



A Community

LOOK AT ST. LOUIS COUNTY'S
TEN YEAR **Plan To End**
Homelessness

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INTRODUCTION

“Homelessness is as wrong and unjust today as it has always been.”

—Steve O’Neil, in his address to the summit

On May 2, 2013, a summit was held at First United Methodist Church in Duluth to review the St. Louis County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. CHUM and Loaves & Fishes co-sponsored the event.

The summit grew out of two challenging realities, and a reason for hope.

The first reality is that six years into a community plan to end homelessness more of our neighbors than ever are struggling to meet their basic needs. Agencies across the county have seen a dramatic rise in requests for rent assistance, food, shelter and other emergency services. This is part of a national trend made worse by economic recession and lack of political will in Washington D.C. to address poverty and inequality. Increased need in St. Louis County does not mean that our plan has failed. It does mean that we need to reevaluate our goals and markers, and redouble our efforts.

The second reality is that communication has not always flowed smoothly between service providers, local government bodies, funders and the leadership council that

guides and implements the Ten Year Plan. As conversations among these stakeholders have centered around allocation of limited federal and state funds, many community activists and people experiencing poverty have struggled to find their role in this ambitious community plan of action.

Still, there is hope. The creation of the Ten Year Plan brought together non-profit agencies, local government bodies, activists, faith communities, business leaders, academics and people who have personal experience of homelessness with the common purpose to address a human and economic crisis facing our community. In the process, we inspired and made possible new models of supportive housing like the San Marco in Duluth and New Moon in Bois Forte that have helped hundreds of people find a life of stability and dignity. We have developed avenues for agencies to work together toward common goals rather than compete over funding. We have ushered in a new era of cooperation and communication between Duluth police, mental and chemical health workers and homeless outreach workers. The compassion, creativity and commitment that marked the early years of the Ten Year Plan is very much alive. We have made great strides, in spite of difficult economic times. With renewed commitment and collaboration, a St. Louis County where everyone has access to safe and affordable housing is within reach.

VISION STATEMENT

The purpose of the summit is to assess progress on the St. Louis County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness by identifying which goals have been met, which goals have yet to be realized, and which goals should be updated in light of the changing face of homelessness and growing numbers of people impacted by the crisis. We hope to use the Ten Year Plan as a stepping stone to stir community action to decrease homelessness in St. Louis County; foster better communication between service providers, advocates, St. Louis County, City of Duluth and those experiencing homelessness; and create an overarching community awareness of homelessness.

The four-hour summit on May 2 was a starting point to reconnect and revitalize our work. Seventy-four people participated in the summit, some because they had experience of being homeless, others representing the Duluth Landlord Association, LSS, HDC, Center City Housing, Red Lake Urban Office, Salvation Army, SOAR, CHUM, Loaves & Fishes, Project Save Our Homes, MPIRG, AIC-HO, Duluth HRA, City of Duluth, CADT, SLC Health and Human Services, Heading Home SLC Leadership Council, Life House, Community Action Duluth, AEOA, ISD 709 (Duluth Public Schools), First United Methodist Church, MACV, Bois Forte, Duluth Police Department, One Roof and LISC.

Prior to the summit, organizers surveyed area service providers for their perspectives on what was working and not working within the Ten Year Plan and the leadership structure that guides it. From that input, we developed six goals for further discussion at the summit. Each goal linked to strategies within the Ten Year Plan and was worked on by a facilitated group of eight to ten people. Groups were charged with describing the current reality of homelessness as related to that goal, what the dream of solving that problem would look like, and how delivery of solutions might be accomplished. Content of the discussion in those working groups follows in this report.

The full document Heading Home St. Louis County: A Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness is available here: www.stlouiscountymn.gov/GOVERNMENT/BoardsCommittees/HeadingHomeCommittee/tabid/2421/yhtab/5801_1/Default.aspx

St. Louis County's Ten Year Plan was formulated using the 2003 Wilder Foundation Point In Time Survey numbers. The same survey saw a 41% increase in homeless individuals in St. Louis County in 2012.

