

# Action Plan to Address Homeless Issues in Boulder

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Submitted by **Boulder Rights Watch** to the Boulder City Council for consideration at Council's Study Session on Homelessness scheduled for August 26, 2014.

Many people worked on various aspects of this Action Plan as authors, consultants and reviewers. That group includes, but is not limited to:

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Submitted by Members of ***Boulder Rights Watch***

## **Preface**

On August 26, 2014, the Boulder City Council will be discussing planning objectives with regard to Boulder's homeless population. This memorandum is intended to contribute to that and future discussions. It was produced by members of the *Boulder Rights Watch*, an organization concerned with the humanitarian crisis facing Boulder's unhoused community members.

## **Organization of this Action Plan**

In the following pages there are sections discussing seven programmatic areas worthy of this community's consideration. In summary, those areas are:

### **Program 1: Establish a Daytime Storage Center for use of Homeless Community Members.**

This proposal reflects the reality that many homeless people must carry everything they own around with them all day – often in heavy backpacks. This becomes a mark of “otherness” and isolates homeless community members. The discussion includes suggested program design criteria and highlights an existing Denver program as one potential model of how a good program might be designed.

### **Program 2: Create a Year-Round Comprehensive Day Center.**

This proposal urges the development of a year-round comprehensive day center so that homeless community members can meet their basic life needs by accessing centralized and coordinated essential services. A center of this type will provide homeless people with a much better chance of putting their lives on a productive path. Other parts of the community will also benefit when public places, like the library, no longer have to serve as de facto day shelters. The discussion provides examples of successful programs in other cities, discusses service philosophy issues and includes information about how services are currently distributed.

### **Program 3: Address the Issue of Housing for our Poorest Community Members as Part of the City's Comprehensive Housing Strategy.**

This proposal recommends expanding Boulder's Comprehensive Housing Strategy to specifically address the needs of our poorest neighbors. Various other community sub-populations – earning varying percentages of the area median income – are addressed by the plan. However, the strategy has not been sufficiently focused on helping those with almost no income. This program urges a change in community attitudes away from considering homeless issues primarily in terms of law enforcement

or business climate or aesthetics. Once the community starts thinking about homeless issues primarily in terms of housing, consideration of various creative planning options may become more feasible. Two possibilities spotlighted in the discussion are higher density for housing of the very poor and the use of “tiny houses” to serve currently homeless individuals.

**Program 4: Create Year-Round Homeless Sheltering Capacity.**

There is an urgent need to address Boulder’s lack of year-round sheltering capacity. The discussion points out that the absence of adequate summer shelter has tragic implications for those without housing and is ultimately more expensive for the community than would be the provision of needed shelter services. The memorandum discusses two options for achieving year-round sheltering. One of those would utilize the current facility of the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless. The other would expand programs of Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO) to achieve this objective.

**Program 5: Implement a Public Education Campaign to Assist Members of the General Community to Better Understand their Homeless Neighbors.**

The City should develop, fund, and implement a campaign to educate the public about homelessness and the realities facing the diverse homeless population in Boulder. The goal should be to change existing negative and inaccurate stereotypes of people experiencing homelessness. The text includes numerous references to potential funding sources and other information pertinent to establishing such a program.

**Program 6: (a) Develop Community Response Teams to Help Resolve and Avoid Conflict Situations and (b) Increase the use of a Community Policing Approach with regard to Homeless Members of Our Community.**

This programmatic area has two proposals, labeled 6-A and 6-B. Both attempt to respond to perceptions of social misconduct associated with some individuals within the homeless community.

Proposal 6-A calls for the establishment of trained Community Response Teams working in cooperation with law enforcement Liaison Officers. The teams would, among other things, analyze conflict hot spots, educate homeless people about available services, and respond and work to deescalate conflicts. The discussion points to programs in other cities which have utilized variants of this approach with good outcomes.

Proposal 6-B suggests an expansion of the use of community policing approaches with regard to interactions with members of the homeless community. The discussion points out the dangers of an unnecessarily antagonistic relationship between police officers and homeless community members. A healthier approach is for the police to be seen sympathetically by our homeless neighbors so that homeless individuals will feel free to call police when a situation is spinning out of control. An example is provided of two women police officers from another jurisdiction who changed their approach from

strict enforcement to helping the homeless. Then, when a dangerous situation developed, members of the local homeless community stepped forward to protect the police officers.

### **Program 7: Revise the Police Department Professional Standards Review Panel.**

The relationship between unhoused people and the police in Boulder has recently become more stressed. There have been allegations of inappropriate or harsh policing actions. One way to address this situation is to increase the transparency and accountability of police officers through the use of a more robust police review panel. The discussion of this proposal explains the current Boulder system, notes systems utilized by other cities, and explores ways to strengthen the Boulder system by making it more transparent. The text sets forth six specific recommendations for consideration.

### **Conclusion**

The August 26 discussion can be a positive and productive event if it helps move our community toward concrete action to save lives and ameliorate suffering. Boulder Rights Watch hopes that the ideas, information and resources set forth in this memorandum will be of assistance in that endeavor.

# Program 1

## Establish a Boulder Daytime Storage Center for the Use of Homeless People.

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### **The Need**

Daytime storage is a vital need for local unhoused people. Many unhoused people carry virtually everything they own on their backs in large backpacks. Carrying those backpacks about during the day represents a visual mark of “otherness” that sets unhoused people apart from other members of the community. The need to carry and manage the backpacks also restricts the ability of unhoused people to utilize public facilities, some of which discourage the unsightliness of backpacks strewn about.

The existence of an effective day storage facility would allow unhoused members of the community to more easily circulate and interact with other community members because they would be able to better blend into the general population on the streets. Housed members of the community would benefit as the impression of the “homeless everywhere” would recede. When the backpack symbol of homelessness is eliminated, the chances that people will interact as human beings – rather than as categories or stereotypes – will increase.

### **The Solution**

Daytime storage models exist. For example, the St. Francis Center in Denver has run such a program for years. The logistics of establishing such a program in Boulder might include:

- Location of a suitable space, perhaps 600-800 square feet.
- Development of a system of racks for the placement of property that is stored.
- Sorting tables for utilization by those who use the service.
- A recycling area to serve those who use the service
- Trash bins and bags available to those who utilize the service.
- Development of a tracking and claim check process.
- Development of a paid and volunteer staffing system

### **A project budget should contemplate the following factors**

- Rent and utilities
- Staffing costs
- Supplies (perhaps including computers) for managing claim tickets & tracking
- Cleaning supplies
- Initial startup cost of construction and equipment

**Other program initiation considerations might include the following:**

- Location of the facility would be important. It would need to be physically accessible to the homeless members of our community and sited in conformity with local zoning and related regulations.
- A series of policies would need to be developed covering a range of matters including the handling of abandoned property, lost claim checks, limitations on storage of dangerous material and related matters. Time limitations for storage would need to be clearly communicated.
- Hours of operation would need to be established, perhaps 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

**Conclusion**

The fundamental solution to homelessness is housing. So long as housing options are inadequate, life for the unhoused will remain a tremendous daily psychological and physical struggle. However, there are a number of steps that can be taken to make the lives of unhoused community members a bit less oppressive. The establishment of a daytime storage facility is probably among the most important such steps. It should, therefore, be high on this community's action plan.

# Program 2

## Create and Fund a Year-Round Comprehensive Day Center

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### **Scope of Proposal**

The proposed year-round Comprehensive Day Center will meet basic life needs of the homeless population by centralizing and coordinating access to essential services. The day center will offer a safe, respectful, and welcoming setting in which members of the housed and unhoused population can build community that reconnects homeless individuals with more productive life opportunities. The need is clear: agencies cannot engage clients whom they cannot reliably reach; clients cannot navigate a disconnected web of services.

### **The Problem**

For homeless community members, services and resources are currently scattered throughout the Boulder City area. That makes access to services for those without transportation difficult and time consuming. Agencies serving this population spend inordinate amounts of time trying to locate clients. There is no central point of contact to receive and respond to messages. The result is missed opportunities to provide efficiently and effectively the services that clients need and agencies seek to offer.

From a broader community perspective, Boulder Public Library staff members and patrons report large numbers of homeless people using the library during the day as a de facto day shelter. This makes some other patrons uncomfortable and represents a missed opportunity to engage homeless individuals in services at an appropriate location.

