

Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Homelessness to the Fort Worth City Council

June 10, 2014

Background

On April 15, 2014, the Fort Worth City Council created an ad hoc Task Force on Homelessness and requested that it perform the following tasks:

- (a) Review the roles and responsibilities of all major organizations that fund and/or deliver services to homeless persons in Fort Worth;
- (b) Analyze the flow of financial resources associated with these services;
- (c) Assess the general efficiency and effectiveness of this service delivery system;
- (d) Identify opportunities to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among public and non-profit agencies serving the homeless; and
- (e) Advise the City Council on opportunities to streamline the funding and delivery of services to the homeless.¹

The Council further requested that the Task Force produce an interim report of findings no later than June 10, 2014 and, after receipt of public comment from interested citizens, a final report of the Task Force's conclusions and recommendations be delivered to the Council no later than July 22, 2014. The timing of the interim report was selected so that the Council could have the benefit of the Task Force's counsel at the outset of the budget development process.

To date, the Task Force has met four times. Meetings have included briefings from City staff, subject area experts, and presentations by the leadership of Fort Worth agencies that serve people who are homeless. The Task Force has also toured portions of the Day Resource Center, Presbyterian Night Shelter, Samaritan House, The Salvation Army, and Union Gospel Mission.

Interim Report Sources

The source material for this report is drawn exclusively from Task Force deliberations, background materials and handouts, and presentations from public meetings convened by the Task Force. Meeting

¹ [City Council Resolution #4312-04-2014](#)

agendas, background materials and handouts, and presentations are available to the public on the internet: <http://fortworthtexas.gov/boards/homelessness/taskforce/>.

Background Materials and Handouts

- CoC Board of Directors Organization Chart
- CoC Scorecard for Renewal Projects
- CoC Strategic Plan
- Continuum of Care (CoC) Board Charter
- Directions Home (City Homelessness Plan) Executive Summary
- Directions Home Fact Sheet
- FY2013 CoC Program Projects Tier 1 Renewal Funding Summary
- Memorandum of Understanding between TX-601 CoC Board and TCHC
- Point In Time (PIT) Count Summary for TX-601
- Samaritan House Overview
- Summary of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness
- Tarrant County Homeless Coalition (TCHC) Organization Chart
- The Cost of Homelessness in Tarrant County, Executive Summary

Meeting Presentations

- Task Force Charge – Fernando Costa, Assistant City Manager
- Briefing on Compliance with Texas Open Meetings Act – Mary J. Kayser, City Secretary
- Briefing on HEARTH Act and Continuum of Care Strategic Plan – Cindy J. Crain, Executive Director, Tarrant County Homeless Coalition
- Overview of Funding Sources and Delivery of Services to Homeless Persons in Fort Worth – M. Otis Thornton, Homelessness Program Director, City of Fort Worth
- Measuring the Performance of Tarrant County’s Service Delivery System – Cindy J. Crain
- Coordinating Fort Worth’s Efforts to End Chronic Homelessness
 - Community Engagement – Sheryl Kenny, Fort Worth Advisory Commission on Ending Homelessness
 - Permanent Supportive Housing – Andy Taft, Fort Worth Advisory Commission on Ending Homelessness
- Briefings by Selected Service Providers
 - Fort Worth Independent School District – June Davis, Director of Special Programs
 - First Street Methodist Mission – Rev. Page Hines, Executive Director
 - YWCA of Fort Worth and Tarrant County – Carol Klocek, Executive Director
- Interim Report Outline: Preliminary Findings, Budget Recommendations, and Next Steps – M. Otis Thornton

FINDINGS

(a) Review the roles and responsibilities of all major organizations that fund and/or deliver services to homeless persons in Fort Worth

1. The homeless services system reflects the diversity and complexity of the needs of people who are homeless.

Around 5,200 people will experience homelessness in our community this year, around 2,400 at any point in time. The primary reasons people become homeless include: 1) ability to afford rent; 2) domestic violence (women); and, 3) unemployment (men).²