WILDER FOUNDATION POINT IN TIME SURVEY DATA:

2003: 533 total homeless people in SLC
2012: 752 total homeless people in SLC

CHUM EMERGENCY SHELTER DATA (DULUTH):

2003: 637 individuals served
68 families served
2012: 1079 individuals served
75 families served

GOAL 1

Making numbers and goals within the Ten Year Plan reflect the changing state of homelessness in St. Louis County

Goal 1 relates to all strategies of the Ten Year Plan

Focus on Strategy D “Expand Direct Prevention Programming” (pp31); Strategy F “Develop Housing Opportunities” (pp33-35); Strategy H “Provide Coordinated Outreach” (pp37-38); Strategy L “Mental & Chemical Health” (pp45-46)

This group struggled to compare what they experience in the field and in their own lives with what is described and called for within the Ten Year Plan. There is concern among all present about the increased incidence of homelessness and the complexity of the needs presented in that population.

Changes since the Ten Year Plan was formulated:

The trend is worse in all ways. There are more cases of homelessness; economic recession has exacerbated the lack of affordable housing and shortage of living wage jobs; and there is less funding available for almost all aspects of homeless advocacy and public services. This group identified three key changes since the Ten Year Plan was adopted:

Housing availability

Momentum behind the Ten Year Plan led to the development of new supportive housing projects across SLC. Still, there has been a net loss of affordable housing in our region. Duluth alone has lost hundreds of units of low-cost housing to hospital expansion and other development and the closing of the Gardner, Carter Hotel and Kozy Apartments. Public housing and Section 8 waiting lists are so long that HRAs are often forced to consider not accepting more applicants. HUD regulations continue to limit access to public housing for people with criminal histories, and the quality of privately owned affordable apartments is poor.

Housing market conditions overall have worsened and become too competitive, effectively squeezing out people with low incomes, poor rental history and other barriers.

Racial discrimination and discrimination against people with mental illness is a persistent obstacle to housing for many people living in SLC.

Profile of those who experience homelessness

Family homelessness is of particular concern and is on the rise. More young children are experiencing homelessness and as a result often fall behind their peers in social, emotional and academic development. Transient youth sometimes do not realize they are homeless or know where to turn for help.

Unaccompanied youth and other populations considered “hardest to house” are getting harder to house. Some individuals experiencing homelessness are re-offending in order to go to jail. More people are experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness, and there is a prevalence of undiagnosed mental illness and generational homelessness.

Drugs

Drugs have always been available, but the ease of access to synthetics and heroin is alarming. Drug use during pregnancy leads to mental and physical disabilities and generational homelessness. Youth using these new drugs often end up with mental or physical disabilities and a lack of life skills.

What has worked well since the Plan was created:

The Heading Home SLC Leadership Council, Affordable Housing Coalition, Rural Housing Coalition, and CIG have enhanced collaboration and communication between service providers, local government bodies and funders. New affordable and supportive housing has been built or is in the process of development, including: Hillside Apartments, Firehouse Flats, San Marco, Gimaajii, New Moon and Virginia Youth Foyer. These projects will benefit the community for years to come, especially if they maintain a strong connection between the property and service providers and more follow-up with clients.

Action steps:

Outreach

CHUM and HDC provide excellent outreach, but there

is a need for more, especially in northern SLC. People are relying more heavily on mental health workers for outreach and outreach workers increasingly must become housing advocates. We need to encourage conversation, cooperation and outreach among all providers given that individuals experiencing homelessness are often willing to talk to some providers and not others.

Employment

Increase efforts to ensure stable housing alongside job creation and training. The Duluth Chamber of Commerce is concerned about access to housing as a workforce issue for people who have employment; for the unemployed it is considerably worse. Training is needed to address the gap between having a GED and being employment ready.

Funding

Providers should be trained and licensed to bill Medicaid or Medicare for services related to youth drug use and emotional problems connected to homelessness. Local funding sources must be developed because state and federal funding is insufficient. Vigilance and persistent advocacy are required to ensure that increases in revenue result in the poorest getting the majority share.

Housing

Create and maintain affordable housing across the spectrum: supportive non-profit housing units; subsidized public housing units; and affordable private units. There need to be multiple options so renters are not forced to rely on substandard conditions or a location that complicates access to other services. There is a great need for more transitional and supportive housing for ex-offenders.

Suggestions for Ten Year Plan coordination:

- Bring together service providers, recipients and other stakeholders on an annual basis to review the Plan, set new goals, and celebrate accomplishments. This review should result in an annual dashboard of changes and action items moving forward. Include youth and family service providers: entire families must be included in plans.

- A five-year update was mandated within the Plan but not done. Heading Home SLC Leadership Council in collaboration with service providers should develop a report card to deliver to the City of Duluth and SLC Board, enumerating successes and identifying current issues.
- Align HEARTH Act and other federal, state, and local policy with the Ten Year Plan. HUD drives the conversation, but the Ten Year Plan is about St. Louis County and must reflect local issues.

