



**CITY OF BOULDER  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

**MEETING DATE: Oct. 7, 2014**

**AGENDA TITLE:** Consideration of a motion to accept the summary of the Aug. 26, 2014 Update on Homeless Issues and Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness Study Session.

**PRESENTERS**

Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager  
Karen Rahn, Director, Human Services  
Greg Testa, Chief of Police  
Wendy Schwartz, Human Services Planning Manager

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This agenda item presents a summary of the Aug. 26, 2014 [Update on Homeless Issues and Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness Study Session](#).

The purpose of the study session was to provide an update on national and local homelessness initiatives, the countywide Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness (TYP), potential strategies for the City of Boulder to consider and current efforts in the downtown area.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Suggested Motion Language:**

Staff requests council consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to accept the summary of the Aug. 26, 2014 Update on Homeless Issues and Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness Study Session.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Staff will incorporate feedback from council into Homeless Action Plan Goals and Strategies and schedule an update on progress to council in the first quarter, 2014.
- 2 Human Services Strategy Update Study Session, First Quarter, 2015.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Aug. 26, 2014 Update on Homeless Issues and Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness Study Session Summary

## **City Council Study Session Summary**

**Aug. 26, 2014**

### **Update on Homeless Issues and Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness**

#### **PRESENT**

**City Council:** Mayor Matt Appelbaum, Macon Cowles, Suzanne Jones, George Karakehian, Lisa Morzel, Tim Plass, Andrew Shoemaker, Sam Weaver, Mary Young

Staff Presenters: City Manager Jane Brautigam, Police Chief Greg Testa, Human Services Director Karen Rahn, Human Services Planning Manager Wendy Schwartz

Guest Presenters: Gary Sanford, Executive Director, Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), Robin Bohannon, Director, Boulder County Community Services, Dr. Mary Wickersham, Principal, Social Solutions/Director of CEPA (Center for Education Policy Analysis, University of Colorado).

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the study session was to provide an update on national and local homelessness initiatives, accomplishments to date of the countywide Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness, potential strategies for the City of Boulder to consider and current efforts in the downtown area.

#### **OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION**

Karen Rahn opened the meeting and provided an overview of:

- Federal priorities in addressing homelessness;
- Key themes from the 100,000 Homes Campaign and successful efforts to reduce homelessness in other communities across the country; and
- Regional homelessness efforts the city and its partners are participating in.

Gary Sanford provided an overview of MDHI, its role in federal funding processes, and leadership in regional initiatives. In response to council member questions, Mr. Sanford provided the following information:

- The Vulnerability Index and similar tools are helpful for prioritizing clients for resources such as housing, but are not typically used for emergency shelter;
- One opportunity to drive regional collaboration is through funding incentives and requirements – system improvements as a condition of funding and offering resources to support changes;
- The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database is one regional effort that Boulder service providers could participate in to be helpful to Boulder homelessness efforts and the region as a whole;
- Communities throughout the Metro Denver region have been experiencing a significant amount of “travelers” passing through; and

- Metro region could consider a simple summer survey to develop a better understanding of where travelers are from, how long they stay and why they came to the region.

Robin Bohannon presented information on accomplishments of the Boulder County Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness. In response to questions from council, Ms. Bohannon provided the following information:

- Homelessness is not just a human services sector problem; multiple sectors will be required to reach goals of the Boulder County Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness;
- Homelessness won't be solved with more services. Housing is needed to most effectively impact positive, long-term outcomes;
- There are many homeless children and families across the county. This population is sometimes "hidden";
- Significant county funding, including Temporary Safety Net tax funding, has been devoted in recent years to prevention and rapid re-housing for families;
- Improved homeless data is important, though providers face challenges with multiple databases required by multiple funders; county working on data warehouse as possible solution to multiple databases; and
- Difficult to say how much emergency shelter is needed in the county; that assessment hasn't been done.

City Manager Jane Brautigam and Police Chief Greg Testa presented information on efforts downtown and citywide to address behavior issues and crime:

- The new Early Diversion Get Engaged (EDGE) Program partnership with Mental Health Partners is very helpful in managing situations where individuals involved with law enforcement could benefit from mental health intervention;
- The majority of municipal court violations in recent years are attributed to 53 people (out of 1967 total defendants) that had between 31 and 138 violations each; and
- Ongoing partnership between law enforcement, municipal court and human services is needed to find more ways to get most vulnerable individuals into services.

Linda Cooke, Presiding Judge, Municipal Court, explained that Municipal Court and the Police Department share information about frequent offenders to facilitate access to needed services and housing.

Karen Rahn presented available data related to concerns about an "influx of homeless" into Boulder. Although some people may come to Boulder for homeless services, the available information does not suggest a significant number are coming to the city for that reason.

