



## Potential City of Boulder Homeless Action Plan Strategies

The goals of a City of Boulder Homeless Action Plan (HAP) are to clarify the city's role in addressing homelessness in Boulder,<sup>1</sup> and to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of city resources in reducing homelessness and engage community partners more broadly in solutions. The HAP will complement the countywide Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness (Ten-Year Plan). Below are six potential strategies to consider for reducing homelessness. Draft strategies are a starting place for discussion with stakeholders and public.

### Key Policy Questions:

- *Where can the city invest efforts to have the biggest impact in reducing homelessness?*
- *How should resources be prioritized for homelessness?*
- *What new and existing partnerships would maximize the impact of these efforts?*

### 1. Strengthen regional relationships to address homeless housing and services issues

**Key issues:** Homelessness is a regional issue but is primarily addressed at the local level. Some regional partners do not provide or contribute to services used by their residents in other jurisdictions. Boulder also receives a disproportionately lower share of federal and state resources to address homelessness compared to its regional homeless population.

**Background:** Although people experiencing homelessness come from communities throughout Boulder County and the seven-county Denver Metro Region, not all communities provide or contribute to services for the homeless. According to the 2013 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, Boulder County's homeless population accounts for 16 percent of the seven-county Metro Denver Region's total homeless population. However, in 2013 programs in Boulder County received two percent of competitive federal homeless allocations through the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI)<sup>2</sup>.

**Strategy goals:** More regional partners contributing to localized solutions to homelessness with Boulder receiving proportionate amounts of federal, state and local resources and other jurisdictions contributing to or providing services.

**Key city role:** Facilitate dialogue about partnership and homeless resources across the county and region. Facilitate discussions and assessments with partners to determine how resources coming into Boulder County and the Metro Denver Region are invested in best practices with long-term outcomes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless specified as Boulder County, "Boulder" refers to the City of Boulder throughout this document.

<sup>2</sup> MDHI is a nonprofit organization whose mission includes preventing and ending homelessness in the seven-county Metro Denver Region. MDHI is responsible for administering HUD's competitive homeless funding among Metro Denver Region nonprofit organizations. Total award to the Metro Denver Region through MDHI was nearly \$15 million.

## 2. Facilitate the development of a seamless, integrated homeless services system

**Key issues:** There are integration and coordination challenges within Boulder’s homeless services system and across the county. Services can be confusing to navigate and may be redundant or uncoordinated. Public indoor and outdoor spaces are used to provide shelter and as congregating spaces.

**Background:** A homeless services system offers different entry points and connected services depending on the unique needs of individuals and households. People receive individualized plans to stabilize, maximize self-sufficiency and successfully exit homelessness. Integrated services enable individuals and families with multiple needs to access services with ease, require visits to a limited number of facilities and include interactions with few caseworkers who coordinate and communicate between different programs.

**Strategy goals:** More efficient and effective use of aligned homeless resources in Boulder to reduce people cycling through emergency services and municipal court; and help more people enter stable housing and exit homelessness. Coherent service delivery system that is easier to navigate and better meets the needs of the homeless. Building partnerships with services and programs focused on long-term outcomes and skill building to exit homelessness.

**Key city role:** Continue to work with city departments and community partners in developing a more coherent and efficient services system for homeless persons to access.

## 3. Identify, analyze and adopt land use approaches and other innovative solutions to increasing the supply of affordable housing options

**Key issues:** The current supply of supported permanent housing for the homeless, and affordable and accessible private market housing for people with very low incomes is insufficient to meet community demand.

**Background:** A key solution to homelessness is housing, and innovative solutions are required with new partners to increase homeless housing options in the Boulder market. Federal funding practices and local plans prioritize a Housing First<sup>3</sup> approach to housing. National research concludes that permanent and permanent supportive housing is a less expensive long-term approach than providing emergency services. Local housing authorities in the area are currently discussing what the need is across the county and resources it would take to meet the demand.

**Strategy goals:** Increased supply of housing options in city of Boulder and countywide to reduce homelessness.

**Key city role:** Facilitate dialogue between service providers and housing providers to meet shared goal of reducing homelessness across the county.

## 4. Promote and facilitate creation of a community-wide shared data system

---

<sup>3</sup> Housing First is an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and providing services as needed.

**Key issues:** There is currently limited information on the outcomes of Boulder’s community efforts to help people exit homelessness.

**Background:** Boulder’s homeless service providers use different data systems and collect different information about the people they serve. Preliminary discussions have begun to identify benefits and challenges in these systems interfacing in the future. Service providers do not collect longitudinal data that track individual or family use of various services through time. Sharing of information among local service providers is not common practice but is needed to effectively assess service system impact.

**Strategy goals:** A data-driven environment that guides investment. With improved information from a shared data system, the city of Boulder can assess the impact of its homeless investments and identify unmet community needs.

**Key city role:** Facilitate service provider discussions about shared data. Consider supporting shared data pilot project initiatives. Use the data collected in a shared data system to educate the community, homeless service providers and other partners and effectively direct resources and efforts.

**Key stakeholders:** Homeless service providers, funders, the Ten-Year Plan Board, MDHI, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.<sup>4</sup>

## **5. Improve community education**

**Key issues:** Many members of the Boulder community are unclear about who is homeless, the causes of homelessness and the roles community members and organizations play in helping to address and reduce homelessness.

**Background:** Homelessness is a complex issue that requires community awareness and engagement in implementing solutions. Lack of understanding of homelessness and the populations that are homeless can lead to misconceptions and concerns about the homeless, homeless services and housing projects.

**Strategy goals:** Increased community understanding of homelessness and shared commitment to addressing and reducing homelessness in the City of Boulder.

**Key city role:** Work with homeless service providers to improve community awareness of homeless issues through increased communication, education and engagement of the community in solutions to homelessness.

## **6. Assess highest priority impact areas for allocations of funds to community nonprofit agencies according to priorities identified through the HS Strategy process**

---

<sup>4</sup> Colorado Coalition for the Homeless is the MDHI contractor responsible for region-wide administration of the federal data collection system.

**Key issues:** City goals and priorities for human services, including homelessness, will be identified through the HS Strategy. Funding to the community should be aligned based on those priorities.

**Background:** Approximately \$2 million in Human Services Fund support was approved to support nonprofit community agencies in 2014. Over \$400,000 of these funds are allocated to a variety of services that help people who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness. In addition, significant city capital resources have been invested in homeless-related projects through the city's Housing Division. The goals of the Ten-Year Plan represent a comprehensive approach that addresses all facets of homelessness, including homelessness prevention, temporary shelter, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing solutions. The city should assess what priorities and investments in homelessness are highest priorities as part of the HS Strategy.

**Strategy goals:** Fund areas with the highest leverage to have the greatest impact on addressing priority issues.

**Key city role:** Identify community priorities and most effective role for city funding and resources as part of the HS Strategy.

## **7. Key stakeholders to be considered in development of a City of Boulder Homeless Action Plan:**

**Regional:** Metro Mayors Caucus, Consortium of Cities, Colorado Department of Housing, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), MDHI, Boulder County, City of Longmont, the Ten-Year Plan Board, local housing authorities and housing development officials from across the region.

**Local:** Homeless services provider agencies, funders of homeless services, the Ten-Year Plan Board, private sector, faith communities, residents, users of local homeless services.