GOAL 2

Prevention of homelessness

Related strategies in the Ten Year Plan:

Strategy A: "Policy Advocacy/Systems Change" (pp27-28); Strategy B "Engaging Landlords/Eviction Prevention" (p29); Strategy C: "Discharge Planning" (p30); Strategy D "Expand Direct Prevention Programming" (p31); Strategy E "Housing First Philosophy" (p32); Strategy F "Develop Housing Opportunities" (pp33-35)

This group was responsible for assessing prevention efforts in light of new economic and social realities facing individuals, local governments and service providers. It is clear that more people in our community are falling into debt and struggling to make rent and mortgage payments, and more people are experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness. Successful prevention requires one-on-one advocacy, adequate funding, and local policies to protect the right to safe and affordable housing.

What is currently working well regarding prevention of homelessness in SLC:

- FHPAP/Salvation Army rental assistance.
- MACV veterans' programming.
- Local HRAs.
- Advocacy and mediation to prevent eviction provided by Legal Aid and Salvation Army.
- Harm reduction and housing first models.

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- Supportive services and more on-site case management

What has changed in prevention of homelessness since creation of Ten Year Plan?

- SLC financial workers have been replaced by teams
- There are fewer staff and caseloads are too big
- Coordination within government groups is lacking
- Increased drug use among people experiencing and at risk of homelessness

Areas for improvement:

- Discharge planning from medical and corrections facilities was a goal of the Ten Year Plan but has not been successfully implemented.
- Access to mental health care, including emergency mental health beds, extended care and long-term supportive housing. Bridge House has closed since the Ten Year Plan was adopted.
- Communication between SLC and service providers.

Action steps:

- Bring together service providers and hospitals/corrections facilities to foster communication; to develop protocol for discharge planning with a goal of never discharging people into homelessness; and to identify gaps in the system including insufficient supportive and transitional housing.
- Streamline reporting and utilize a common release and application for services, increase opportunities for county-wide online communication and data-sharing
- Look into ways for social services to more easily get representative payees.
- Seek grant money for cell phones for people who are at risk of homelessness to improve communication with service providers, landlords and employers.
- Re-evaluate SLC social service team model, with input from service recipients. The system was developed with the intention of improving efficiency and user-friend-

liness, but it is not working. People get bounced from worker to worker and often wait on hold for long periods of time, complicating efforts to get timely assistance that may prevent homelessness.

GOAL 3

Restoring connectivity and collaboration between service providers, advocates, government agencies, and those experiencing homelessness

Related strategies in the Ten Year Plan:

Strategy E “Housing First Philosophy”(p32); Strategy F “Develop Housing Opportunities”(pp33-35); Strategy G “No Wrong Door Coordination”(p36); Strategy H “Provide Coordinated Outreach” (pp37-38)

This group was tasked with looking at ways we can better work together as a team, value the perspectives and skills of all stakeholders, and foster open communication between decision makers, service providers and service recipients.

Successes of collaboration:

- Duluth Police Department has worked well with HDC/CHUM to help avoid conflicts and resolve issues that may arise with both newly homeless and long-term homeless individuals.
- Families in Transition program and the Duluth Public Schools.
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) collaboration and record keeping.
- HOPE (Help & Opportunity in Pursuit of Employment) at Community Action Duluth.

Areas for improvement:

- Representatives of the DPD expressed a need for better training and lists of contacts and services for people who are experiencing homelessness. Currently, calls and problems tend to flow to Deb Holman.
- Work as a team to diagnose root causes of homelessness

for individuals and not simply perpetuate a cycle of being picked up by police and dropped at a facility.

- Follow-up is spotty because agencies make referrals but their caseloads are too heavy.
- People experiencing homelessness are faced with too much paperwork and not enough direction on where to get help; sometimes they give up before they find it.
- Interagency competition for funds can lead to duplication of services and slow the flow of resources to people in need.

Action Steps:

- Coordinated intake and assessment for people experiencing homelessness by October 2013.
- A clear and regularly updated list of agencies along with the services that they provide made available to all service providers, DPD and SLC Sheriff's Department.
- Increased opportunities for private developers and housing organizations to collaborate on affordable housing development.
- Increased opportunities for agencies to communicate with each other about services offered, services needed, and best use of available funding — a funders' collaborative for homeless services could help reduce competition as well as grant-writing paperwork.