### **Reasons for Supporting a Year-Round Comprehensive Day Center**

#### **a. Benefits for the Unhoused Community**

Coordination of available services in a central place will make service access feasible and will substantially reduce the immense amount of time and energy that unhoused individuals spend getting from place to place to meet their basic human needs for survival. This time and energy savings will support better physical and mental health outcomes and give unhoused people the energy to focus on shaping a better future life for themselves.

Healing and personal growth is possible when a person's entire daily life is not focused on meeting survival needs. Many people in the homeless population have

endured issues like brain damage, PTSD, domestic violence, sexual abuse, desertion by or death of parents as children, or other challenges to healthy adult life that make professional services a necessity for better outcomes. For some, addictive behavior has become a coping mechanism that can be replaced only by effective intervention services. Interaction with professionals and volunteers who respect and believe in their potential will support the growth in confidence that fuels personal growth. When homeless people in need have a safe place to be during the day where they can access services, their road to a housed and more healthy life situation becomes more accessible.

### **b. Benefits to the Greater Community, the Business Community and for City Government**

Provision of centralized year-round day center services will reduce panhandling, reduce incidents that require emergency intervention by police and medical services, and protect unhoused people who are genuinely in need from the criminal element that preys on the unhoused as well as on the general public. The shelter will decrease the criminalization of the homeless and mitigate fear among them that they are being driven away. This, in turn, may help reduce the number of tragic street deaths of vulnerable people who die frightened and alone in dark and dangerous places.

Other cities have seen a dramatic reduction in the cost of emergency police, medical, and protective services when centralized and coordinated services to support the unhoused population are provided. The efficiency and impact of service providers operating within a comprehensive day center will reduce costs and increase efficiency for those agencies.

### **Cities That Have Successfully Implemented Comprehensive Day Center Services**

The **Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope** in Ft Collins is an example of a program that provides coordinated services. It has met with substantive local support and improved outcomes for homeless individuals. The program offers:

- Employment resources
- Housing assistance
- Financial counseling
- Transportation assistance
- Job training and educational opportunities
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Phone and computer access for employment contacts
- Medical and dental health assistance
- Washer/dryer, kitchen, showers, and storage facilities
- Play areas for children

The **Gathering Place** in Denver is a national model for effective intervention programs. Its comprehensive services provide one template for planning coordinated and comprehensive services in Boulder. Denver has experienced an overall reduction in cost by adopting this model. The Gathering Place, <http://tgpdenver.org/>

A third model program is **Haven for Hope** in San Antonio, Texas, which is supported by a broad coalition of individuals and businesses as well as government there. See <http://www.havenforhope.org>.

It may be wise to consider a women only day center in Boulder to address the severe trauma and mental health needs that some homeless women experience, making it difficult for them to feel safe in coeducational settings.

### **Appropriately Targeting Services**

As Boulder moves forward to strengthen its services to the homeless, best practices suggest tailoring approaches and services for varying segments of the homeless population. Factors such as gender, age, health condition, and pre-existing trauma necessitate different approaches for optimal outcomes. Having a day center at which services can be located will provide an opportunity for case managers to evaluate and help clients access the right mix of services.

Utilizing a differentiated service planning model will also enable service providers to complement their current evidence-based data collection with more sensitive and predictive measures for success. While it is important to continue collecting census data and information about the quantity of services (meals served, beds provided) more sensitive indicators are needed. Tracking level of individual participant engagement in services and individual progress in moving from initial level of vulnerability to greater levels of self-management will provide important data that can be used for future planning and refinement of service delivery. This type of data will assist agency coordination with regard to individual clients. This approach can be implemented with full protection of each client's confidentiality. It also provides a more substantive data source for future funding and research on applied practice. But none of this is feasible so long as homeless people are careening around the city every day trying to meet basic life needs and attempting to stay below the radar of police enforcement.

### **National Organizations Reporting the Effectiveness of This Programmatic Approach**

Numerous research centers and service agencies have developed a comprehensive literature concerning best practices to address homelessness issues. The following websites provide valuable information for decision makers:

- [Homelessness Resource Center http://homeless.samhsa.gov](http://homeless.samhsa.gov) - See especially Best Practices for Providers and Trauma: Cost of Homelessness.
- [The National Coalition for the Homeless http://nationalhomeless.org/](http://nationalhomeless.org/)

- [Burnes Institute on Poverty and Homelessness](http://www.burnesinstitute.org) [www.burnesinstitute.org](http://www.burnesinstitute.org)
- [Colorado Coalition for the Homeless](http://www.coloradocoalition.org) [www.coloradocoalition.org](http://www.coloradocoalition.org)

## **Consequences of Failing to Establish a Day Shelter**

The immediate impact of failing to implement an effective day center is that homeless people will continue to face daily life in their current plight: they will lack sufficient safe daytime shelter and face overwhelming obstacles to accessing required services. The community, in turn, will continue to be frustrated as public spaces continue to be used as de facto shelter spaces.

## **The Relationship between Establishing a Day Shelter and Pursuing Regional Approaches to the Problem**

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless reports that in general 60 to 75 percent of the homeless population in local communities is originally from the community or its immediately surrounding area. However, it is also true that there is considerable movement back and forth among homeless people from Boulder to Denver and vice versa. Survey data does not support the popular assumption that the majority of this population comes from somewhere else out of state. In fact, data confirm that most people stay within a short travel distance from the communities where they have grown up and have family connections. Given this reality, the fear that providing a day shelter will dramatically increase the numbers of local homeless people is misplaced.

However, it is imperative that Boulder homeless providers and local government seek ways to build relationships with statewide coalitions and seek funding opportunities on a state and federal level rather than relying solely on local resources for what is fundamentally a regional problem. The advantage of a comprehensive day shelter in this regard is that it will serve as an effective information gathering center with regard to clients and thus allow more informed communications with other regional providers and local governments. That information is critical if meaningful regional cooperation is to take place.

## **Conclusion**

The first step in response to Boulder's challenge is to recognize that the homeless population is part of the greater Boulder community. This part of our community needs day shelter services and as a compassionate community, Boulder should try to help meet this need. A failure to act in this manner will result in greater frustration and hopelessness on the part of both unhoused and housed members of our community.

This community is not – and should not be – satisfied to have homeless people lying about in public spaces because they have no other options. People on the street need help and they probably won't get it at the library where they currently seek shelter. Our community can do better.

People with hope typically continue to strive for a better life. People without hope tend to resort to dangerous and destructive behavior that results in tragedy for the individual and for others. The choice lies with the decisions made by Boulder's community leaders. By banding together in partnership with leaders of the homeless community, the civic leaders, business leaders, faith leaders, and individuals of good will have created solutions in other cities. Boulder, with its immense resources of talent and wealth, could do the same.

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### **Appendix:**

Some services that might be provided at a day center are already being provided in the community in various locations and ways. However, those services tend to be uncoordinated. The chart, starting on the next page, details those services.

The following chart suggests ways that services might be better coordinated on an interim basis, even prior to the opening of a new day center.

