

Strategic Priority Issue
Develop a Strategy to Help the Homeless in Eugene
Action Plan

At the February 2005 retreat of the City of Eugene Mayor, City Council, and Executive Managers, eight strategic issues were identified, one of which was to “Develop a strategy to help the homeless in Eugene.” Based on the discussion outcomes, a desire was shown to determine the City’s future role in addressing this complex, international issue. The Homelessness Action Planning Team will develop a 3 to 5 year action plan with greatest focus on the first 18 to 24 months.

Because homelessness has the potential to touch every resident and area within the City, our team has expanded the definition of “the homeless” to include community members who are “at risk” of becoming homeless—persons who cannot afford food and shelter.

This action plan will identify gaps in current services, promote public awareness, foster collaboration with stakeholders, and propose appropriate actions. We recognize that action items developed as part of this initiative could influence other priority issues such as those for neighborhoods, policing, and arts & outdoors, and that a multitude of initiatives and ongoing programs contribute to the overall effort. This initiative is truly a community effort.

A. Planning Horizon and Focus

In order to make informed decisions, many areas will need to be evaluated. However, we propose several strategic areas to allow us to focus our efforts and resources:

1. Review the City’s past and present service delivery and staff training.
2. Review the Eugene Human Rights Commission (HRC) priorities on homeless/at risk community members.
3. Assemble community stakeholders to determine current service levels and areas for collaboration.
4. Engage homeless/at risk community members to determine how best to assist them in their transition away from homelessness.
5. Prioritize potential service enhancements based on greatest need and resource requirements.
6. Stress the importance of the issue to county and local elected officials; request their leadership and support so priorities can be implemented.

Given the potential scope and breadth of the initiative, related actions and tasks are grouped into short and longer-term horizons:

Phase I (18 to 24 Months) – Action items that define, analyze and prioritize internal city and community-focused initiatives. These priorities will be used by elected officials to approve and fund the longer-term direction of homeless/at risk assistance.

Phase II (3 to 5 Years) – Longer-term approved priorities. These priorities will be initiated with the understanding that some go far beyond the five-year time horizon.

B. Strategic Priority Issue Outcomes

The problem of homelessness is not isolated to Eugene; the City will need a great deal of assistance, especially from Lane County, the State of Oregon and the Federal Government. The following deliverables illustrate the magnitude of the local problem and of how we can best help address the issues:

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1. Determine ways to more efficiently deliver service with existing resources based on the evaluation of City service delivery to homeless/at risk populations.
2. Assemble community stakeholders and form a “collaborative base” to identify the areas of most critical need. These stakeholders will include, but are not limited to, City & County staff, the Eugene HRC, elected officials, past and present service providers, business owners, and neighborhood leaders.
3. Engage homeless/at risk community members to determine their needs and to identify what enhancements would provide them with the greatest benefit.
4. Train all City staff on issues relating to homeless/at risk community members. Provide more detailed training for City employees and work groups that are more likely to have frequent, daily interaction with homeless/at risk persons, which might include advising them about other appropriate service providers.
5. Prioritize the issues of most critical need and/or areas where the City and the “collaborative base” of partners can deliver the most effective assistance taking into account discretionary funding and the potential to re-deploy resources to higher priority areas.
6. Present the highest priority items to the Mayor and City Council, and request they direct the City Manager on which options should be implemented.
7. Assign appropriate City staff and other applicable resources to short- and long-term options approved by the Mayor and City Council.

C. Progress to Date

The following are examples of currently operational programs/actions that assist homeless/at risk community members which the City has participated in, supported or created. This list may not include programs run by the County and other organizations.