GOAL 4

Foster connections between realities and services needed in order to minimize “behind the desk” work and maximize impact with those receiving services

Strategies within Ten Year Plan Connected to Goal 4:

Strategy I: “Case Management” (pp39-40) Strategy J: “Special Supports for Children & Youth” (pp41-42) Strategy K: “Building Capacity for Self Support” (pp43-44) Strategy L: “Mental & Chemical Health Services” (pp45-56)

Funders and service providers each face harsh decisions about how to best utilize limited financial resources for maximum impact toward ending homelessness. Technical questions related to funding and data collection might be difficult to understand for people not directly working with the maze of federal, state and private sources and reporting requirements. While it is an important conversation, it can also be an obstacle to greater community involvement in efforts to end homelessness. Organizers made sure this break-out group included community activists and people who have experienced homelessness, who were able to offer critical input on what matters most to people living in poverty and keep the conversation from becoming too tangled in acronyms.

Examples of funding sources and services providers working together effectively:

- HEARTH Act long-term homeless funding copilot.
- Providing Leadership Council with demonstrated information and data to prove problems.
- CIG and case management coordination with law enforcement.
- Wilder Foundation data collection from many counties keeps pressure on funders and service providers.

Areas for improvement:

- There is room for improving HMIS, and this should be done in consultation with service providers. Some helpful data is not included, such as family break-down. Services providers are frustrated by not always knowing what is expected of them and frustrated at having to back-enter data when new questions are added. There is a need for greater access to data by service providers and funders to cut down on research and ensure money is allocated where most needed.
- A mandated payee system through Social Security in coordination with local agencies would greatly increase chances that people will have enough money saved to move into housing and provide for other basic needs.

- More cooperation and communication is needed between SLC social services and agencies.
- Cut down on ARMHS and HMIS paperwork so direct service providers can spend more time working with clients. Capacity for mobile HMIS data entry may help.
- More money is needed for long-term supportive service staff, not just bricks and mortar. Youth and people who have experienced generational homelessness, chemical dependency and mental illness need support in order to maintain housing.
- Prioritize development of youth shelter beds. It is traumatizing for youth to move to CHUM.
- Give people more transition time on Medical Assistance when income improves.
- Team system at social services is not working.
- Better tracking of turnaways needed.
- More opportunities must be created for intervention and employment/life skills education in the schools (STEPS as an example).
- Better coordination and communication between people working in the field, people experiencing homelessness, people collecting technical data and Heading Home Leadership Council.
- More political power and leadership to address homeless issues and lobby for effective funding priorities — we need more Steve O’Neils elected, better education for current office holders, and coordinated lobbying and advocacy instead of competition for funding.

Action steps:

- Revamp DIC to be more people friendly.
- Meet with Social Security to discuss better cooperation with local service providers and possibilities of a mandated payee system.
- Convene a meeting between agencies, SLC and Wilder Foundation to discuss improvements to HMIS and foster better communications between those entering data and those trying to access data.

- Develop an open, county-wide system to coordinate services.
- Maintain an up to date list of high priority issues facing the homeless to better prioritize funding and lobbying efforts. This could be developed at an annual summit.

GOAL 5

Increasing engagement with whole community

4 Goals of the Ten Year Plan:

(1) Prevent new occurrences of homelessness, (2) Shorten length of homelessness and rapidly re-house in the most permanent arrangement, (3) expand access points to housing and services, and (4) increase supports needed to maintain housing

The Ten Year Plan is a document by and for the community. Efforts to end homelessness can only be successful if they include the voices and participation of all stakeholders, including people who have experienced poverty, neighborhood organizations, faith communities, employers and landlords.

The conversation in this break-out group centered on two areas: landlord engagement and public education. A representative of a local landlord association offered insight into some of the reasons why landlords are reluctant to rent to individuals with Section 8 vouchers, as well as possible solutions. Participants also noted a general lack of awareness of homelessness in SLC and brainstormed ways to engage, inform and encourage participation from the entire community.

What has worked well since the Ten Year Plan was adopted:

- CIG and improved communication with law enforcement and service providers.
- Greater awareness of homelessness among members of Leadership Duluth and other professionals.
- Coordinated, broad-based efforts to relocate Kozy residents and save the Seaway Hotel.

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- Continued faith community engagement, particularly through CHUM.