Those at greatest risk of becoming homeless are the very poor:

- Poverty rate in Tarrant County is 1 in 6³
- Poverty rate in Fort Worth is getting worse relative to the state
- Child poverty rate is 1 in 4; growing faster than state average
- In the Fort Worth Independent School District, there are 2,007 students classified as homeless by the U.S. Department of Education
- Texas – Top 10% in affordable homes; bottom 10% in home ownership
- A family must earn a “housing wage” of \$18.04 per hour to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent in Fort Worth—the equivalent of 2.5 full-time jobs at minimum wage⁴
- 35% of households in Fort Worth have incomes below the housing wage⁵

A large and multifaceted network of homeless services has evolved in our community to respond to the diversity of needs of people who are homeless. The array of evidence-based services, techniques, and systems organization strategies is indicative of the complex and layered needs of the people for whom they are provided.

Services⁶

Permanent Supportive Housing
Housing-focused Street Outreach
Rapid Re-housing
Income and Benefit Assistance
Medical and Behavioral Health Care
Prevention

² [Directions Home Fact Sheet](#), pg. 1

³ Poverty, student, and homeownership statistics are from the Fort Worth Independent [School District report](#).

⁴ [Out of Reach 2014, National Low Income Housing Coalition](#)

⁵ [Directions Home Fact Sheet](#), pg. 1; the figure is calculated by comparing housing wage data and census bureau income figures

⁶ [Directions Home Fact Sheet](#), pg. 3

Techniques

Housing First

Trauma Informed Care

Client-centered, Strengths-based, Solution-focused Service Delivery

Systems Organization

Housing Prioritization

Coordinated Assessment

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Services that are provided specifically for people who are homeless are delivered alongside and coordinated with other community, health, and human services such as those provided by Adult Protective Services, Community Action Partners, Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD), Fort Worth Fire Department (FWFD), foster care, Goodwill Industries, MedStar Mobile Healthcare, MHMR of Tarrant County, Recovery Resource Council, Tarrant Area Food Bank, Travelers Aid, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Workforce Solutions, and numerous community- and faith-based food pantries and clothes closets.

2. The Continuum of Care (CoC) serves as the central planning and coordinating body for Tarrant and Parker counties.

With the adoption of the Federal plan to end homelessness, *Opening Doors*, and the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, the Continuum of Care (CoC) has emerged as the central planning and coordinating body for our area.⁷ The Fort Worth/Arlington/Tarrant County CoC was chartered in November of 2013⁸ and since then has developed an ambitious Strategic Plan for the coming year.⁹

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Board of Directors has selected the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition (TCHC) to be the “Lead Agency” for CoC operations, accountability, resources, and planning. In this capacity, TCHC ensures statutory compliance and competitive eligibility for Federal funds.¹⁰

The CoC Board has also designated TCHC to serve as the lead agency for the implementation of the community’s shared Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS). Performance measurement at the project level is accomplished largely—though not exclusively—through the shared HMIS system which computes 36 core measures in four program types.¹¹ Examples of project level data measures include: program capacity/ occupancy; comparisons of health, income, and benefits at

⁷ [Presentation: Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act and the Continuum of Care.](#)

Two members of the Task Force serve on the CoC Board of Directors: Councilmember Kelly Allen Gray and Mr. Ted Blevins.

⁸ [CoC Board Charter](#)

⁹ [CoC Strategic Plan](#)

¹⁰ The [CoC Board Charter](#) describes the duties of the CoC.

¹¹ [Measuring the Performance of Tarrant County’s Service Delivery System](#)

program entry and exit; and, the type of housing (permanent housing, nursing home, return to shelter, etc.) into which a person moves after leaving the program.

Similarly, aggregate HMIS data is used along with other data to evaluate the performance of the overall homelessness system. Examples of systems level measures include: point in time count; bed utilization; percentage of beds dedicated/ occupied by the chronically homeless; and, employment income at program exit.

