



INFORMATION PACKET MEMORANDUM

To: Members of City Council

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Date: April 7, 2015

Subject: Information Item: Update on Homelessness Issues

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information item provides an update on staff work to address homelessness in the City of Boulder, including development of the City of Boulder Homelessness Strategy and progress on key initiatives.

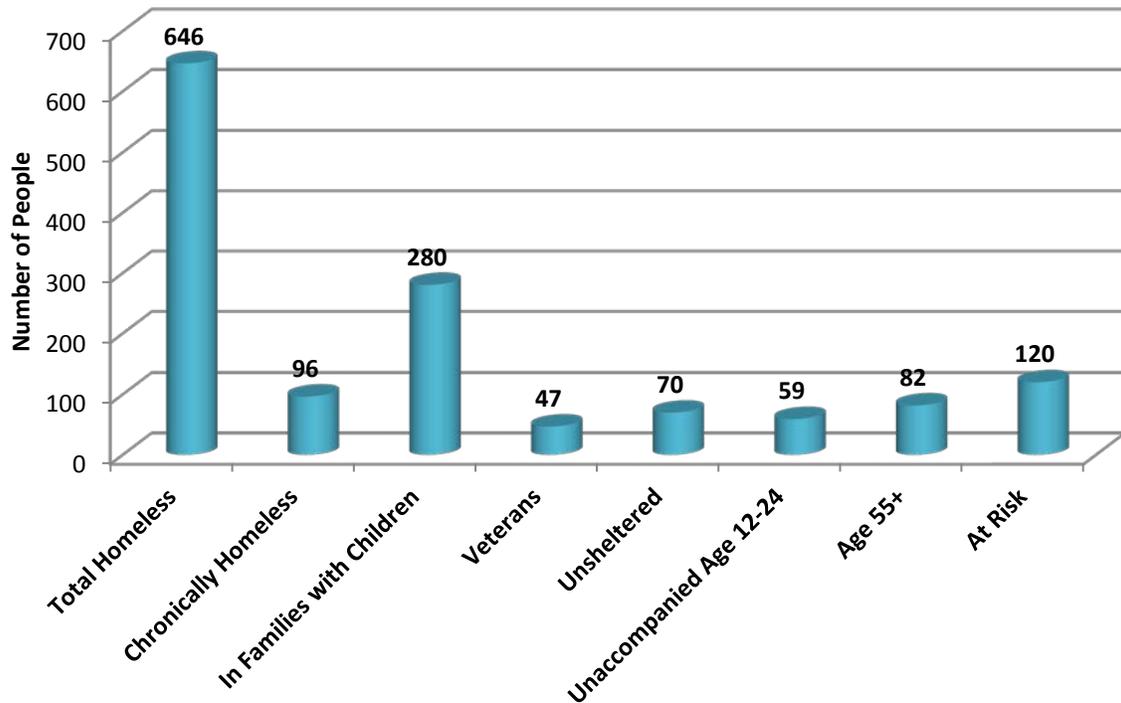
Additional information on homelessness can be found in past [Council Agenda Items and Information Packets on homelessness.](#)

BACKGROUND

Update on Point in Time Survey (PIT)

Over the past three years, an average of 646 people have been counted as homeless in the City of Boulder in the annual PIT. In addition to people surveyed through PIT, the Boulder Valley School District reports 400 children accessed homeless services through the district during the 2013-14 school year, with 186 of those students in City of Boulder schools. Many school district homeless services participants are not captured in PIT counts due to differences in methodology and homeless definitions in programs supported by the federal government. PIT has challenges as a data collection mechanism, and national estimates suggest PIT undercounts the homeless population. The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is working to improve the survey to make it a more reliable and valid tool.

People Experiencing Homelessness in the City of Boulder



A number of factors contribute to people falling into homelessness. The text box at left reflects top reasons for homelessness reported in the 2014 PIT survey. In many cases, people reported more than one factor contributing to their homelessness.

Reasons for Homelessness in Boulder

2014 Point In Time Survey

- Lost Job **40%**
- Housing Costs **34%**
- Family Breakup **28%**
- Mental Health **25%**
- Substance Abuse **19%**
- Domestic Violence **12%**

Homeless Services and City Support

A wide variety of homeless services are available in the city, including:

- emergency shelter, food and clothing
- medical, dental, mental health and substance use treatment
- case management
- employment training
- transitional housing
- permanent and permanent supportive housing

The city, other government partners and private philanthropy have made significant capital and operating investments to support these homeless

services. On an annual basis, the city contributes nearly \$700,000 in operating support for homeless services, in addition to an investment of approximately \$4 million in capital investments between 2008-2014. In addition, other basic needs investments to local agencies which may also serve homeless people total approximately \$920,000 in 2015.