Areas for improvement:

- Tenant union organizing and tenant-landlord education.
- Public education on homelessness, the Ten Year Plan and housing first and harm reduction models.
- Opportunities for the public to volunteer and create change.
- Coordination between police, service providers and landlords to intervene with problem tenants, and incentives for landlords to rent to people with criminal or poor rental history.

Action steps:

- Encourage more community-based programs and volunteer opportunities to fill gaps in the system. Examples include CHUM's overflow family shelter, Loaves & Fishes, volunteer outreach teams, tenant unions and housing activist groups.
- Develop and offer regular local tenant/landlord trainings in collaboration with landlord associations, non-profit housing agencies and Legal Aid.
- Work with local government to create incentives for landlords to invest in vacant properties with a focus of housing individuals with multiple barriers.
- Host material drives for street outreach and that include opportunities for education about homelessness.
- Improve on cooperation between DPD and service providers, and work to create trainings for officers on a common response when dealing with individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Reach out to the business community to educate and engage them on issues of homelessness. Focus on the cost effectiveness of projects like San Marco and street outreach.

GOAL 6

Policies to protect everyone's right to safe, affordable and adequate housing

Strategies within Ten Year Plan Connected to Goal 6:

*Strategy A "Policy Advocacy/Systems Change" (pp27-28);
Strategy B "Engaging Landlords/Eviction Prevention (p29);
Strategy D "Expand Direct Prevention Programming" (p31);
Strategy E "Housing First Philosophy" (p32)*

A common theme in provider survey responses was frustration at their reliance on "band-aid" solutions to homelessness, rather than addressing systemic causes of poverty. While much of the needed systems change to end homelessness must happen well beyond the borders of SLC, there is plenty of room to effect positive policy changes within local agencies and governments.

Participants in this break-out group agreed that political advocacy is a critical tool in the fight against homelessness and should engage and take leadership from people directly impacted by homelessness and poverty.

What has worked well since the Ten Year Plan was adopted:

- Cooperation between law enforcement and service providers to assist homeless individuals, as well as state Crime Free Multi-Housing model for dealing with problem tenants and landlords.
- Greater awareness of and support for a housing first model. San Marco is an example of public advocacy winning over initial public skepticism.
- Helpful HRA policies, including strict building safety requirements. Range HRAs have also been successful in reducing evictions for problem behavior by using a combination of early warning letters and collaboration with providers of supportive services.
- Expanded definition of homelessness under the HEARTH Act to include victims of domestic violence, people living in emergency shelter and substandard housing, and people in immediate danger of eviction.

- Local policies and government programs to protect housing rights, including the Mayor’s Task Force on Foreclosures in Duluth; Duluth Human Rights Office; resource letters sent to tenants whose buildings are at risk of condemnation (City of Duluth 2013), to homeowners at risk of bank foreclosure (City of Duluth 2007), and to homeowners at risk of tax forfeiture (SLC 2012).
- Successful community organizing by CHUM and Loaves & Fishes, including support for tenant associations, anti-foreclosure advocacy, and mobilizing a broad-based community effort to save the Seaway Hotel.
- Homeless prevention funds/FHPAP.
- Legal Aid tenant advocacy and mediation and assistance with HRA appeals.
- Advocacy for ex-offenders through SOAR, including development of positive relationships with private landlords and successful advocacy with Duluth HRA.
- Increased supportive services for military veterans.

Areas for improvement:

- HRA policies are too restrictive for people who have felony convictions, have previously been evicted from public housing or cannot afford minimum rent.
- People of color, ex-offenders, and people living with mental illness continue to face discrimination in housing and employment. Landlords can legally discriminate against people with felony convictions and cannot legally rent to people under 18 years of age. Unaccompanied youth and ex-offenders are a large and growing segment of the homeless population.
- Cost-effective and supportive alternatives to private board and lodge facilities.
- Better discharge planning from hospitals and prison.
- More accountability from landlords, particularly those who take Section 8 vouchers.
- The closing of the Housing Access Center has left Duluth with significant gaps in housing and tenant advocacy.
- Better system of data sharing between service providers and social workers across SLC.

What is not addressed in the Ten Year Plan:

- The emergency assistance process needs to be streamlined and open to people currently in a corrections facility to reduce risk of being discharged to homelessness.
- The City of Duluth lacks clear policies to protect and replace affordable rental and single-family housing. Many units continue to be lost to development (particularly hospital expansion), landlord negligence, and foreclosure.
- More opportunities are needed for people experiencing poverty to develop the tools to advocate for themselves.
- A community review board could help SLC social services, the medical system and service providers be more responsive and accountable to service recipients and community at large.