<b>Programmatic need:</b>	<b>Current situation:</b>	<b>Suggested intervention</b>	<b>Projected Result</b>
Shelter from inclement weather.	Currently: Bridge House (BH) provides this within the limitations of their 1200 square foot space.	Proposed: Utilize space at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (BSH) which is vastly larger.	<p>Projected Result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Better health outcomes.</li> <li>– Decrease in short-term &amp; chronic illness &amp; reduction of costs for emergency medical care.</li> <li>– Medicaid enrollment as per circumstances.</li> </ul>
Access to mental health services in a setting that supports privacy and dignity.	<p>Currently: BH does not have private space appropriate for this use.</p> <p>BH runs the Resource Center which has some limited access to private space.</p> <p>Mental Health Partners (MHP ) will open its new outreach center next month.</p>	<p>Proposed: Those clients not meeting the criteria for MHP services, would be better served by the use of BSH as a day shelter as it has private office space for meeting.</p> <p>Combining BH and Resource Center services at the shelter will lead to greater access and coordination.</p>	<p>Projected Result:</p> <p>Improved client attendance and regularity in following treatment protocols.</p>
Enrollment assistance and information to programs such as Social Security, VA programs and other state and federal safety net programs.	<p>Currently: This occurs at the Resource Center run by BH Outreach which takes place at the BH main site.</p> <p>For those with brain injuries, the Center for People with Disabilities (CPWD) offers this type of service.</p>	<p>Proposed: Combine BH and Resource Center activities at the BSH for better client access and coordination.</p>	<p>Projected Result:</p> <p>Better use and coordination of existing programs.</p> <p>Better aid clients to re-enter the housed population.</p> <p>Reduction of emergency housing needs.</p>

<p>Bathroom and shower facilities, laundry facilities, day storage of personal possessions.</p>	<p>Currently: There is one shower at BH, and one bathroom at BH.</p> <p>No laundry facilities exist at BH.</p> <p>Very limited laundry hours at BSH are very hard for clients to access because the laundry room is isolated and can cause trauma for PTSD clients.</p> <p>No day storage exists for personal possession.</p>	<p>Proposed: This is a crucial need best served by BSH with much more already existing shower and bathroom capacity than other agencies.</p> <p>Allowing access would reduce the impact of homeless people's elimination needs in public spaces and thus reduce the public backlash against homeless people.</p>	<p>Projected Result:</p> <p>Safe and secure access to meeting essential personal needs gives clients the opportunity to focus on underlying issues/ opportunities for personal growth in life and work skills.</p>
<p>Accessible case management from trained and certified case managers.</p>	<p>Currently: Occurring at BH and the Resource Center.</p> <p>Case management at BSH is limited to participants in their transitional programs.</p> <p>Case management also occurs at other sites such as People's Clinic and MHP.</p>	<p>Proposed: The Burnes report suggests a shared information system leading to much more coordinated efforts.</p> <p>The proposed model of the Resource Center replicated at the BSH site would provide the most access, bringing together the disparate efforts of agencies that are scattered in locations throughout Boulder.</p>	<p>Projected Result:</p> <p>Assignment of each client to an accessible case manager creates a personal link that supports all aspects of growth and healing.</p>
<p>Transportation to external meals, medical, legal, and employment appointments.</p>	<p>Currently: Many providers in Boulder purchase tokens independently.</p>	<p>Proposed: The Burnes report suggests joint purchasing/negotiation with RTD as a far more cost effective route, with a savings that may allow for purchase of bus passes for homeless individuals.</p>	<p>Projected Result:</p> <p>Centralized access to RTD tickets and medical transportation will reduce costs.</p>

## Program 3

# Address the Issue of Housing for our Poorest Community Members as Part of the City's Comprehensive Housing Strategy

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### **The Problem**

For some time Boulder has endeavored to maintain a Comprehensive Housing Strategy. Efforts pursuant to that approach have been directed at making housing available for people who earn some percentage of the area median income. While that approach has supplied many units of housing over the years, the strategy has never really been complete. In particular, it has largely failed to address those who make an extraordinarily low percentage of the area median income – the group generally including homeless people.

Homeless issues, to the extent the City has addressed them, have tended to be considered separately from the comprehensive housing strategy. This has had the unfortunate result of limiting imagination and planning efforts with regard to the housing needs of our poorest community members. It has also too often allowed Boulder to imagine that responses to homeless issues are appropriately left to the police and courts.

### **The Solution**

The first step is to acknowledge that any housing strategy that ignores the basic housing needs of our poorest community members is neither comprehensive nor credible. Our community has to change its mental viewpoint in order to acknowledge this reality. Instead of considering homeless issues under the rubric of criminal enforcement, or improvement of the local business climate, or improvements in community aesthetics, homeless issues should be understood first and foremost within the continuum of housing needs.

Once this attitudinal switch with regard to homeless issues is made, a variety of planning options may be pursued. The following are examples of approaches that might be investigated:

#### **1. Investigate zoning changes to permit increased density for homeless residential establishments:**

Many homeless people, being very poor, don't own cars. Because opposition to housing density is often related to the consequences of cars clogging streets and parking places and because homeless people often can't afford cars, the impacts of

density of the poorest element of our community may be lesser or different for buildings that house homeless people. Staff might be instructed to investigate this idea and report back to council about code changes that are appropriate as a result.

## **2. Investigate a program of “tiny houses” that might serve the poorest of our neighbors:**

A “tiny homes” movement seems to be springing into existence across the nation. While there are many community sectors that might have interest in such tiny structures, this approach promises particular benefits for some people who are currently unhoused.

Some preliminary communications have taken place with Abod Shelters, which is based in Iowa and has an office in Denver, CO. The unique designs of this group were featured in July 7, 2014 issue of Time Magazine. Co-founder Doug Sharp has expressed an interest in helping with Boulder’s issue of housing for poor people. He believes that his company can present some viable solutions for some members of the homeless community at a very low cost. The company claims to be ecologically progressive and even features some solar options in its small units. Staff might be instructed to communicate with this potential provider and investigate other tiny housing possibilities.

### **Tiny Houses in Other Communities**

Examples of the use of tiny houses to assist homeless people are provided by Linda Federico-O'murchu in a February 2014 article posted on an NBC news site <http://www.nbcnews.com/business/real-estate/tiny-houses-big-idea-end-homelessness-n39316>:

- In Austin, Texas, a village of 200 tiny houses is being built for the homeless.
- In upstate New York, Rochester Greenovation has designed a prototype for small-scale individualized shelters.
- “Homeless No More Survival Pods” have been built in Utah, micro-pods in Florida, miniature homes in Wisconsin and mini mobile houses in California.

Federico-O'murchu explains that the “Tiny House Movement” was once a concept related to a desire for downsized lives. However it is now transforming itself into a strategy to provide an escape from chronic homelessness. Moreover, the movement is stimulating innovative ideas. For example, California artist Gregory Kloehn has built small, portable homes using salvaged materials he finds on the street. The cost of his small houses has been as low as \$100 each.

Federico-O'murchu’s article refers to a study by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty that points out that local governments routinely criminalize activities that go hand-in-hand with living on the street, such as sleeping in public

spaces and loitering. Incarceration costs taxpayers \$34,480 per inmate per year, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The report goes on to note:

Homeless people spend excessive time in jail or prison, often for petty offenses such as loitering .... The penal system frequently serves as emergency shelter for the chronically homeless, at far greater cost than other more appropriate options.

**Conclusion:**

To the extent that our community thinks about homeless issues principally as an enforcement or aesthetic issue there will be a tendency to rely on the police and courts for primary response. That would be a tragic mistake. Almost everyone agrees that the primary solution to homelessness is housing.

The City Council should acknowledge this reality by making provision of housing to those with nowhere to live a full-fledged and important element of its comprehensive housing strategy. Having done that, it should ask its staff to develop appropriate community planning strategies. Changes to regulations relating to housing density and the exploration of tiny homes are among the approaches worthy of staff investigation.

## Program 4

# All year homeless shelter(s) and overflow facilities

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### **The Problem**

Boulder lacks adequate year-round sheltering capacity. According to John Parvensky, President of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Boulder is the only community in the country that has a dedicated homeless shelter that is not open year-round. (Personal Communication, June, 6, 2014.)

The absence of all year shelter capacity has serious negative consequences. It contributes to the deaths of homeless individuals from exposure. It fosters rapes and other kinds of assaults. It exacerbates preexisting medical conditions. It squanders opportunities for those in need to access critical social service support services. It makes public facilities into de facto shelters.

It also has the negative impact of criminalizing the poor. People have to sleep somewhere, but if they lie down in a park or public place and use a blanket, they are subject to criminal prosecution. This, in turn, imposes costs upon the system for arrests, detentions, attorney time, hearings and trials. Resources expended in this manner have virtually no positive impacts on the lives of those processed through the system.

National figures suggest that the average cost of a day in jail (including attendant legal processing) is in the range of \$90. In contrast, the average cost of providing permanent supportive housing is in the range of \$30 a day. Therefore, it is clear that the failure to provide shelter beds all year is not just inhumane – it is also very expensive.

### **The Solution**

The obvious solution to a lack of all year sheltering capacity is to establish that capacity. Doing so will provide a number of important benefits including:

- A reduction of deaths of homeless people for which exposure is a primary or contributing cause.
- A reduction of deaths of homeless people in situations in which medical intervention would be feasible if there were night time supervision.
- A reduction in the number of sexual assaults on homeless women.
- A reduction in expenditures for enforcement of bans on illegal camping.