In 2010, the City of Boulder was one of several local governments and other partners in Boulder County to adopt the [Boulder County Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness](#) (Ten-Year Plan). The Ten-Year Plan is organized around six goals, with an emphasis on [Housing First](#), a national best practice with demonstrated success helping people escape chronic homelessness by providing permanent housing with supportive services. In the past five years, significant progress has been made in the City of Boulder, and throughout the county, on Ten-Year Plan goals. See City of Boulder Homelessness Accomplishments (**Attachment A**), as well as the [Summary of Ten-Year Plan Accomplishments](#) for details.

Despite progress on Ten-Year Plan goals, homelessness remains a significant community concern. Although PIT survey data does not indicate an increase in the homeless population, anecdotal evidence from the community, reports from service providers about demand suggest an increasing need to focus targeted, innovative city and regional efforts on solutions.

To address this need city staff, in consultation with local stakeholders, began creating a city-specific homelessness plan in 2014, to complement the Ten-Year Plan. Potential elements of the plan, including draft strategies and initiatives, were discussed with City Council at study sessions on [May 13, 2014](#) and [Aug. 26, 2014](#). Development of the plan has also been discussed on an ongoing basis with members of the Boulder Homelessness Planning Group (BHPG), comprised of representatives from several city departments, homeless service providers, Boulder's housing authority and the faith community.

The proposed process for continuing work on the city's homelessness strategy, and progress on initiatives are described below.

Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

A draft City of Boulder Homelessness Strategy framework (Framework, **Attachment B**) identifies a vision statement, guiding principles and goals to formalize and clarify the goals and role of the city in addressing homelessness, based on prior council feedback. The draft framework was developed based on:

- Key guiding plans previously approved by the city, including the Ten-Year Plan;
- National best practices and federal policy;
- Direction from City Council; and
- Consultation with local stakeholders through BHPG.

The draft framework will be modified based on input from council, stakeholders and the public going forward and will become a formal Homelessness Strategy to be adopted by City Council by the end of 2015. A Homelessness Strategy Timeline (Timeline, **Attachment C**) is attached to this memo.

The Homeless Action Plan (HAP) are the specific strategies and initiatives previously discussed with council and stakeholders to implement the Strategy. HAP is proposed as a nimble, flexible action plan that is a “living” document and can be updated as opportunities arise. This draft action plan is included in the attached Homelessness Strategy framework.

PROGRESS ON KEY INITIATIVES

At the May 13 and Aug. 26 2014 study sessions, council directed staff to further explore several strategies and initiatives. Progress on these is included below.

Strategy 1 – Strengthen Regional Partnerships

1. Consortium of Cities Regional Dialogue – Representing the City of Boulder on the Ten-Year Plan Board, city and county staff presented information to the Consortium on housing and service issues across the county. The Consortium requested the Ten-Year Plan Board return with a proposal for a county-wide, permanent supportive housing study and cost. City and county staff are currently working on a proposal to submit to the Consortium in April.
2. 25 Cities Initiative Pilot – In the first six months of this pilot project, 15 of the most vulnerable veterans and chronically homeless people in Boulder County (9 from the Boulder) have been matched with housing resources (vouchers or units) from a centralized Metro Denver Regional housing list and 95 have been assessed. Some voucher recipients continue to look for housing in the tight local rental market.

The Metro Denver region is planning to expand this best practice pilot to a full scale regional coordinated entry and housing placement system. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently awarded an additional 100-120 vouchers to the region, which will be included as housing resources in the pilot, along with other “turnover” units and vouchers throughout the region.