- 1967 City created special land use zone for the Eugene Mission to allow them to move to their current location on W. First Avenue.
Current Status: Special land use zone is still in effect.
- 1970 Family Shelter House opened with City assistance, on E. 11th Avenue, at the site that became the “Animal House.” The facility moved to its current location, 969 Hwy. 99 N, in 1977.
Current Status: This facility is still in operation.
- 1990 Housing Policy Board (HPB) formed, by intergovernmental agreement, between Lane County, Eugene, Springfield, and HACSA. This public-private partnership prioritizes permanent housing over emergency housing and sets a goal of adding 100 new rental housing units per year.
Current Status: As of June 2005, 1,526 subsidized rental housing units have either been added or are in the pipeline for completion. Many are rented to formerly homeless households or those at risk of homelessness.

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- 1990 Interfaith Emergency Shelter Program began when the Opportunity Shelter closed due to both funding shortfalls and recognition that this model was not successful. Following a public protest, the City provided seed money for the Interfaith Emergency Shelter Program, rather than implement the proposal submitted by the community members that would have allowed camping at the site of the former Jefferson Pool.
Current Status: This program continues to operate. (St. Vincent dePaul)
- 1990 Family Access Center created. (Now called First Place Family Center.)
This program began when the Opportunity Shelter closed due to both funding shortfalls and recognition that this model was not successful. This was a critical companion program to the Interfaith Shelter.
Current Status: The program continues to operate at 1990 Amazon. (St. Vincent dePaul)
- 1992 Department of Public Safety camping policy revised.
Current Status: Police enforcement actions became more complaint-oriented rather than proactive.
- 1993 New Roads School and Youth Access Center opened in December.
Current Status: This program still operates (Looking Glass).
- 1995 Eugene Service Station, an adult access center, established with City seed money.
Current Status: This program still exists at an expanded facility. The building is now shared by the Bethel Police Substation.
- 1995 Station 7, Looking Glass Youth Shelter, opened with City assistance replacing a smaller shelter that Looking Glass had operated since 1970. It was named Station 7, because the building was formerly a fire station.
Current Status: This program operates as the only youth shelter in Lane County.
- 1997 The Safe Place Project initiated to provide transportation to emergency services for youth in crisis. Program received support from the City of Eugene.
Current Status: The program still operates.
- 1998 Council approved CCHY's recommendation for special funding for program expansion at Station 7 and Eugene Service Station. Station 7 was able to help more youth, until the funding ran out, and permanently expand its services.
Current Status: The program had a shelter capacity of 13, but it is now at 10 due to budget cuts in 2003. Also, the daytime non-school hour activities had to be cut.
- 1998 Council repealed camping in industrial areas and expanded camping options at businesses and public property based on CCHY's recommendation. SVDP received a contract for on-street facilitation services. The City provided 15 camping spaces and encouraged intergovernmental partners, churches, and businesses to provide spaces.
Current Status: This program still operates and is generally regarded as very successful.
- 1990 City of Eugene Interdepartmental Community Action Team (ICAT) created to convene staff from various departments to address critical issues, including homelessness.
Current Status: ICAT meets to discuss various issues, including homelessness.
- 2003 Council approved CCHY's recommendation to fund Safe & Sound substance abuse services for homeless youth through 2006.
Current Status: Eugene's contribution has leveraged nearly a half million dollars in private foundation funding during the last two years and provides comprehensive and coordinated behavioral health services for more than 800 youth each year. Safe & Sound partners with Lane County community health centers to secure Medicaid reimbursement; however, many of the pre-treatment services are not eligible and the partnership with the City is critical to ensure continued success. The Safe & Sound strategy of business, public

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safety, and social services working together, effective in the downtown area, is now being replicated in the Monroe Park vicinity, but additional funding is necessary.

2004 Lane County plan submitted to end chronic homelessness as part of their HUD 2004 Continuum of Care application.

Current Status: *Funding is already directed to this effort, and the City recently received a response to a housing RFP to add new housing for homeless veterans.*

Also attached is a list of ongoing and terminated/completed community programs for homeless/at risk community members over the last several decades. (*Attachment B*)

D. Action Plan & Resource Needs

The following outcomes occur in Phase 1(18 to 24 months):

1. Action Items for Elected Officials:

- a) Highlight the homeless problem as a Council Priority to demonstrate the willingness of Eugene's political leadership to address the issue. Inform the key stakeholders about the significance. Costs should be minimal and relate to the time elected officials spend in discussions with stakeholders and City staff.
- b) Review the recommended prioritization of service delivery options from the stakeholders. Include a review of existing discretionary spending and possible reallocation of existing resources to higher priorities. Costs should be minimal and relate to the time elected officials spend in discussions with City staff regarding recommendations and resource issues.