- A reduction in the psychological damage inflicted upon the very poor when they are treated as criminals for attempting to meet basic biologic needs.
- A reduction of human waste in public areas caused by a failure of access to bathroom facilities at night.
- An increase in access to services for homeless people who need mental health, addiction, case management and/or employment assistance.

## **The Logistics**

Achieving an all year shelter capacity in Boulder can be accomplished in several different ways. There is already winter shelter in existence and other volunteer and non-profit resources also exist. Given this starting point, there are two obvious, but mutually exclusive, approaches to meeting Boulder's summer sheltering need:

### **Option 1: The Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (BSH) operates all year for emergency sheltering.**

There are a number of potential advantages to this approach. For example, the current facility is large enough to serve the target homeless population. It is well established and has a positive history of interacting with neighbors. The current shelter has an effective fundraising capacity. Finally, the use of the existing location would eliminate the need to select one or more new sites to be used for summer sheltering.

There are, however, also several challenges associated with this approach. In the past, the shelter (BHS) has seemed reluctant to expand to a year round model. It has cited its desire to maintain good relationships with its neighbors and pointed to the management plan that currently controls its operations. While management plans can be altered – particularly if there is a strong desire on the part of the city – the current shelter may feel that it is doing all that it can in view of financial and other constraints.

Another challenge is the perception among some elements of our community that the shelter has been inflexible with regards to its relationships with other agencies. Some believe that the agency's historical reticence to collaborate with other agencies makes all year sheltering at this location unlikely unless there is a significant push in that direction by the city.

Finally, the current shelter is a relatively large agency that has significant operational costs. For this reason, it is possible that the expenditures required to expand services at this location would be larger than an approach that relies upon the expansion of other existing agencies such as the Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO), which has kept its operating costs very low by using space donated by faith sites.

**Option 2: BOHO provides emergency sheltering services all year and the current shelter serves solely as a site for transitional housing programs.**

There would be advantages to having the **Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow** take over all sheltering services. BOHO's mission and vision aligns it well with this approach. In addition, BOHO's deep roots within the faith community may help to neutralize some adverse neighbor reactions to the establishment of additional sites. Also, there are legal protections for faith based institutions that engage in activities consistent with their religious missions.

As an agency with a very small budget and very low fixed costs (the budget was approximately \$125,000 in 2014) the amount of additional funding required to achieve year round operation might be proportionally less than that needed for an expansion of services by the current shelter.

If the current shelter facility is unwilling or unable to expand its sheltering services to operate on a year round basis, finding an alternative is imperative and utilizing an already existing organization for that task seems reasonable. In that regard, even if BOHO is not an ultimate long term solution, it might nevertheless be invaluable as an interim solution to the current summer sheltering crisis.

It is also true that there are some challenges associated with this approach. Currently, the Board of BOHO provides all the executive, administrative and fundraising functions for the organization. A dramatic expansion of services would require expanded – and presumably funded – administrative capacity. Ultimately that probably would necessitate at least an initial investment by local government.

Another challenge would be expanding the nature of the BOHO mission and thus impacting its volunteer partners. BOHO's model is based upon the use of faith community sites. That has been possible based upon many years of relationship building. A dramatic expansion of capacity would present new logistical challenges. For example, it would probably require the participation of a larger number of congregations. As a result, additional outreach to the faith community would be required.

**Conclusion:**

Currently, homeless people have no legal place to sleep during the summer months. This is unacceptable from both a moral and a financial point of view. On the other hand, options exist. What is vitally needed is city leadership. It is time for action.

## PROGRAM 5

# Public Education Campaign: Who are Homeless?

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As an essential part of its overall goal to alleviate homelessness in Boulder, the City Council should develop, fund, and implement a campaign to educate the public about homelessness and to communicate the real picture of the diverse homeless population in Boulder. The goal should be to change existing negative and inaccurate stereotypes of people experiencing homelessness in Boulder.

### **The Problem**

The public's lack of accurate and complete information regarding homeless individuals contributes to our community's growing hostility towards homelessness and threatens the health and welfare of Boulder's unhoused community.

There has been very little education regarding misperceptions and negative attitudes toward homelessness in Boulder. Attitudes shape the way a community responds to those who are disadvantaged. For example,

[P]eople who perceive homelessness as the result of an individual's poor decision making are more likely to consider that individuals rather than government should solve homelessness. Conversely, if a greater preference is given to social and economic causes of homelessness, such as the lack of affordable housing, it is more likely that people will turn to government as one of the main agents to solve homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

In Boulder, inaccurate assumptions about the causes of homelessness and about who comprise our homeless population have led to inappropriate conclusions regarding ways to ameliorate the problems associated with our unhoused population. This proposed campaign, through education, will help to change negative attitudes about people living in poverty, overcoming negative misperceptions of and oft-accompanying fears about the unhoused.

### **Goals & Objectives: Educate the Public to More Effectively Address Homelessness**

The main goal of this program is to address public misperceptions about homelessness and to educate the general public about the diversity of people living without shelter in Boulder. As part of an overall strategy to address the realities of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Australian Social Policy Journal*, p. 74, (No. 10: July 2012), <http://hanover.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Australian-Social-Policy-no-10.pdf> (p. 74).

homelessness, we ask the Boulder City Council to implement a local education and awareness initiative that will replace misperceptions with accurate facts regarding the social, economic, legal, political, and personal issues associated with poverty and homelessness in Boulder to achieve the following objectives:

- increase public awareness of the facts surrounding homelessness in Boulder to dispel stereotypes regarding homeless individuals and decrease inappropriate concerns;
- educate the public about those living in poverty in our community to increase awareness about availability of appropriate social services, as well as the value of other still-needed services;
- render explicit the way these stereotypes about individuals experiencing homelessness and inaccurate views about presumed social nets contribute to the increasing unhoused population in Boulder; and
- explore ways the City of Boulder can make a difference in the lives of the members of our community who are in the least fortunate of situations, thereby improving the lives of all living in Boulder—those housed and those unhoused—ultimately decreasing the number of unhoused and those living in poverty here, as well as related problems.

### **Public Education: An Essential Ingredient to Decrease Homelessness in Boulder**

Community engagement with issues related to homelessness is key to resolving many problems. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless:

Ending homelessness must begin with the understanding that people who are or have been homeless are our neighbors and members of our community. Public perceptions and attitudes toward persons experiencing homelessness or in danger of becoming homeless need to change in order for positive, long-term solutions to be realized. Most Americans rarely interact with people who are or who have been homeless. The lack of interaction between different groups of our society, combined with impersonal or inaccurate descriptions of homelessness posed by the media and public officials, contributes to a distancing of those who have housing from those who do not. As a result, homelessness is perceived as an abstract social problem.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/index.html>

As one national group has noted:

Those who experience homelessness are seen as the sources of their own misfortunes, and the socio-economic policies and practices that give rise to homelessness are then too easily ignored. This abstraction, in turn, lessens the degree of urgency and commitment needed to work strategically and consistently toward solutions to end homelessness that are long-term, outcome-based, and not simply responses to crises.<sup>3</sup>

Education eliminates inaccurate assumptions and unwarranted fears that prevent adopting appropriate short and long term solutions. Therefore, by initiating a public education campaign the Boulder City Council will help foster an educated community receptive to enactment of appropriate solutions to alleviate problems related to homelessness.

### **A Public Education Program benefits all members of the community—housed and not.**

Public opinion is an important component for fostering a favorable policy environment needed to address homelessness, and shifting public perception is vital to positive change in Boulder. A City Council-sponsored public education campaign will benefit the unhoused, the housed, businesses, and the City Government because informing the public about the diversity of our homeless population will help:

- overcome the negative attitudes towards unhoused people which accompanies City Council's criminalization of the elements of homelessness (e.g., camping, panhandling, sleeping in cars ordinances);
- create a critical core of Boulder residents who support further services to people experiencing homelessness, including those recommended by BRW;<sup>4</sup>
- reduce crimes committed by housed people against people experiencing homelessness;<sup>5</sup> and,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Attitudes about homelessness matter. Perceptions shape the way the public treat people experiencing homelessness and their support for particular policy responses (Lee, Lewis & Jones 1992; Lee, Link & Toro 1991; Link et al. 1995; Tompsett et al. 2006). Many authors cite evidence that public opinion influences public policy and legislative change (Barnett, Quackenbush & Pierce 1997; Lee, Jones & Lewis 1990; Tompsett et al. 2006). Lee, Link and Toro (1991) argue that public opinion is an important component of the favorable policy environment needed to address homelessness." (See *Australian Social Policy Journal*, p. 74, (No. 10: July 2012), <http://hanover.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Australian-Social-Policy-no-10.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, "...bias against the indigent drives many crimes against the homeless. Some crimes are opportunistic, a direct result of the vulnerability homeless people

- encourage Police to treat people experiencing homelessness with respect in their contact with the unhoused.