In addition to fulfilling goals for housing and regional partnership, this pilot offers a chance

25 Cities Initiative Pilot Boulder County Client Profile

- Average **74 months** on the streets
- **62%** report being attacked or beaten up since becoming homeless
- **46%** have gone to ER for potential mental health issues
- **48%** serious brain injury/head trauma
- **58%** survivors of abuse or trauma
- **31%** were in foster care
- **15%** served in military
- **67%** problematic drug/alcohol issues

In the last 6 months averaged:

- **3** ER trips
- **4** law enforcement interactions
- accessed crisis services such as suicide hotline **1** time
- hospitalized **1** time

Places slept most often:

- Shelter – **44%**
- Street, sidewalk doorway – **22%**
- Beach, Riverbed, Park – **20%**
- Car, Van, RV – **12%**
- Other – **2%**

to learn more about the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness locally. The text box on the previous page provides a snapshot of Boulder County clients that have been assessed, issues they face and focus areas for services.

Strategy 2 – Innovative Solutions to Increase Housing Options

1. Regional landlord campaign – The Metro Mayor’s Caucus is partnering with the [MDHI](#) to launch a regional landlord recruitment campaign to increase the number of units available to homeless people that obtain vouchers. The campaign leadership is currently meeting with landlords and related associations, and has launched the [Colorado Good Landlord Survey](#) to assess the barriers, incentives and support needs of landlords to accept more voucher recipients. City staff are participating in campaign outreach efforts locally to enlist the partnership of more landlords in providing housing for veterans and other vulnerable homeless populations.
2. 1175 Lee Hill – In November 2014, 31 residents moved into the new permanent supportive housing apartments. The City supported this project with approximately \$2 million in capital funding and \$33,000 in 2014 to begin program services. Supportive services for 1175 Lee Hill are also included in the \$120,000 in 2015 operating funds provided to Boulder Shelter for the Homeless programs. This development fills approximately ten percent of the housing need for the estimated 300 chronically homeless individuals in Boulder County.

Management and support of 1175 Lee Hill and its residents is a joint effort of Boulder Housing Partners and Boulder Shelter for the Homeless. These partners have managed the Boulder County scattered site Housing First program for more than seven years and will use experience and benchmarks from that program to measure client progress and success at 1175 Lee Hill. Benchmarks for the Housing First program include:

- About 90 percent of clients are still housed after six months. After more than four months, 87 percent of the original Lee Hill residents are still housed. Attrition at a new program is expected to be higher in early stages than that of a more established program.
- Approximately 70-75 percent of clients are still housed after two years. Lee Hill retention will also be assessed after two years.
- About 85 percent of clients improve in areas of skills/income and self-determination as assessed by the self sufficiency matrix (SSM), a case management tool used by Boulder County and other countywide partners. Lee Hill residents will be assessed for progress on SSM after one year in the program.
- Lee Hill management and City of Boulder Municipal Court will be tracking and comparing local justice system interactions of residents in the first year of the program and the years prior to entering the program.

The 1175 Lee Hill Advisory Group is made up of representatives from the neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of 1175 Lee Hill. This group was modeled after the Neighborhood Shelter Action Group and has had two quarterly meetings. To date, the advisory group’s work has been to review the Good Neighbor Statement of Operations and discuss updates to the document. Boulder Housing Partners reports there have not

been any neighborhood incidents. The group has also focused on how to provide outreach to support staff and the residents at the site.

Calls to the police and emergency services since the project opened in Nov. 2014:

- notifications for medical/welfare assistance – 20
 - notifications for police assistance – 5
 - arrest - 1
3. Planning and Land Use – The Ten-Year Plan Board has convened a countywide planners group to assess and make recommendations on reducing barriers to the development and acquisition of housing for the homeless across the county. The Boulder County Planning Manager is coordinating and leading this project and is convening meetings with representation from city and county planning and housing departments across the county.

Strategy 3 – Improve Local Service Integration, Coordination, Data Collection and Outcomes Reporting

1. Homeless Services Task Force – The City of Boulder and the key emergency services providers are forming a task force, along with additional representation from the community, including the business and the faith community, to assess the emergency services system, and gaps and needs in continuing the development of an integrated, coordinated homeless services delivery system in Boulder. This will include an assessment of the current sheltering and services system, best and highest use of facilities, and need for day shelter and resource center. This assessment will expand on an earlier report by the Burnes Institute, commissioned by Bridge House, Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overview.
2. Common assessment tool piloting - Boulder homeless service providers, including Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Bridge House and Mental Health Partners have made strides in implementing coordinated assessment by piloting the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as part of the 25 Cities Initiative.

This common assessment tool is used throughout the Denver Metro Region and is the first step in working toward a more integrated, coordinated system. Further standardization is expected as the region moves toward bringing the 25 Cities pilot to scale.

