

Strategies For Addressing Homelessness in Independence

Scope of the Problem

- Numbers of Homeless on the rise
- Reasons include COVID impact on economy and unemployment, and increased migration from KCMO
- Local impacts include more Homeless camps in Parks, public & private property, and more people living in vehicles in area parking lots

Search for Solutions

- City Inter-Departmental task force appointed by City Manger
- Research of Best Practices
- Conversations with Community Partners
- Exploration of Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

Strategy Elements Identified

- Outreach Team
- Services & Support
- Housing

Outreach Team Best Practices

- **Law Enforcement Representatives**
- **Service Provider Representatives**
- **Mental Health Professional**
- **Social Worker for referral and follow up**
- **Fire Dept. Community Paramedicine Professional**

Outreach Team Independence

- **Police Department** (1 officer currently, 2 Gen. Fund vacancies, additional help funded through Prop P)
- **CSL** representative (currently involved)
- **Mental Health Professional** (CMHS professional funded with MARC Shared Services Initiative grant)
- **Social Worker** (above grant may assist with this)
- **Fire Dept.** (exploring Community Paramedicine)

Services & Support

- Many services available in Independence area to help homeless with a variety of issues
- **Social Worker** needed for referral & follow-up
- No **Drop-In Center** for showers, laundry, access to various services (Unity Center a partial one)
- No local **Mental Health Crisis Center**, closest is in KCMO, bed space limited

Housing

- Housing First Approach is a Best Practice
- Housing needs to go hand-in-hand with Services & Support
- **Housing Study** needed to determine number and type of housing units needed

Housing Assets

- Extreme Weather Shelters
- Temporary Transitional/Supportive Housing
- Long-term Supportive Housing
- Long-term Affordable Housing
- Pathways to Home Ownership

Housing

Extreme Weather Sheltering

- Sermon Center & TMB (limited hours)
- Hotel voucher program (CSL & PRT, dependent on available funds and vacancies)
- Faith-Based Temporary Sheltering (6 churches enrolled in program through City Emergency Preparedness Division)

Housing

Temporary Transitional/Supportive Housing

- A few excellent facilities exist for families (Crossroads, Hillcrest) but number of units limited
- Few assets available for single persons with substance abuse issues. ReStart in KCMO a good example in the area.

Housing

Long-Term Supportive Housing

- Lack of Long-Term Supportive Housing currently in Independence (housing provided with support services offered on a voluntary basis to individuals, including those with substance abuse issues)

Housing

Long-Term Affordable Rental Housing

- There are several affordable apartment units for rent in Independence, including Hawthorne Place, (the largest in Missouri with 745 units and 2,000 residents), Independence Housing Authority, etc.
- CSL has a limited number of affordable rental homes available

Housing

Pathways to Home Ownership

- A small percentage of Homeless are in a position to pursue affordable home ownership.
- Transitioning renters to homeowners frees up affordable/subsidized rental units for others.
- Quality infill housing can revive neighborhoods and contribute to individual & community prosperity.

Housing

- Established programs in Independence include Hawthorne Place Family Self-Sufficiency Program, City HOMES Program, Habitat for Humanity.
- New initiatives include HOOPS non-profit program for infill housing, City working with Land Trust for lot clearance, Chamber housing committee, Englewood housing initiative.

Summary of Identified Needs

- **Outreach Team:** need to add more special Police personnel through Prop P, start Community Paramedicine, and add more Social Worker services.
- **Services & Support:** need to acquire services of Social Worker for evaluation, referral, follow-up, support, explore Crisis Center, Drop-In Center.
- **Housing:** need a Housing Study leading to the addition of new quality housing of various types.

Conclusions

- City can't do it alone – a community effort needed
- Independence can't do it alone – a regional effort needed
- Parallel strategies needed to strengthen Outreach Team, provide Services & Support, and develop Housing in accordance with a Housing Plan

Questions?