Thus, by implementing a public education campaign, City Council can lead the way for these necessary systemic and attitudinal changes.

### **Public Education Programs in Other Places (local & national)<sup>6</sup>**

Boulder City Council can draw from the numerous successful national and local programs to alleviate problems related to homelessness. The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) “sponsors many educational and organizing projects, special campaigns, and annual events...to empower homeless people, whose voices are essential to the public policy debate.”<sup>7</sup> For example, the Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Bureau program provides speakers who have experienced homelessness and/or are experiencing homelessness to speak to groups to dispel misperceptions and inform the public about the realities regarding homelessness. “By fostering an environment of self-worth, respect, and understanding for all people, the Speakers’ Bureau challenges us to believe that we can and should end homelessness.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, “Faces of Homelessness: the e course” is a national education and awareness initiative in an online format aimed at high school and college students.<sup>9</sup>

A second organization, the National Center on Family Homelessness, uses the arts and media (music, photography, documentary video, public service announcements) in its public education campaign, [Give US Your Poor](#).<sup>10</sup> In another example, Maryland high school students designed a year-long awareness-raising project dedicated to changing attitudes towards the treatment and support of the homeless.<sup>11</sup>

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experience because they have no shelter for protection. The NCH only records crimes committed by housed perpetrators against homeless individuals in its report.” (*Vulnerable to Hate: A Survey of Hate Crimes & Violence Committed against the Homeless in 2013*, June 2014), (<http://streetsense.org/article/susan-sarandon-homeless-hate-crimes-testimony/#.U9P372MUrIU>).

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B: Links to photos, videos, testimonials from housed and unhoused people in communities where programs have been implemented.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> This project is produced in Key West, FL by Americorps VISTA volunteers (<http://homelessfaces.org/>).

<sup>10</sup> This initiative is housed at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston (<http://www.giveusyourpoor.org/about/index.php>).

<sup>11</sup> “Altering Perceptions: Students’ Response to Homelessness”, was funded by a grant provided by Youth Service America ([http://www.gysd.org/altering\\_perceptions](http://www.gysd.org/altering_perceptions)).

By adopting these models or in creating Boulder’s own version of public awareness on these important issues, the City Council will help build bridges between those who are experiencing homelessness and other members of our community, including private citizens, members of the business community, and others so that we can work together to alleviate the problems related to homelessness.

**Consequences of Failing to Implement this Program.**

Policy and programming do not exist in a vacuum and public understanding and support for policies to address homelessness are critical. They are especially important when policy changes require significant expenditure of public funds. Apt solutions can only come from an accurate assessment of the problem coupled with public support for the City’s use of funds. Conversely, if public opinion fails to comprehend the diversity of our homeless population, then the City will fail to optimize support for improving upon its services, resources will be wasted, and nothing will improve.

**Conclusion**

For the above-stated reasons, we ask City Council to direct its Staff to present to Council options to implement this proposal for a public education campaign to change the negative stereotype image of people experiencing homelessness and to communicate the real picture of the diverse homeless population in Boulder.

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**Appendices Regarding Public Education Programs**

**A. Changes in Perceptions of Unhoused Individuals After Service-Learning.**

The following chart reflects the results of a study tracking changes in student perceptions about homeless individuals after meeting homeless individuals as part of a service-learning project, (*Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 15, Number 3, p. 56, (2011), Kim Buch and Susan Harden, ([“The impact of a service-learning project on student awareness of homelessness, civic attitudes, and stereotypes toward the homeless”](#))).

<b>Question on End-of-Course Evaluation</b>	<b>“Describe your perceptions of homeless people <i>before</i> Niner Neighbors.”</b>	<b>“Describe your perceptions of homeless people <i>after</i> Niner Neighbors.”</b>
Student 1	“Before this project, I thought they were bums and they needed to get a job.”	“They are trying to get on their feet and they just need some help.”
Student 2	“I thought they were homeless because of ...poor choices; I really didn’t think of them as my equals.”	“I see that they are people just like me and I can learn a lot from them.”

Question on End-of-Course Evaluation	"Describe your perceptions of homeless people <i>before</i> Niner Neighbors."	"Describe your perceptions of homeless people <i>after</i> Niner Neighbors."
Student 3	"I thought they were lazy and some wanted hand-outs. They were dirty and not like 'us.' Now I'm sorry for feeling this way."	"Just like us. Very educated people and were once successful. Not everyone brought this on themselves."
Student 3	"That they put themselves there, drug users, pan-handlers."	Good people, sometimes out of their control; Humans just like me."
Student 4	"I thought that they were lazy and that they were typically drug/alcohol addicts. I hate to admit it but I actually feared being near them."	"I've learned that homelessness can happen to anyone and that they are no different than the rest of us. They just need love and compassion."

**B. Links to photos, videos, testimonials from housed and unhoused people in communities where programs have been implemented.**

**Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau:**

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/index.html>

**Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau Photo Gallery:**

[http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/photo\\_gallery.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/photo_gallery.html)

**Give Us Your Poor:** <http://www.giveusyourpoor.org/media/index.php>

**Video Clips:** <http://www.giveusyourpoor.org/media/video-clips.php>

**Photographs: "Finding Grace: The Face of America's Homeless":**

[http://www.giveusyourpoor.org/media/finding\\_grace\\_gallery.php](http://www.giveusyourpoor.org/media/finding_grace_gallery.php)

**Parkdale High School's Project: Homelessness, Hunger, & Poverty:**

<http://www.ibparkdale1.com/#!updates/c207q>

**National Coalition for the Homeless Projects (NCH Projects):**

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/index.html>

**Youth Service America (YSA):** [http://www.gysd.org/altering\\_perceptions](http://www.gysd.org/altering_perceptions)

**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) Resources**

**Videos:** [The McKinney-Vento Act in Our Schools Video Series](#)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Patricia Julianelle, NAEHCY's Director of State Projects and Legal Affairs, created a series of videos to be used in brief McKinney-Vento trainings with school staff and community members. Ten short videos feature interviews with educators, each one designed for a specific audience, including registrars, principals, counselors, federal program administrators, superintendents, and community groups. A preview of three of the videos is available at <http://vimeo.com/user7111515>. To order a DVD containing all ten videos (\$15.00 plus shipping/handling), contact Patricia Julianelle at [pjulianelle@naehcy.org](mailto:pjulianelle@naehcy.org).

[Real Students, Real Schools Video Series](#)<sup>13</sup>

**C. Potential funding sources, such as government and private foundation grants, for this type of program.**

**Anschutz Family Foundation:** <http://www.anschutzfamilyfoundation.org/guidelines.aspx>

**A.V. Hunter Trust, Inc.:** <http://avhuntertrust.org/#>

**Bank of America Charitable Foundation:** [http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=GeN2tpK07P\\_/hashlink=hunger](http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=GeN2tpK07P_/hashlink=hunger)

**Captain Planet Foundation:** <http://captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/>

**Charles Stewart Mott Foundation:** <http://www.mott.org/FundingInterests/Regions/us>

**Corporation for National and Community Service:** <http://nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants> Current Funding Opportunities:  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>

**The Edmund T. and Eleanor Quick Foundation:**  
<http://www.quickfoundation.org/pdf/Quick%20Fnd%20Guidelines%20%26%20Procedures%202008.pdf>

**Farrell Family Foundation:**  
[http://www.farrellfamilyfoundation.com/about/?utm\\_source=NEWS+from+HCC+-+16+December+2013&utm\\_campaign=NEWS+from+HCC+3.2.12&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.farrellfamilyfoundation.com/about/?utm_source=NEWS+from+HCC+-+16+December+2013&utm_campaign=NEWS+from+HCC+3.2.12&utm_medium=email)

**General Service Foundation:** <http://www.generalservice.org/Colorado%20Program.htm>

**Hearst Foundation:** <http://www.hearstfdn.org/funding-priorities/>

**John G. Duncan Charitable Trust:**  
<https://www.wellsfargo.com/privatefoundationgrants/duncan>

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<sup>13</sup> NAEHCY's *Real Students, Real Schools* videos feature McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons and students experiencing homelessness interviewing each other about their experiences. Two videos showcase high school students from around the country talking about losing their homes, how homelessness affected their education, and how their schools help them stay safe, stable, and successful. The youth also share their advice and encouragement for other young people without stable housing. These two videos are also available in English and Spanish. In a third video, McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons from around the country answer questions from students about their work, challenges, and successes.