3. System improvement requirements for city funding – Human Services staff has mapped out a draft timeline for implementing system improvement requirements for the 2017 Human Services Fund round, which will take place during the summer of 2016. Staff has had preliminary discussions with other funders about jointly funding a pilot or technical assistance project to assist agencies to overcome system improvement barriers, such as data coordination.

Next steps include further refinement of system improvement goals and requirements, discussion with service providers on barriers and support needed, and further dialogue with

partners about goals and requirements of potential opportunity projects.

4. High Utilizer Project – Municipal Court and Bridge House have a partnership which refers homeless defendants for services. In some cases, this includes reduction of selected sentencing conditions in exchange for intake and engagement in services at Bridge House. Probation officers also offer support to Bridge House Resource Center clients seeking assistance with settling ongoing or past legal issues to remove them as barriers to stability.

The partners are now beginning to match court “repeat offender” or “high utilizer” lists with Bridge House clients to determine current engagement in services and target “non-engaged” high utilizers for case management and service connection.

Staff from Human Services, Municipal Court and Bridge House are evaluating a more formalized “high utilizer project” – developing a shared list of individuals for more intensive service intervention, tracking progress on connecting those people to housing and supportive services and measuring recidivism. The goal would be to reduce the demand of high utilizers on the Police Department, Municipal Court and emergency intervention.

5. Summer population study – Council and the community have expressed interest in learning more about how the city’s homeless population may differ in the summer and the winter. Anecdotal evidence suggests one significant difference is a higher population of “travelers” or “transients” that travel through Boulder during warmer months who are not reflected in the annual PIT survey, conducted in the winter. Homeless services also change locally during the summer, with the majority of winter shelter beds and warming center locations closed.

To better understand the temporary population of people who travel through Boulder in the summer, Human Services staff is investigating a summer survey in partnership with other regional stakeholders. Initial discussions about this concept are underway with the goal of executing this study during summer 2015.

6. EDGE Program - In mid 2014 the Boulder Police Department implemented the EDGE program (Early Diversion, Get Engaged), in partnership with Mental Health Partners. Mental health clinicians work out of the police department and respond to calls to provide direct intervention services to community members in need. The program has become an important asset to the police department and to date has been very successful in providing additional services and resources at the time of police of contact.

Strategy 4 – Improve Community Education and Dialogue About Homelessness

Homelessness Communications Plan – Staff is developing a communications plan, targeted for launch during the second quarter of 2015, to create a more effective community dialogue around homelessness. Current goals include:

- Promote knowledge of the diverse people experiencing homelessness, reasons for becoming homeless and barriers to exiting homelessness;
- Improve understanding of national best practices in addressing homelessness, as well as actions the city and its partners are taking to tackle the issue locally;

- Celebrate successes in reducing homelessness in Boulder;
- Expand readily available information on homelessness through a variety of communication mechanisms and include the homeless; and
- Build a sense of pride and partnership with the community and residents in jointly working to reduce homelessness.

In implementing the plan, staff will coordinate with other entities, such as the Ten-Year Plan Board, MDHI and the Denver Foundation, which are also developing efforts to improve regional communication and information about homelessness.

Denver Foundation Research and Campaign

In January 2015, The Denver Foundation began collecting data around perceptions of homelessness and identifying the strongest messages for a public will-building campaign. Across the seven-county Denver Metro Region, including Boulder County, 812 registered voters participated in the initial survey. Focus groups are also being conducted. Data at the Boulder County level will be available in the coming weeks for use in our local communication plan around homelessness. Regional results from the survey are available on the [Denver Foundation website](#).

OTHER UPDATES

As community needs evolve, homeless service providers are responding with changes in service delivery models. Since 2009, Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO) has operated overnight emergency warming centers at rotating faith-based locations in the winter, in addition to as-needed emergency day shelters during severe weather. A smaller-capacity outdoor “summer sleep” program, which began in 2011, has been discontinued and replaced by two new year-round programs to serve chronically homeless guests at rotating faith-based locations.

- **Women’s Shelter:** Women’s Shelter is open to chronically homeless women residents with a record of good behavior at BOHO.
- **Resident’s Shelter:** Resident’s Shelter is open to chronically homeless residents with a record of good behavior at BOHO.

During the winter season, BOHO’s programs have averaged a combined attendance of about 125 guests per night for a season of about 135 nights.

