

# ICE plans to open Scarborough facility to hold people accused of immigration violations

BDN [bangordailynews.com/2020/02/14/news/portland/ice-plans-to-open-scarborough-facility-to-hold-people-](https://bangordailynews.com/2020/02/14/news/portland/ice-plans-to-open-scarborough-facility-to-hold-people-)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, has plans to operate a detention center out of an office building at 40 Manson Libby Road. An announcement by Maine Realty Advisors on September 10, 2019 said that the building was fully leased after contracts signed by the U.S. government.

By [Nick Schroeder](#), BDN Staff • February 14, 2020 3:37 pm

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SCARBOROUGH, Maine — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, plans to open a Maine facility to hold people suspected of immigration violations, according to an email obtained by the Bangor Daily News.

ICE would share the industrial building in Scarborough at 40 Manson Libby Road with a marketing firm and a [federal veterans health agency](#) that has signed a lease to relocate there. ICE's use of the building was referred to in a December email obtained late Thursday under the Freedom of Information Act.

"[T]his space will be lowkey and not brightly advertised as an ICE location," Alisha Wofford, a leasing specialist with the U.S. General Services Administration, said in an email to other government officials. GSA is an agency that builds, manages and leases real estate for the federal government.

The email was heavily redacted, but the full version said ICE authorities will process, fingerprint and detain people suspected of immigration violations there. People apprehended by ICE agents could be kept in onsite holding rooms for hours but would be transported in unmarked vans to an overnight detention facility elsewhere, if necessary, according to the email.

A source who requested anonymity for fear of retribution provided the unredacted email to the BDN in which Wofford described the holding facility as similar to a "police station" — not a "jail." Wofford said it would not have steel bars. It was not clear when it was expected to begin operating.

She added that ICE's operations are not expected to "trigger any of the visiting veterans" who would come to the neighboring health agency for treatment.

"You should not have to worry about ICE having any negative impact on the vet center," she told health agency staff in her Dec. 3 email.

The news comes four months after ICE faced protests following an announcement that it would open an administrative office in Portland's Monument Square. ICE has no other holding facilities in Maine. The nearest Enforcement and Removal Operations field office is in Boston, according to the agency's website.

The facility also comes as ICE has arrested more people nationwide. The agency said it apprehended more than 1.1 million people in 2019, an increase of more than 68 percent from the previous fiscal year.

ICE did not immediately respond to an inquiry about the number of people apprehended in Maine during that time. A spokesperson for the agency declined to comment on the facility.

The Scarborough industrial building is owned by Maine Realty Advisors. Principal Josh Soley said that his firm offered the space for the government's use by bidding on a contract from the Department of Homeland Security via an online system. ICE is part of the Department of Homeland Security, which was seeking leasable space in New England.

He said that he told tenants in the building that a Department of Homeland Security agency could locate operations there.

Maine Realty Advisors owns real estate and manages properties throughout the state. It announced in January it would be converting a 200-year-old former monastery in Portland into low-income housing for asylum seekers.

Immigration enforcement has ramped up under the Trump administration.

The New York Times reported Friday afternoon that federal ICE agents who typically confront border smugglers are being redeployed to cities across the country known for immigrant-friendly policies. These "sanctuary" cities have largely refused to cooperate with federal authorities who are targeting immigrants for deportation. Portland is not a sanctuary city.

Some say there's evidence that federal authorities have targeted Portland, where local law enforcement is expected to cooperate with ICE despite an ordinance that prohibits city workers from asking the immigration status of individuals who are seeking city services.

Those who work in Portland's social service circles blame a policy change they say was designed to intentionally overwhelm networks in liberal cities that offer aid and assistance to immigrants. These policies could be setting up a "release-and-catch" system where Portland is inundated with improperly processed immigrants who then become easy targets for deportation.

Since June of last year, the city of Portland found housing for more than 800 asylum seekers — most of them fleeing violent persecution from Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo — who sought emergency shelter for more than nine weeks in the gym of the Portland Exposition Building.

Maine's recent influx of migrant families — who came here legally to seek asylum — first began to arrive in Portland from San Antonio, Texas with little warning last summer. In an effort to reduce dependence on taxpayer money, the city has relied on private donations and social service organizations for volunteer services to aid them.

Correction: A previous version of this story misstated the number of asylum seekers who had come to Portland. More than 800 people have come since June 2019.

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