**The Pollination Project:** <http://thepollinationproject.org/funding-guidelines/>

**RGK Foundation:** <http://www.rgkfoundation.org/>

**The Safeway Foundation:** <http://www.safewayfoundation.org/get-funded/how-we-fund.html>

**Singing for Change (no funds for gov't):** [http://www.singingforchange.org/grant\\_information.html](http://www.singingforchange.org/grant_information.html)

**William T. Grant Foundation:** <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/Grants#apply-research-grants>

**Wyerhaeuser:**

<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Sustainability/Communities/CommunityInvestment/GivingFund>

## **D. Links to reports, studies, and articles by Cities and National Organizations in support of this proposal.**

National Coalition for the Homeless: A Survey of Hate Crimes & Violence Committed Against the Homeless in 2013, (June 2014):

<http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Hate-Crimes-2013-1.pdf>

Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau Articles and Write-Ups  
(<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/articles.html>):

[Ex-Homeless Speak Out To Change Perceptions](#) by Pam Fesler on NPR

[The faces and voices of the homeless](#) by Harriet Daniels

["Why We Celebrate"](#) by Jennifer Rottmann

["Smiles Amidst Tears"](#) by Luke Perry

[Homeless veterans tell their stories](#) by Lauren Blumenthal

[Homeless to share experiences](#)

[The Faces of Homelessness](#) (Audio File)

"I Chose to be Homeless: Reflections on the Homeless Challenge,"  
(<http://nationalhomeless.org/WordPress/2013/10/i-chose-to-be-homeless-reflections-on-the-homeless-challenge/>)

"Common Stereotypes and Misconceptions About Homeless People,"  
<http://culture.squidoo.com/homelessness-myths-misconceptions>

The Daily Californian, "Attitudes Toward the Homeless Affect Us All," (Mar. 3, 2014),  
<http://www.dailycal.org/2014/03/03/attitudes-toward-homeless-affect-us/>

## E. Academic/Scholarly Articles regarding Homelessness, Perceptions, and Solutions.

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Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness 2003, *Working towards a national homelessness strategy—a response to consultations*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia 2008, *The Road Home: a national approach to reducing homelessness*, Australian Government, Canberra.

Fitzpatrick, S & Christian, J 2006, "Comparing homelessness research in the US and Britain," *International Journal of Housing Policy*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 313–33.

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## PROGRAM 6-A

# Specially Trained Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Cultural Community Response Teams Working With Police & Sheriff Department Liaison Officers

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### **The Problem**

Since early 2014, City Council Members and police have received complaints from business persons, merchants, and housed community members about alleged criminal violations as well as unacceptable and challenging behaviors by people presumed to be homeless. City Council has responded by passing new ordinances that effectively criminalize elements of homelessness. Unfortunately, such laws have negative impacts upon many unhoused people who are not engaged in the kind of social misbehavior that has been of concern. An unintended consequence has been to establish conditions that can dangerously isolate people, prolong their homeless status and put them at risk of harm from predators and overly-zealous police officers who interpret City Council's action as permission to treat unhoused people harshly.

This proposal is designed to address the culture clash between some members of the housed and unhoused community. It is an attempt to reduce challenging behavior of some unhoused persons while also responding to the fears harbored by many housed residents. It should reduce the number of arrests of homeless people who instead would be directed to available legal shelter, housing, and other services.

### **The Proposal**

Community Response Teams would be established to work in concert with Police Liaison Officers. The idea is that such teams might eventually become first responders to non-violent, non-theft related incidents in Boulder. Team members would be trained to defuse volatile situations and to refer unhoused persons to available and appropriate services. These trained Response Teams would engage in the following types of activities:

a. Patrolling areas of Boulder where surveys and experience demonstrate that the most conflicts occur between business people, customers, other community members and perceived unhoused people.

b. Responding to incidents involving suspected or identified unhoused persons, that do not involve serious criminal or violent behavior;

- c. Employing training to defuse situations involving suspected or identified unhoused persons without the necessity of arrest or, in the alternative, trying to help homeless people cope with the process of being peacefully taken into custody;
- d. Advising unhoused people of potential infractions of Boulder criminal laws;
- e. Directing identified unhoused people to services in order to assist them in obtaining lawful shelter and access to supportive services;
- f. Mediating disputes between individuals who are homeless and between groups of unhoused people in order to avoid having those disputes escalate and potentially result in criminal prosecution; and,
- g. Assisting in calming unhoused people who may be intoxicated on alcohol, drugs or medication (or agitated because of a failure to take medications) or who are exhibiting symptoms of mental illness, and facilitating transportation of such persons to the proper non-jail facility when that is appropriate.

## **Program Design**

The Community Response Teams are envisioned as follows:

### **Team Composition and Funding**

Each team would consist of 2 to 4 members. Team leaders would rotate each for each response. The teams would be operated or coordinated by an existing or newly created homeless service organization with street experience. Team members would be screened to include people carefully selected from housed and unhoused members of the local community. Whenever possible, one team member would be a professional or paraprofessional mental health worker trained to recognize and deal with those who are mentally ill and/or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Team members would receive training from the Boulder Police Department and the Boulder Sheriff's Officers. One or more such officers would act in a liaison capacity with each team.

The proposal is initially to establish a one-year pilot project. If that is successful, the program could be extended. Funding of the teams would be through non-governmental grants. However, law enforcement Liaison Officers would be funded by city and county governments.

### **Team Equipment and Capabilities**

Team members would be outfitted with distinctive clothing so they are readily identifiable and distinguishable from law enforcement officers. They should also be provided necessary communication and transportation equipment to facilitate their rapid response to situations and coordination with law enforcement Liaison Officers.

Team members would act independently of local law enforcement personnel, but would fully cooperate with them. Safety for all parties would always be the highest priority.

Team members would seek to mediate fairly on behalf of all parties. The goal will be to defuse difficult situations and foster mutual respect among all parties

Teams should include community members from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Team members should be compensated on an hourly basis. That would be particularly helpful for team members who are currently unhoused. Qualified volunteers could also participate.

### **The Role of Law Enforcement Liaison Officers and Training Resource Providers**

Law enforcement Liaison Officers should be trained to work with the Community Response Team members. This would begin with Liaison Officers having several initial meetings with Community Response Team members so that everyone understands the role and objective of the new group. Further, Liaison Officers should offer intervention training, teaching Response Team members to identify as early as possible when they should seek police or other intervention.

Response Team members will take on a challenging role. Intervening in situations where individuals or groups are in conflict requires interveners to be skilled and able to make neutral assessments in difficult situations. Training will be required to build skills in conflict resolution, de-escalation technique, and in order to make team members aware of appropriate and available supportive services that can be brought to bear.

### **Community Response Team Duties**

#### **1. Surveys and Interviews**

Initially, the response teams would conduct surveys and interviews with members of the community who report having been in conflict with homeless people. The object would be to determine the nature of the conflict and the typical location and times of such conflict. The objective would be to develop ideas for resolving such conflicts without denying anyone their rights or demeaning them. Survey information would be sought from business people and their customers, other institutions and their patrons, (for example the RTD, Boulder Public Library, hospitals, clinics and so forth), members of the unhoused community and from law enforcement officers.

#### **2. Identification of trends and hotspots**

Through surveys and interviews, the Teams should identify hot spots in the community and any trends that are developing and plan their deployment accordingly.