NEXT STEPS

- Human Services Strategy Study Session – April 28, 2015
- Council check-in on Homelessness Strategy – Third Quarter 2015
- Council approval of Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan – Fourth Quarter 2015

ATTACHMENTS

- A. City of Boulder Homelessness Accomplishments**
- B. Draft City of Boulder Homelessness Strategy Framework**
- C. Homelessness Strategy Timeline**

City of Boulder Homelessness Accomplishments 2013-2015

1. 25 Cities Initiative Pilot

- At least 15 people from Boulder County matched with housing resources
- Boulder County has submitted approximately 6 percent of people into regional pilot, and been matched with nearly 20 percent of the housing resources
- Common vulnerability assessment tool now being used by multiple local agencies to prioritize homeless people for housing – starting place for system integration goals
- Learning about vulnerable people – clients have averaged about four law enforcement interactions in the past six months and people connected with housing so far could save many law enforcement interactions in Boulder over next year
- More housing matching expected as more housing resources go into pilot

2. 1175 Lee Hill opened to first 31 occupants – November 2014

- Thousands in savings expected in law enforcement, justice system, medical
- Housed approximately 10 percent of the estimated chronically homeless people countywide
- Approximately \$2 million contributed from city

3. Construction in progress on Ready To Work Transitional Housing

- 48 people will be housed while gaining employment training
- City contributed \$1.2 million

4. Construction of five additional transitional housing units for families

- \$45K contributed from City of Boulder

5. Boulder Homeless Planning Group (BHPG) Behavior Guidelines

- BHPG approves common client behavior standards for service

6. Supportive Housing Toolkit

- Attention Homes, Boulder County Housing Authority, Boulder Housing Partners, Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Bridge House partner to develop permanent supportive housing development concept. Potential sites in county under consideration.

7. “Walkabout” Observational Data Gathered – Summer/Fall 2013

- City staff and local homeless service providers walked the civic area creek path multiple days to collect observational data on the number of potentially homeless individuals present that were known to the justice system or accessing homeless services - approximately 80 percent unknown to both systems, with high turnover among unknowns from week to week

8. Adult Homeless Providers Collaborate on Assessment

- Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO), Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and Bridge House jointly embarked on a consultant evaluation (Burnes Report) of their opportunities to better coordinate services

- The three agencies have ongoing weekly meetings, and are implementing more consistent data reporting

9. Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI)

- City staff (Wendy Schwartz) appointed to MDHI Board, greater connection of Boulder to regional resource planning

10. Metro Mayor's Caucus Homeless Committee

- Developed short, medium and long-term goals to increase resources and support on a regional level to address homelessness
- Partnering with MDHI on a regional landlord campaign, which could help people in Boulder use vouchers if more landlords are recruited

11. Consortium of Cities

- Interest in supporting a countywide assessment of permanent supportive housing needs.

12. Annual Human Services Fund Homelessness Results - 2014

- More than 450 people received employment training, and subsequently gained employment
- More than 2,800 people at-risk of homelessness have received temporary assistance with rent, utilities or other expenses to prevent a costly slide into homelessness
- 7836 meals served/food distributed
- More than 2,720 people received emergency overnight shelter
- Approximately 200 people were provided with transitional housing
- Almost 850 people received onsite medical, mental health or substance use services at homeless service organizations
- Approximately 46 people maintained or obtained permanent housing

13. Countywide homeless housing inventory

- Created by City of Boulder in 2013 to track system resources and capacity

14. BOHO service changes

- Created women-only and residents warming centers for ongoing clients with good behavior records

15. Increased city support for Bridge House employment training programs

16. Regional Grants Management System implemented

- Standardized impact areas, outcomes and goals among four regional funders

17. Annual homeless memorial

- Commemorate lives of homeless people who died on the streets in Boulder

18. Public information on homelessness

- "Human Services Insight" on Channel 8
- City of Boulder Employee Forum
- Updates to city homelessness site for more mobile-friendly access to resource information

19. Conducted Point-In-Time (PIT) Survey

- Gathered information for a “snapshot” of homelessness

20. Fort Lyon

- At least 25 people from Boulder County have been accepted into Fort Lyon, a supportive residential program in Bent County for people experiencing homelessness and in need of substance use treatment

21. VISTA Volunteer

- Through MDHI the city has gained a VISTA volunteer to work on homelessness projects beginning in February 2015

