with the Archdiocese, Cook County, and the Zakat Foundation as we work to support those in need."

Under the terms of the agreement, the Archdiocese of Chicago is leasing St. Bart's to the City of Chicago at no cost. Subsequently, the City is subleasing the property to the Zakat Foundation, a renowned international humanitarian agency with extensive experience in providing refuge to displaced individuals and families across the globe. The convent and school building of St. Bart's will be utilized for the shelter.

"The Archdiocese of Chicago is pleased to partner with the City of Chicago, Cook County and the Zakat Foundation to provide these much-needed services for migrant families that have recently arrived to our city," said **Betsy Bohlen, Chief Operating Officer of the Archdiocese of Chicago**. "We are grateful to the parishioners of the Our Lady of the Rosary Parish for providing space and support to establish this new family shelter at the St. Bartholomew's Parish site."

"The family shelter at St. Bartholomew Catholic Church is a testament to the resilience and empathy of our community," said **30th Ward Alderwoman Ruth Cruz**. "I look forward to assisting the Zakat Foundation, Cook County, and the



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Archdiocese in providing these vulnerable families with a safe place and the necessary resources to create a new life for themselves.”

“I’m grateful for the collaborative effort with the City of Chicago and the Archdiocese in our pursuit of innovative approaches to the new arrivals response,” said **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle**. “Cook County is proud to contribute to this initiative, leveraging the skilled craftsmanship of our in-house trades to prepare St. Bartholomew’s for welcoming new families into our community.”

Cook County is overseeing the construction of shower facilities and performing other minor renovations necessary to accommodate the families at this site. This collaborative effort emphasizes the community’s commitment to providing essential services without imposing a financial burden on the city’s budget.

The Zakat Foundation will assume all operational costs, including logistics and staffing for the shelter. Adhering strictly to the City of Chicago’s Shelter Operation Guide, the foundation will offer comprehensive wrap-around services to ensure the well-being and comfort of the families. Additionally, the Zakat Foundation is coordinating with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to facilitate the enrollment of students, guaranteeing that education remains a priority for young residents.

“We are honored to assist the City of Chicago in this most important work of providing shelter for the refugee and the displaced, ensuring each family finds resettlement, retraining, new-language literacy, education, and earning through trade and jobs,” said **Halil Demir, Founding Executive Director, the Zakat Foundation of America**. “We stand shoulder to shoulder with Mayor Johnson and Chicago’s leaders to demonstrate to the world why Chicago is the City of Big Shoulders.”

Preparations to open the shelter are underway, with the official move-in set for mid-April. The shelter, dedicated exclusively to families, underscores the partners’ shared commitment to providing a safe, supportive environment for those facing homelessness.

###