However, teams also need to be available to respond to incidents occurring in unanticipated locations.

### **3. Team interaction with unhoused community members**

In routine contact with unhoused people, the Teams should act as on-street referral services to direct people to appropriate supportive services in the community. Toward that end, the teams should develop on-line and physical contact card type information and distribute that information widely throughout the community.

### **Benefits of the Proposed Program**

Intervention Team activities with regard to conflict situations between the unhoused and housed should lead to better understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties and help de-escalate conflicts. Intervention team activity should also reduce arrests of unhoused people and help people see each other as fellow community members.

The ability to engage the Intervention Teams might avoid escalation of frustration on the part of business owners, their employees and customers.

The work of the Community Response Teams might decrease the pressure the City Council has felt to further criminalize homeless people's behavior in Boulder.

Routine patrols of the Response Teams should lead to more homeless people seeking legal, safe shelter and other supportive services as an alternative to remaining outdoors in non-legal, non-secure locations. It also should encourage more unhoused people to seek services that could assist them in overcoming life challenges.

Members and institutions of the housed Boulder Community, including the city government, business owners (and employees and customers) should benefit in several ways from this program:

- 1 Conflicts between housed and the unhoused members of the community should be defused by the work of the Response Teams. As conflict resolution resources are expanded, fear and prejudice should recede.
- 2 The need for traditional police responses (putting aside Liaison Officers) should decrease with the result that fewer arrestees will need to be processed through the jail and court systems.
- 3 The pressure on City Council and its staff to take action may be lessened so that resources might be directed toward the goal of ending homelessness rather than toward further criminalizing it.

## **Support for the Community Response Team Concept**

The concept of utilizing such multi-disciplinary response teams is not a new one. For example, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recommends establishment of such interdisciplinary teams in the following words:

... Collaboration between service providers and law enforcement regarding outreach to individuals and specialized crisis intervention training can limit the number of arrests for non-violent offenses. This partnership can also help link individuals experiencing homelessness with the system of care.

See the 2013 report, *Human Rights and Alternatives to Criminalization*, <http://usich.gov/issue/human-rights>; *SEARCHING OUT SOLUTIONS*, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2012, p.25-28. The report further notes:

Collaboration between law enforcement and behavioral health and social service providers results in tailored interventions that divert individuals experiencing homelessness out of the criminal justice system, and meets the community's goal of reducing the number of people inhabiting public spaces.

Indeed, several communities have endorsed and deployed variations on the interdisciplinary team concept. *Id.* Approximately 23 Cities employ Police Liaison Officers teamed with social workers, mental health professionals, and other skilled or trained community members to act as liaisons to the homeless or mentally ill population. Some examples:

### **a. San Diego, CA:**

The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) together with the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) provide outreach and engagement services throughout the City of San Diego. They are the initial point of contact with chronic homeless and inebriates living on the streets. Each HOT Team is composed of police officers, County psychiatric clinicians and County Mental Health eligibility technicians. The Teams seek out chronically homeless persons and, for those who are willing, make placements in housing linked with appropriate services. The Police Department, along with Community Services provide support by funding the law enforcement officers in this program.

### **b. Pasadena, California**

The Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Evaluation Team (H.O.P.E.) is a partnership between the Pasadena Police Department and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to provide those in need with mental health services and reduce the duties of patrol officers to arrest.

Each team consists of a police officer and licensed clinician (officers may or may not be in uniform and teams respond to calls in unmarked vehicles). They provide referrals and services as part of a long-term approach to assist the homeless,

preventing unnecessary incarceration or hospitalization of the homeless. The minimum training for H.O.P.E. officers includes 40 hours post "Crisis Intervention" training, 40 hours „Crisis Negotiation" training, 8 hour post class on "Effective Enforcement Contacts with the Homeless or Mentally Ill," "Drug and Alcohol Recognition" class, and monthly, quarterly, and annual update training

### **c. Ramsey County, Minnesota**

This program, called the Police-Homelessness Outreach Program (P-HOP) is one in which the St. Paul Police Department and South Metro Human Services developed a relationship in connection with a P-HOP worker. The P-HOP worker and police officers work together to respond effectively to situations involving homeless persons. The P-HOP worker is stationed in a police sub-station to work closely with law enforcement to improve the outcomes for individuals with multiple police encounters. This collaboration involved intense training between South Metro Human Services and the police officers.

The initiative helps to provide secure treatment and housing opportunities for individuals who are victims of chronic homelessness as well as to enhance police and community dialogue and awareness of homeless issues through "police-provider forums" and monthly breakfast meetings between police officers and other members of the criminal justice system. The team also diligently works with landlords to improve housing access. It has also served to improve the fields of communication between the police and the homeless.

### **d. Other communities**

A number of other communities have adopted a police-based Crisis Intervention Team approach based on the Memphis CRT Model. See summary of this model's core elements by Googling: *Core Elements - CRT Center - University of Memphis. and NAMI - CRT Facts.* For example:

The *Memphis Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)*, developed by the police in collaboration with the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and two local universities, is a specialized unit that responds to crises involving people with mental illnesses. The CIT is made up of volunteer officers from each Uniform Patrol Precinct who are trained by mental health providers, family advocates, and mental health consumer groups through which the officers learn a variety of de-escalation techniques. In addition to their regular patrol duties, CIT officers are available to provide immediate response to crisis events throughout the city at any time. University of Tennessee studies report that the CIT program has contributed to a decrease in arrest rates for people who are mentally ill, an impressive rate of diversion into the health care system, and a resulting low rate of mental illness in the jails.

<http://www.memphistn.gov/framework.aspx?page=302>

## Conclusion

A Community response team approach has many potential benefits to both the housed and unhoused members of our community. Therefore, for the reasons expressed in this report, the Boulder City Council is urged to instruct its staff to seriously investigate the feasibility of establishing such Community Response Teams in Boulder.

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## APPENDIX: Potential Funding Sources for a one year pilot program of Community response teams

- a. The Community Foundation.
- b. Donations to Street Statues. *See* Santa Monica Dolphin Statue Change Program
- c. Other Foundations that fund homeless projects. For example: (1) the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; and, (2) Foundations listed in "*Ending Homelessness: The Philanthropic Role*," produced by the National Foundation Advisory Group for Ending Homelessness.

## Program 6-B

# A Community Policing Approach to Interaction with Homeless Community Members

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### **The Problem**

When conflict arises involving those who are (or are perceived to be) homeless, a default response seems to be to seek police intervention. However, there is no acceptable police solution to homelessness. Traditional law enforcement approaches won't solve the problem.

### **A Solution**

An important objective should be to avoid an unnecessarily antagonistic relationship between police officers and our homeless neighbors. Such antagonism will impede good police work. If the homeless community fears the police, it will pull inward and create an atmosphere of insularity and fear in which predators can hide from the police while preying upon vulnerable homeless individuals. A much healthier approach – both for homeless people and for the rest of the community – would be for the police to be seen sympathetically by our local homeless neighbors. In that way local homeless people will feel free to call the police when a situation on the streets is spinning out of control.

What would be useful, therefore, is the increased use of some variant of the community policing model. In community policing, designated police officers are assigned to specific areas so that they can become familiar with local inhabitants and issues. The approach stresses the use of problem-solving techniques to address conditions that give rise to public safety issues and fear of crime.

Many communities are experimenting with variants of the community policing model with regard to homeless issues. One example of this approach is reflected in an interesting article about two women police officers in New Haven. It appears at [http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/a\\_two-woman\\_crusade\\_against\\_homelessness/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/a_two-woman_crusade_against_homelessness/). The article explains how the women, who patrol an area that includes many homeless residents, decided to help by providing plastic bags of supplies to those in need. Here is a short excerpt:

“We want to help them instead of arresting them all the time,” [Officer] Chomka said of the homeless. “They just want food, and lots of them are looking for jobs.”

The homeless people they've helped have returned the favor.

“One time, a large fight broke out at a bar here downtown. It was huge, but all the [homeless] guys showed up there immediately making sure we [the two officers] were safe and that no one was going to hurt us,” [Officer] Fowler recounted....

“They protect us, and we watch them,” [one homeless man] said. He said he has seen the [officers’] work help decrease crime in the area where homeless people tend to hang out.