2. Internally-Focused Action Items:

- a) Analyze City programs that involve contact with homeless/at risk community members and recommend any efficiencies to be gained by combining efforts or redistributing staff and/or other resources. Costs will be mostly for City staff time in doing the analysis, but could include other one-time material.
- b) Help with the design of a City staff training program on how to best assist homeless/at risk community members find needed resources. Include information on homeless "truths and myths," and on the availability of existing resources, and incorporate into the City's existing Cultural Competency and Respectful Work Environment courses. Costs will be mostly for City Staff time, but could include costs for outside consulting help and materials. Because the training will be added to the City's core, required, employee training, costs will be ongoing.
- c) Assist in the design of an additional training regimen specific to employees and work units which have frequent, daily interactions with homeless/at risk community members. Costs will be mostly for City Staff time, but could include costs for outside consulting help and materials. Because the training will be added to the City's core, required, employee training, costs will be ongoing.

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3. Externally-Focused Action Items:

- a) Invite all local stakeholders to help identify current service levels and service delivery gaps. This group could include current and former service providers, community members, business owners, neighborhood leaders, City and County staff, and local elected officials. These key stakeholders will help the City determine the most effective and cost-efficient ways to help. We expect that this group will continue to meet to discuss resources issues and needs. Costs will include City Staff time for meetings, and material costs for facilitation. If the stakeholders continue to meet after the initial evaluation period, as this group recommends, ongoing sustainability costs should be minimal.
- b) Invite the homeless/at risk community members to participate in the process of defining the problems and identifying potential solutions. These participants will be a part of the “collaborative base” of key stakeholders. Costs will include City staff time for meetings, and material costs for facilitation. If the stakeholders continue to meet after the initial evaluation period, as this group recommends, ongoing sustainability costs should be minimal.
- c) Have the stakeholders research best practices in other jurisdictions and incorporate the ones that will work for Eugene into the strategic priority options recommended to the Mayor and City Council.

The following outcomes occur in Phase 2 (3 to 5 years and beyond):

Once options have been reviewed and approved by the Mayor and City Council, identify resources and assign appropriate City staff to facilitate the action steps. Resource needs and staff expense will largely depend on the number and scope of the options selected.

Based on the results of similar plans in other localities, the following long-term options may be recommended for consideration once our evaluation process is completed:

- a) Develop permanent and transitional housing units for people who are homeless.
- b) Develop an expanded “shelter system,” particularly on cold nights, until adequate housing is available.
- c) Prevent further homelessness by assisting people, particularly families, who are at risk of becoming homeless due to eviction, foreclosure or utility shut-off.
- d) Strategically expand supportive services, including medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment, to help homeless residents secure and maintain housing and otherwise achieve stability.
- e) Enhance public safety by expanding homeless outreach efforts that help people access services and leave the streets.
- f) Increase access to education, training and employment opportunities in order to break the cycle of homelessness.
- g) Increase community awareness regarding the size and scope of homelessness, the costs, who's affected, and what individuals and communities can do to help.
- h) Improve emergency shelter and housing capacity by updating zoning, urban design and land use regulations.

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Costs associated with these examples will vary greatly depending on those selected and their duration; however, based on the cities we have preliminarily researched for “best practices,” resources of this type cost from \$5 to \$10 million the first year, and from \$5 to \$20 million ongoing. By way of example, attached are two articles from the Denver Post (Attachment C) and Oregonian (Attachment D).

E. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Mayor and City Council should be briefed on the progress of the approved options annually. This briefing could also be used as an update on service delivery to the local community, and on any drastic changes to service levels or numbers served. Options could be adjusted based on changed conditions.