At the local level, the CoC determines which applications are included in the application to HUD which, in turn, competes for funding with communities around the nation.¹² For the coming year, the local Continuum of Care program application is competing for \$12,147,115 from HUD; if awarded, these funds will be matched by approximately \$2,800,000 in local sources for a total funding level of \$14,924,192.¹³ These dollars will fund 33 different projects administered by 11 different organizations.

(b) Analyze the flow of financial resources associated with these services

3. Housing and services are funded by a complex array of public and private sources, each with a varied set of goals, eligibility requirements, and regulatory constraints.

Funding for mainstream and homeless-specific services is complex, technical, layered, multi-sourced, and frequently siloed. Dollars that are spent on emergency response health care for a person who is homeless cannot be spent on a rent subsidy that otherwise could have prevented the emergency room admission in the first place.

Resourceful agency leaders solicit funds from a wide variety of private and public sources:

- Federal: 17 agencies operating 94 programs
- State: 11 agencies operating 22 programs
- Local: city- and county-funded services
- Private: foundations, philanthropists, events, individuals, corporations, and program income

The service array of a particular agency is influenced by client needs, funding availability, politics, and the mission or philosophical orientation of the organization. Factors that influence utilization of services by people who are homeless include fit, availability, eligibility, suitability, and choice.

Public funding is provided through mainstream services and instrumentalities (i.e., Medicaid, VA Hospitals) and through competitive grant programs, the largest of which is the Continuum of Care (CoC)

¹² A [draft scorecard](#) for the local competition was shared with the Task Force as well as a [funding process map: Overview of Funding Sources and Delivery of Services to Homeless Persons in Fort Worth](#), p 7.

¹³ Funding levels are here: [Briefing on HEARTH Act and Continuum of Care Strategic Plan](#), p 6; and, a list of applicant organizations and funding levels are here: [CoC Program Projects](#).

program operated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The transparency and standardization of publically-funded housing and services does not apply to private dollars; thus, program outcomes and overall funding levels are difficult to evaluate.

4. City funding plays a key role in the community-wide effort to end homelessness.

Fort Worth citizens have a significant financial interest in decreasing homelessness—especially chronic homelessness. Costs incurred by the community are in terms of cash, lost opportunity, quality of life, and human lives.

A TCU-led study found that charges for taxpayer-funded services at the JPS Hospital, MHMR, and MedStar were reduced by 36% after the individual was moved off the streets or out of a shelter and into housing. While cash outlays were necessary to provide rental assistance and supportive services in the program, the costs to ongoing essential services were lower. Moreover, by moving people out of homelessness, the return on the investment in supportive housing improved neighborhood conditions as well as the health and self-sufficiency of individuals.

Local studies have also demonstrated the opportunity costs that homelessness has on economic development efforts and property values. Quality of life for residents, business owners, tourists, and, of course, for people who are homeless, improves when people return to housing. A 2008 citizen survey reveals that 90% of Fort Worth citizens feel that dealing with homelessness is important, very important, or extremely important.¹⁴

City resources and services were cited by agency leaders who met with the Task Force as “critical” to their efforts to maintain public safety and to help people escape homelessness. Current year (FY 2014) allocations total \$2,501,661.

Dept.	Program	FY '10	FY '12	FY '14	'14 APs
Housing & Eco. Dev.	Contracted Svcs., Admin.	2,556,042	2,556,042	2,349,163	2
Code Compliance	Homeless Court – Community Services	71,652	-	-	-
Law	Homeless Court – Prosecutors	195,435	-	-	1
Municipal Court	Homeless Court – Social Services	75,424	62,379	55,161	-
Police	Narcotics Section	253,222	-	-	-
Police	Liaison Officer	-	84,758	97,337	1
TOTAL		\$3,151,775	\$2,703,179	\$2,501,661	4

¹⁴ [Directions Home Plan](#), Pg. 4

The Fort Worth Advisory Commission on Homelessness recommends a system-wide increase of \$6,000,000 per year and has advised the Council to establish a Task Force to identify possible resources from the public and private sectors to meet this need.