Boulder might consider emphasizing this kind of approach.

Of course, traditional policing and prosecution will continue to be appropriate when serious violations occur. Assaults, theft and large scale illicit drug sales should be investigated and offenders should be prosecuted. In fact, most such cases should be handled by the District Attorney’s office because felony charges carry vastly greater potential penalties than do municipal court prosecutions. However, even when this level of policing and prosecution is appropriate, healthy relationships between those living on the streets and the police will be helpful. People on the street know what is happening there and can provide vital information to the police – assuming that there is a level of mutual trust.

On the other hand, the use of the police to enforce what are essentially culturally based aesthetic prejudices should be avoided. The fact that some people feel uncomfortable when confronted with a disheveled person – or that some homeless people speak in styles that make others uncomfortable – cannot become law enforcement issues. Such aesthetic issues are best addressed programmatically. If, for example, homeless people have clean clothes and available shower facilities, some may find them less aesthetically objectionable. When homeless people have a place to be during the day and live with less anxiety about where they will be spending their nights, their levels of frustration and fear will recede and so will some of the volume and edginess of their verbal communications. It is grossly improper to ask our police officers to become the arbiters of acceptable personal aesthetics.

### **Surveying Members of the Homeless Community**

Boulder apparently already does some community style policing with regard to areas where homeless people tend to be found. Some of the officers assigned to such duties are respected and appreciated by Boulder’s homeless residents. But some officers seem less well oriented to this approach and are not so appreciated. Surveying members of the homeless population might assist the police department with the assignment of officers who are well suited for this style of policing.

### **Conclusion**

The Boulder Police Department has experience with community policing approaches. An expansion of that approach with regard to homeless members of our community would provide enormous benefits. Council should ask its staff to explore this issue and report back with suggestions.

# Program 7

## Revise the Police Department Professional Standards Review Panel

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### **The Problem**

Reliance upon police enforcement as a default approach for dealing with the social challenges faced by our unhoused neighbors carries many negative consequences. One of those is that it sours the relationship between unhoused people and the police. When public figures are understood to favor policies of exclusion for homeless people, both police officers and homeless people start looking at each other through antagonistic lenses. That makes conflict more likely.

One of the ways to address this situation is to increase transparency and accountability through the use of a more robust police review panel. This proposal discusses such an approach.

### **The Solution**

The Professional Standards Review Panel process should include broader notice of vacancies, an altered appointment process for panel members, full disclosure of recommendations and actions taken to implement recommendations and certain other procedural changes.

### **The Current Boulder Police Department “Citizen Review Panel**

The current BPD review panel is called “Professional Standards Review Panel.” It consists of 12 members. Six members come from the general community and six from the agency. They meet and review cases on an as needed basis. They review “Class 1 Complaints”. The BPD website contains the following explanation:

Allegations of serious misconduct, such as excessive force, abuse of authority, or criminal violations, are investigated by the department's Professional Standards Unit. Investigations of serious misconduct are referred to as *Internal Affairs (IA) Investigations*. Once an IA investigation is completed, each supervisor in the employee's chain of command reviews the case and makes a recommendation for disposition. The case is also reviewed by the IA Review Panel, which consists of both department and community members. The panel ensures that the investigative process was fair and complete, and provides a recommendation on the disposition of the case to the Chief of Police. After considering all of the input received, the Chief of Police makes the final decision on the disposition of the complaint.

This panel met 13 times in 2013. Cases involved allegations of violation of various BPD policies. Cases have included claims of excessive force and less serious

policy violations. Essentially the panel reviews the internal affairs investigation that the department has already done in an effort to decide if the investigation was conducted fairly, completely and was reported accurately.

The panel does not perform its own investigation. Rather it reviews the already completed investigation. It does not appear that its meetings are widely advertised and it is not clear that meetings are open to the public. However, the panel does make a recommendation about the appropriate disposition of the case—either agreeing with an IA recommended sanction or not. Its recommendations are only advisory and final decisions are made by the police chief. Criminal investigations are handled through the DA's office – not by this panel.

### **Comparison with Other Cities**

Some cities utilize completely independent panels that have investigators on staff. Investigations in such systems are independent of the police department and reports are made directly to review panels. Depending upon the particular city, either the panel makes findings or recommends findings to the police chief. Some cities provide complainants the right to “appeal” findings to a citizen panel that reviews the investigation and, in turn, recommends findings. Some panels have subpoena power to require people to appear and testify.

In some systems, the review processes, including panel meetings, are open to the public and media. In other localities, review panels produce reports that are made public. Some cities make the finding of the police chief public, although most of the time discipline is not made public as it is considered a personnel matter. Sometimes the police union contract speaks to the process to be followed in internal affairs investigations and what can and cannot be made public.

In some localities, panel members are appointed by the mayor or by city council. In other cities, panel members are appointed by the chief of police. Some cities have an open application process for the positions on the panel while in others it becomes a “political” appointment. In some places extensive training is required to serve on review panels. In other places, no training is required. Almost all review panels have at least one or two active street officer members in order to provide the perspective of a current officer on the street. In a few places, a majority of panel members are police officers.

### **Is Boulder’s Current System Sufficient?**

Citizen oversight panels are often touted as meeting a need of citizens to feel that the complaint process is handled appropriately and that it provides true accountability. Such systems can increase public confidence in the fairness with which citizen complaints are handled, even if the public disagrees with the result. The more transparent and open the process, the better citizens typically feel about it being fair. When a person with no direct citizen accountability (the City Manager) makes the

appointments and the ultimate decisions are made by another person with no direct citizen accountability, the police chief, citizen confidence in the process can be low.

An open and public process performed by a panel independent of the police department can impact officers who, being aware that they are subject to such open scrutiny, will alter their actions such that they feel more confident that their actions can withstand such scrutiny. They work "for the citizens" and thus should ultimately be accountable to them.

Boulder's system has been adequate in the past. However, what has changed is the new emphasis on using police enforcement with regard to our homeless neighbors. As a result, local unhoused people are losing confidence in the system, and the confidence of others who care about them is also being shaken. Having a system that is more transparent thus becomes desirable.

### **Proposed Panel Structure:**

#### **A. Current Membership on the Panel**

Currently, community members of the panel have to have lived in Boulder for 3 years, be 21 years of age or older and be able to pass a background check. They are interviewed by a panel of BPD members and by the City Manager's office. The City Manager makes the final decision about community appointees to the panel.

Under the current system, Police Department members are appointed by the Police Chief with input from the Police Union and the Municipal Employees Union. Department members consist of three commissioned officers, one commissioned sergeant and two Municipal Union (non-commissioned) employees.

#### **B. Appointment Systems Utilized by other Cities**

Various appointment systems are utilized in other cities. Those include everything from having the police chief make appointments to having an independent process for choosing panel members. The most common approaches are to have the governing body of the city or the mayor make the appointments.

#### **C. Specific Recommendations**

##### **1. Change the method of appointment of panel members to system so that the Council makes appointments to the panel.**

Panel members should be appointed by City Council which is accountable to the citizenry. Candidates who have experience interacting with homeless people might be considered for appointment. The council appoints members of other boards and commissions. It is unclear why appointment to this panel is treated differently.

**2. Community panel members should outnumber department panel members by at least one vote.**

While the input from the department members is important it is likely that the sergeant from the department, serving as a panel member, has significant influence.

**3. The panel should have subpoena power in case it feels the need to interview additional witnesses or gather documents.**

**4. Meetings of the panel should be open to the public and the media.**

**5. Panel recommendations should be made available to the public.**

**6. Ultimate findings of the police chief (possibly not including the disciplinary actions imposed) should be made available for public review.**

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**Background material:**

Much of the comparative information in this attachment is derived from three helpful works:

- (1) *Citizen Oversight Committees in Law Enforcement*. That work was produced by the Center for Public Policy at California State University at Fullerton. The study was produced in January 2013 and its authors include Eduardo L. Calderon & Maria Hernandez-Figueroa. The authors of the study cite more than 50 relevant sources. A copy of the study can be made available to council members and city staff if there is interest.
- (2) *Embracing Citizen Oversight: A Police Executive's Guide to Improving Accountability* by Mark Evenson - University of Alaska Fairbanks
- (3) "*Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation*," US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, March 2001