In response to a question from council, Greg Harms, Executive Director of Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (BSH), clarified that approximately 50 percent of BSH emergency shelter clients stay less than seven days per winter shelter season. Summer clients in BSH's transition program typically stay 3-5 months as part of the program.

Dr. Mary Wickersham, presented information about how Pay for Success/Social Impact Bonds are being implemented across the country, including a project being developed in Denver to address homeless individuals that are the highest utilizers of emergency services, by re-allocating savings from one system of services to fund gaps in other systems.

Karen Rahn reviewed the Homeless Action Plan strategies and potential initiatives Council provided feedback on the initiatives as described below.

Isabel McDevitt, Executive Director of Bridge House, explained services available at Bridge House and the Bridge House Resource Center, and stated that there have been a number of community requests for a larger space for those services. Ms. McDevitt also explained the Ready-To-Work model and services provided to program participants that will be housed at the planned Ready-To-Work transitional housing site at 4747 Table Mesa.

Jeff Yegian, Division of Housing Manager, clarified that after the closing for the property at 4747 Table Mesa on September 2, the city's funds to acquire the property would be expended.

## **COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

### General Themes

- Data on homeless population and services is important. Staff should work with providers to assess barriers to a shared data system and support mechanisms to resolve and implement a system.
- Support systems improvements such as coordinated entry, coordinated case management and vulnerability assessment to ensure that the city is using its resources efficiently and effectively, before more resources are devoted to a specific area.
- Preserve existing affordable housing as a prevention strategy and a path out of homelessness.
- Explore strategies to better understand who "travelers" are and why they are here.
- More services will not solve homelessness; ultimately people need housing.

### Potential Initiatives

Council expressed support for further exploration/implementation of the following initiatives:

#### *Strategy 1 – Strengthen Regional Partnerships*

1. Explore city funding requirements for coordinated entry, assessment of vulnerability and prioritization; work with other funders, MDHI and service providers to identify barriers and resources needed to implement.
2. Actively support the proposed goals of the Metro Mayors Caucus, Homeless Committee.

#### *Strategy 2 – Innovative Solutions to Increase Housing Options*

3. More thorough evaluation of emergency sheltering system and update target goals for sheltering.
4. Feasibility study for Pay for Success.
5. Develop community dashboard on goals when those has been identified.

6. Identify any new opportunities in the Boulder Broomfield Regional Consortium Consolidated Plan to prioritize homeless housing.
7. Strengthen landlord relationships for housing retention, incentives.
8. Address barriers to federal resources such as Fair Market Rent (FMR) requirements. Council expressed that some housing options in Strategy 2 were challenging to assess because they need to be discussed as part of the broader conversation on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy, and more information is needed about targets for numbers/types of units.

*Strategy 3 – Improve Local Service Integration*

9. Require system improvements (coordinated entry, assessment, data) as condition of city funding.
10. Develop prioritization system for some services, including vulnerability assessment. Explore the feasibility of expanded Bridge House day services center (not day shelter). Day services are programs that engage people in productive daily activities leading to greater self-sufficiency and stability.

*Strategy 4 – Improve Community Education*

11. Work with community *stakeholders to improve communications* and information about homeless populations; important to highlight “invisible” populations such as families, but also make sure education includes veterans, youth, mentally ill.
12. Expand communications methods to include information and stories from homeless people about homelessness; maximize use of city and local partner websites, and media vehicles.

## **REQUESTED FOLLOW UP INFORMATION**

### **1. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**

Council members requested a link with additional information about HMIS, and information about which local Boulder homeless services agencies were currently using HMIS. The [HMIS page of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative](#) website, link here, includes a description of HMIS, as well as HMIS intake, interim assessment and exit forms.

Homeless service providers within the City of Boulder that currently use HMIS include:

- Boulder County Housing and Human Services
- Boulder Shelter for the Homeless
- Mental Health Partners
- Attention Homes

### **2. Vulnerability Index**

Council members requested a link to the Vulnerability Index assessment tool. An example of this tool is located [here](#). A modified version of the Vulnerability Index, known as the Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool ([VI-SPDAT](#)), is now being used as a common assessment tool in many initiatives, including the 25 Cities Initiative pilot that Boulder and other counties in the Metro Denver area are participating in.

Bus Passes and Bus Tickets

Council requested information on the availability of bus passes or tickets for homeless individuals and why there might not be enough passes/tickets available to meet the needs of the population. Some local homeless service agencies provide bus fare for homeless clients, to allow transportation to medical appointments, job interviews or similar needs. However, there is generally not enough funding in agency budgets to provide for all transportation needs for all clients every month.

The city currently provides funding for transportation to and from Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO), and downtown during the winter sheltering season and provides support through the city Public Works Department to VIA for special needs populations. Some agencies supported by the city through the Human Services Fund assist clients with disabilities in signing up for reduced-rate bus passes.