

## Executive Summary

More than 6,300 people experience homelessness each year in Tarrant County – around 4,000 at any point-in-time. 52% of our community’s homeless have a disability and 29% are children.

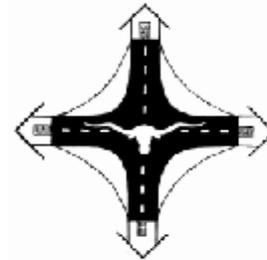


Around three-quarters of our homeless neighbors regain housing in relatively short order; the remaining 25% live on our streets and in our emergency shelters for extended periods of time, ricocheting between expensive, ad hoc, reactive systems like hospitals, jails and emergency shelters that do not provide them with permanent housing.

People become homeless for a variety of reasons: bad luck, bad circumstances, bad choices, or, more commonly a combination of things that spiral out of control. Unemployment, lack of finances, domestic violence, criminal background, mental illness, substance abuse and other disabilities both cause homelessness and create barriers to ending it. All of these conditions, of course, are aggravated by an acute shortage of quality, affordable housing.

Homelessness – especially *chronic homelessness*<sup>1</sup> – is expensive to public systems and detrimental to the health of persons who endure it. Ending homelessness is both cost-effective and the right thing to do.

10-year Homelessness Plans are a national “best practice” recommended by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Plans like this one have been adopted by all but 3 of the 50 largest cities in the United States (Fort Worth, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Arlington, TX) and are documenting success in reducing the incidence and duration of homelessness.



The *Directions Home* logo was designed by artist and poet Monte Woods, resident of Presbyterian Night Shelter, Fort Worth, Texas. The logo combines streets, homes and the Fort Worth “Molly” on a compass face to show that “all roads need to lead to a home.”

<sup>1</sup> Chronic Homelessness as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) includes unaccompanied individuals with disabling conditions who have been continuously homeless for one year or who have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness within the last three years. For a discussion, see Appendix H: National Alliance to End Homelessness brief on Chronic Homelessness.

| <i>Directions Home</i> |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Vision                 | Homelessness will be a <b>rare, short-term</b> and <b>non-recurring</b> experience in Fort Worth, Texas by the year 2018  |
| Goals                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Homelessness will be rare:</b> <i>every year fewer households will fall out of housing and into homelessness.</i></li> <li>2. <b>Homelessness will be short-term:</b> <i>no one will be homeless more than 12 months—ending chronic homelessness in our community.<sup>2</sup></i></li> <li>3. <b>Homelessness will be non-recurring:</b> <i>homelessness will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.</i></li> </ol>  |
| Strategies             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the Supply of Permanent Supportive Housing</li> <li>2. Expand Opportunities and Services Linked with Accountability</li> <li>3. Develop and Operate a Central Resource Facility</li> <li>4. Coordinate and Expand Homelessness Prevention Initiatives</li> <li>5. Support and Strengthen Existing Public, Private and Faith-based Efforts</li> <li>6. Mitigate the Negative Community Impacts of Homelessness</li> <li>7. Lead, Educate and Advocate for Change</li> </ol> |

Successful implementation of this plan will require the efforts of many organizations and individuals: local and state government, the business community, faith-based organizations, foundations, homeless services providers, volunteers, donors, landlords, employers, health care organizations and, of course, the homeless themselves.

Plan implementation will require additional financial resources. The plan includes high-, medium- and low-cost implementation strategies. As a new and critical partner in the county-wide effort to end homelessness, the City of Fort Worth is asked to make specific investments in housing, housing vouchers, the delivery of centralized services and other key plan components.

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<sup>2</sup> By definition, chronic homelessness includes individuals who have been homeless over 12 months.

We spent over \$30 million dollars in Tarrant County responding to homelessness in Fiscal Year 2007. Strikingly, only about one-third of those dollars were spent *proactively* in providing services and housing for two-thirds of the homeless population. Around \$20 million was spent reacting to the homelessness of around 1,200 people: fire department 911 response, emergency room health care, jail and mental health services.

There are more than 1,000 people in Tarrant County living in our emergency shelters and on our streets. The cost and effort required to house these residents will be significant; however, the cost of doing nothing will be even greater and we are not a community to shy away from hard work when it comes to addressing our shortcomings and helping our neighbors.

Full funding and implementation of this plan will provide housing and supportive services for 300 people in its first year – including 100 of the most ill people on our streets and in our emergency shelters.

This plan is not a cookie cutter: it is tailored to Fort Worth realities and acknowledges that “directions home” are as diverse as the individuals who live here. This plan is bold: it calls for civic leadership, community action and personal responsibility. This plan will save lives, revitalize neighborhoods and “secure the blessings of liberty” for our community’s most vulnerable residents. This plan will help everyone find their unique direction home.

#### Irish

Irish was a frequent consumer of the Day Resource Center. Anyone could spot her out of the crowd because she always came in to the center in the morning wearing her hard hat and boots because she had just completed her overnight shift at Ranch Style Beans. After leaving an abusive relationship two years ago with just the clothes on her back, she had found herself on the streets of Lancaster. Irish had never graduated high school, had difficulties reading, and had a criminal background due to a previous drug addiction. All these issues served as significant obstacles for her to get off the streets. However, despite her situation she had maintained employment for two years at the Ranch Style Beans factory. In January 2008 Irish talked to a social worker at the Day Resource Center about housing. This worker helped her fill out housing applications and she was eventually approved for the Transitional Housing Program through the Day Resource Center. On March 7, 2008 Irish signed her lease for her very first apartment. Her goal is to finish her GED and to go to truck driving school someday.