(c) Assess the general efficiency and effectiveness of this service delivery system

5. Most often cited inefficiency is a shortage of safe, affordable housing.

As Councilmember Kelly Allen Gray noted, “Every provider concurred that despite all that is being done to assist and provide services to the men, women, and children living on East Lancaster, housing is the most needed resource.” Indeed, every presenter and tour guide underscored the need for additional units of dispersed, mixed-income, affordable and supportive housing.

Task Force discussions and questions related to this issue have centered on what the most appropriate and viable methods for funding additional affordable housing and what agency/entity should take the lead locally in accomplishing this goal.

(d) Identify opportunities to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among public and non-profit agencies serving the homeless

6. Fort Worth area agencies work together to achieve a great deal with scarce resources.

The resources currently being spent to provide housing and services for the homeless are accomplishing a great deal, providing emergency shelter for 1,200 people county-wide as well as rental assistance and supportive services for more than 2,800 people in transitional and permanent supportive housing programs who live in apartments. Despite challenging circumstances, organizations and local government in the Near East Side Neighborhood provide meals, shelter, housing placement, social services, and public safety around the clock.

The Task Force heard numerous examples of interagency collaboration and the extraordinary lengths to which organizations go to provide assistance. Unfortunately, demand continues to outpace the capacity of the system to provide the breadth and depth of services that are needed to more efficiently help people return to permanent housing.

7. CoC-wide continuous improvement efforts are underway to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and coordination.

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Strategic Plan for the coming year details numerous efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the housing and services delivery system for people who are homeless. Consistent with Federal expectations and best practices, the CoC is rolling out a Coordinated Assessment

System (CAS) along with policies to better prioritize and further align the provision of services that are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the CoC program.

Service providers are free to operate, endow, fund, and support programs of their choosing no less than foundations, philanthropists, or individual donors. While this arrangement allows for a great deal of freedom, the Task Force observed that it does add complexity and reduces the number of levers available to make system-wide adjustments.

Systems Change Strategy	Pro	Con
Strategic Funding	Funder can achieve quick, specific results	It is very difficult to achieve change at a sufficient scale across more than one service sector due to expenses
Regulatory Action	Government can achieve quick, specific results	Also difficult to take to scale within regulatory authority and retain buy-in of partners
Collective Impact¹⁵	Best practices for developing large scale, long-term change	Slow, must balance Short-Term Wins with Long-Term Planning

(e) Advise the City Council on opportunities to streamline the funding and delivery of services to the homeless

In anticipation of the commencement of budget deliberations by the City Council, the Task Force recommends that to support our community- and faith-based partners in their efforts to address homelessness, the City of Fort Worth should include a minimum budget allocation for the Housing & Economic Development Department of \$3,000,000 per year for homelessness programs.

As the Task Force works to report its conclusions and recommendations, the following issues will be considered:

1. Organizational structures that optimize the contributions of providers, government agencies, school districts, people who are and were homeless, as well as the public.
2. Shared performance metrics that promote community understanding of the issue of homelessness and the progress made towards goals.
3. Creation by the City Council of a Task Force of key, public and private partners to identify the resources from both public and private sources necessary to create/ identify at least 544 additional units of permanent supportive housing.

¹⁵ [CoC Strategic Plan](#)

4. Leadership from elected officials in securing and incenting needed partnerships and to establish policies and practices that encourage and support the creation and maintenance of not only permanent supportive housing units but quality affordable housing for our City's working poor dispersed throughout the City.
5. How the City of Fort Worth can continue to promote and encourage community participation in best practice efforts to end homelessness to foster partnerships and encourage collaborative problem solving.

Next Steps

The Task Force plans to conclude its work by July 8, 2014 and the final report will be presented to Council by July 22, 2014.

Date	Action
June 10	Deliver interim report to Council
June 17	Receive briefing on communication, coordination, and collaboration
June 24	Open house and public comment
July 8	Review and approve final report
July 22	Final report presented to Council