22. EDGE Program

- The Boulder Police Department has partnered with Mental Health Partners on the EDGE program to divert individuals with mental health needs from the justice system to treatment

23. Municipal Court/Bridge House partnership to connect homeless defendants with needed services

- Defendants referred to Bridge House Resource Center - in some cases, sentencing conditions can be modified with engagement in services



DRAFT City of Boulder Homelessness Strategy Framework

Homelessness Strategy Purpose

The purpose of the City of Boulder Homelessness Strategy is to:

- 1) Clarify city goals in addressing homelessness;
- 2) Maximize efficiency and effectiveness of city resources in reducing homelessness;
- 3) Engage community partners more broadly in solutions; and
- 4) Provide a strategic road map for city action on homelessness.

Homelessness Strategy Guiding Principles

The Homeless Strategy guiding principles and goals are informed by national best practices in addressing homelessness, local community needs, and other local and regional policy documents.

- *Consider homelessness in a regional context*
People experiencing homelessness are highly mobile, seeking services, employment, housing and other needs. Policies, resources and strategies in one city, county or metro area impact homelessness among neighboring jurisdictions. Planning and resources should be leveraged regionally.
- *Respect for the strength and dignity of diverse individuals*
A wide variety of people experience homelessness for many different reasons. Solutions should consider diverse homeless individuals and families and their needs.
- *Support to advance self sufficiency and maximize independence*
Individuals and families should have support to achieve the maximum degree of self sufficiency and independence possible.
- *Effective use of resources within a coordinated and collaborative system*
National best practices demonstrate that coordinated, collaborative systems yield better outcomes for people and cost-effective solutions for communities.

Homelessness Strategy Goals

- *Prevent Homelessness*
Provide support to prevent individuals and families from the traumatic and costly slide into homelessness.
- *Provide temporary shelter and supportive services as needed*

Maintain a safety net of emergency shelter, food and other needed services with a pathway to long-term solutions such as permanent housing.

- *Provide long-term housing and support solutions*

Provide housing options and support; including permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families and rapid re-housing for people with fewer support needs.

- *Improve systems to support efficient and effective services and outcomes*

Implement best practices in homelessness that result in a system that is coordinated, integrated, easy to navigate and provides performance information that supports analysis of outcomes and opportunities for improvement.

- *Improve public education and communication*

Provide accessible information about homelessness and people experiencing homelessness and how the community can be involved in solutions.

Homeless Action Plan

The Homeless Action Plan (HAP) provides implementation strategies and action items to achieve the goals of the Homelessness Strategy.

Strategy 1 – Strengthen Regional Partnerships

- 1.a. Work with other funders, local and regional partners and service providers to identify barriers and resources needed to implement system improvements
- 1.b. Actively support the proposed goals of the Metro Mayors Caucus, Homeless Committee
- 1.c. Engage Consortium of Cities for countywide dialogues and solutions
- 1.d. Actively engage in regional homelessness reduction efforts

Strategy 2 – Innovative Solutions to Increase Housing Options

- 2.a. Develop community dashboard on goals
- 2.b. Identify any new opportunities in the Consolidated Plan to prioritize homeless housing
- 2.c. Strengthen landlord relationships for housing retention and incentives
- 2.d. Address barriers to maximizing federal housing resources
- 2.e. Support community initiatives to develop housing for the homeless
- 2.f. Address land use barriers to developing and acquiring housing

Strategy 3 – Improve Local Service Integration

- 3.a. Require system improvements (coordinated assessment, intake, case management, data) as condition of city funding
- 3.b. Develop prioritization system, including vulnerability assessment, for services
- 3.c. Conduct a more thorough evaluation of emergency sheltering system and update target goals for sheltering, including feasibility of expanded day services center and summer study of homelessness.
- 3.d. Strengthen Municipal Court Referrals to Bridge House and other services
- 3.e. Support Boulder Police Department EDGE Partnership with Mental Health Partners

Strategy 4 – Improve Community Education

- 4.a. Work with community stakeholders to improve communications and information about homeless populations, initiatives and results achieved.

Strategy 5 – Prevent Homelessness

- 5.a. Continue support and coordination of city and regional programs that help people out of poverty, including affordable housing programs and supportive/temporary assistance programs.

City of Boulder Human Services Homelessness Strategy Timeline

