



Legislation Details (With Text)

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 17, 2018
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Update in Regard to the Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness Strategic Plan.

ISSUE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the progress and status of the Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive this report.

BACKGROUND: The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness (the “Partnership”) is made up of public and private non-profit homeless, housing, and social services providers, faith-based and educational institutions, advocates, former homeless consumers, and other community stakeholders, and serves as the homeless service Continuum of Care (CoC) for the City of Alexandria. The Partnership develops and implements The Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria, and manages the delivery of homeless prevention and emergency services to persons experiencing housing instability in Alexandria.

In July of 2014, The Partnership updated and approved Alexandria's Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which was presented at the City Council Work Session on September 23, 2014. The Plan's vision that, "Within the City of Alexandria, no one should experience homelessness - no one should be without a safe, suitable, and stable place to call home," includes the following four goals to ensure that Alexandria has an effective and efficient system to prevent and end homelessness:

- Goal 1: Increase Leadership, Collaboration, and Civic Engagement
- Goal 2: Increase Access to and Availability of Stable and Affordable Housing
- Goal 3: Increase Economic and Health Security
- Goal 4: Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System

The Plan aligns with the City's Strategic Plan and was updated to coincide with other City Council approved plans, including the Housing Master Plan.

DISCUSSION: The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness has numerous accomplishments in the goal areas outlined in the Strategic Plan. Progress to date includes:

Increase Leadership, Collaboration, and Civic Engagement

- Functionally ended Veteran Homelessness in the City of Alexandria.
- 100% Participation in HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report each year.
- Collaboration with INOVA Alexandria Hospital when discharging clients from the ER.
- Addition of 3 questions about housing and homelessness to the Youth Risk Behavior Study.
- Adoption of Rapid Rehousing Benchmarks and successfully application for State Housing Trust Funds.
- 100% participation of all homeless services providers in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- Delivery of HMIS training and technical assistance to all CoC service providers and new staff.

Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing

- Increased diversion rates, by nearly 200% since 2014 (50% of families and 9% of singles are diverted from entering shelter).
- Decreased street homelessness, showing 35% fewer since 2015
- Addition of two Permanent Supportive Housing units in 2015 for chronically homeless individuals through HUD's CoC bonus funding competition.
- Increased Rapid Rehousing funds in the community by 63% through state and federal funding opportunities to total \$779,500.
- Formation of Veterans House for three formally homeless veterans.
- Support the Redevelopment of Carpenters Shelter to include an additional 97 units of affordable housing with 10 units targeted at 30% of AMI.
- Support the development of a Pilot Rental Subsidy Program to create deeply affordable units within new Low Income Housing Tax Credit Projects.

Increase Economic and Health Security

- Certification of five case managers in Social Security Income/ Social Security Disability Income Outreach Access and Recovery (SOAR) to increase client access to Social Security benefits.
- Implementation of an Employment Navigator in collaboration with the Workforce

Development Center, for employment services linkages to address the employment needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

- Employment Committee comprised of service providers and private sector employers, hosted job fairs for homeless clients.
- Department of Health nursing staff visit Emergency Shelters to provide basic health needs to residents.

Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System

- Same day access for assessments with Homeless Services Assessment Center.
- Development and management of a roster of Veterans, and Chronically Homeless residents in Alexandria to expedite engagement and access to services and housing referrals.
- Establishment of standard operating procedures for Rapid Rehousing that align with national benchmarks.
- Production of a robust training curriculum for homeless service providers including, trauma informed care, crisis intervention skills, Landlord Tenant Rights, and LGBTQ equal access.
- 100% emergency shelter participation state's Learning Collaborative on Low Barrier Emergency Shelters.

Point in Time (PIT) Count

The annual enumeration of homeless households, held in late January across the county, provides an unduplicated “snapshot” of persons experiencing homelessness in a community as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. During Alexandria 2018's Point in Time Count, 226 people were identified as experiencing homelessness. While this constitutes a 15 person increase from 2017, there has been a 46% overall decline in Alexandria's PIT count since 2011. Of the 226 persons counted on January 24, 2018, 142 were single adult households and 29 households with children. The City of Alexandria experienced the largest reduction in unsheltered homelessness in the region, at 35%. Fifty-five percent of adults in families and 28% of single adults were employed on the night of the count. An additional 39% of single adults receive Social Security Disability Income. While most households have income, it is not enough to pay for housing in the City of Alexandria.

Next Steps in Homeless Services

The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness tracks and analyzes data at the client, program, and system level to make informed decisions about service delivery and future trends. In 2020 the Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness will expire, allowing the Partnership the opportunity to update their approach to meet the current homeless services needs in Alexandria. Several system gaps have been identified that must be addressed to continue the progress made thus far. These gaps fall into three larger categories: affordable housing for multiple subpopulations; supportive services to address the more complex needs; and dedicated resources necessary to continue preventing and ending homelessness at the current rate.

The Affordable Housing Landscape

There is a lack of affordable housing for households at 30% Area Median Income (AMI) and below in Alexandria, forcing residents to seek homeless prevention or emergency shelter services. According to the 2017 Out of Reach Report, in the City of Alexandria, a person earning the minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) in 2017 would need to work 185 hours per week or \$69,745 to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent (FMR) of \$1,744. The lowest-income residents face significant challenges affording housing, particularly as increased demand drives up rental rates making otherwise affordable units too expensive.

The Office of Housing has reported an 88% decrease in the number of market affordable units in the City since 2000. The Partnership will continue to advocate and support the Housing Master Plan's Strategies for goals one and two. Other possible solutions to the low-income housing gap include an expansion of the local rental subsidy pilot program.

The lack of affordable housing options also impacts those households currently living in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs who no longer require intensive supportive service. There are 47 PSH units operating within the City of Alexandria, providing a rental subsidy, intensive case management, and supportive services for clients with disabling conditions. The average length of stay in Alexandria PSH is 4 years, yet some clients are capable of moving sooner to units with only a rental subsidy. Communities across the country are working with their local public housing authorities and local governments to address this issue through "moving on" programs. PSH clients identified with low service need can be prioritized for Housing Choice vouchers and local subsidies, allowing them to move to a more independent housing situation, freeing the resource heavy PSH unit for a new chronically homeless client.

Communities such as Philadelphia have also created a supportive housing model for persons experiencing homelessness who suffer from substance use disorders. Often clients with these disorders do not qualify for HUD funded PSH. Communities have created harm reduction housing using local subsidies and supportive services as a way to engage clients in the recovery process.

Health and Homelessness

Much like national trends, the City of Alexandria is more recently noticing the effects age and years living outdoors have had on the health and wellbeing of clients. During 2018's PIT count, 25% of the population was over the age of 55 and many reported extended periods of homelessness and chronic health conditions affecting a wide range of health risks. The Partnership will be focusing on the social determinants of health and partnering with the health care system. CoC members attended the state's first ever Home Remedies symposium on housing and health this summer. Progressive communities around the country are partnering with local hospital systems to create permanent supportive housing for frequent users of hospitals and homeless services, and the Alexandria CoC has begun discussions to track that data.

Future Outlook

Funding for homeless services is becoming increasingly competitive and scarce with even the most vital Federal programs being threatened in recent years. Even with level funding success is not guaranteed as this does not account for the increases in regional housing costs and the need for additional services. The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness has been successful in applying for Federal Housing and Urban Development dollars and for state money and has demonstrated that targeted resources prevent and reduce homelessness. The Partnership will continue to work together to focus on the most effective approaches to achieve the goals of the plan and to support the success of our residents.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

ATTACHMENT: Presentation

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

Kate Garvey, Director, Department of Community and Human Services