Action steps:

- Increase opportunities for long-term supportive services, mentoring, and tenant/landlord education to empower tenants and stop the cycle of generational homelessness.
- Strengthen community organizing and opportunities for people in poverty to advance their own interests. Work together with existing housing agencies, community groups and local government to develop a tenant union/housing access office in Duluth and perhaps elsewhere in SLC.
- Reduce HRA restrictions for ex-offenders and work with police and supportive services to find creative solutions to problem behavior and reduce evictions.
- Require CoC discharge plans from mental health and corrections facilities.
- Create coordinated intake and assessment, so people only need to apply and tell their story once.

GOAL 7

Coordinated Outreach

Strategies within the Ten Year Plan connected to Goal 7

Strategy H “Provide Coordinated Outreach” (pp37-38);

Strategy J “Special Supports for Children and Youth” (pp41-

42); Strategy L “Mental and Chemical Health Services”

(pp45-46)

Coordinated outreach was not initially included in the Summit as a distinct goal, but it was raised in almost every break-out group. Throughout the day it became clear that this frontline of homeless services is severely underfunded and understaffed, even as the population of unsheltered homeless people is growing and synthetic drug use has complicated outreach efforts.

Improved outreach may also be one of the first successes of the Summit. Duluth-area agencies and advocacy groups including Salvation Army, HDC, CHUM, AICHO, Life House and Loaves & Fishes met following the summit to plan for more site-based and mobile outreach opportunities and a corp of 20 trained outreach volunteers to be mobilized by the end of summer 2013.

The points below were compiled from the six summit break-out groups, survey responses, and conversations with outreach workers.

What has worked well since the Ten Year Plan was adopted:

- CIG and generally improved communication and coordination between Duluth City Attorney, Duluth Police Department, SLC Public Health and Human Services, CADT, CHUM, HDC and other agencies.
- Leadership Duluth and media support for outdoor gear drive.
- Outreach to the homeless youth population through Life House and LSS.
- Project Homeless Connect.

Areas for improvement:

- Regular workshops for service providers, business

owners and law enforcement. The Duluth Police Department in particular has expressed frustration at not knowing what services are available, and have worked largely with a single point of contact when dealing with calls involving homeless people. Police and community allies need more education about harm reduction and housing first philosophies.

- Coordinated intake and assessment. Outreach workers spend too much time arranging appointments and filling out applications for clients. Intake and assessment must have multiple points of entry to meet the needs of people who are transient or living with a mental illness or chemical dependency.
- Outreach staff. There is one half-time position for street outreach to the adult homeless population in Duluth. There are no street outreach workers in greater SLC. 24/7/365 outreach will require additional paid or volunteer staff and greater cooperation between agencies.
- Supportive housing units, particularly for people with mental illness, chemical dependency and felony convictions. Lack of supportive housing leads to a revolving door of people moving from emergency shelter to substandard housing and back to the streets.
- Mental/chemical health case management for outreach services. There is a need for MI/CD counselors and other healthcare professionals involved in direct outreach.

What is not addressed in the Ten Year Plan:

- The unsheltered homeless population has increased in SLC. Transitioning people into shelter will require more shelter beds appropriate for individual needs.
- The rise in use of synthetics and other drugs has created new obstacles to outreach efforts, including safety concerns for outreach workers, law enforcement and the community at large.
- City of Duluth ordinances can be used against homeless people (after hours park use, for example). Successful intervention requires both coordination with police and firm policies and ordinances to decriminalize homelessness.

Action steps:

- Fund an additional outreach worker position each for Duluth and northern SLC. Develop teams of trained outreach volunteers.
- The Homeless Emergency Services pocket guide should continue to be updated and distributed to agencies as well as to faith communities that receive frequent calls for assistance.
- Implement coordinated intake and assessment with multiple street-level points of entry.
- Develop additional harm reduction services, in particular needle exchange sites throughout SLC and distribution of survival gear. A tent city or squat would provide safety for unsheltered homeless people, some oversight by law enforcement, and access by outreach workers and other service providers.
- Establish a Homeless Bill of Rights in Duluth and SLC to decriminalize homelessness and provide City and County support to outreach services.
- Institute regular workshops for service providers, health-care professionals, downtown Duluth business owners and law enforcement. Workshops should identify relevant agencies and contact people and educate on housing first and harm reduction philosophies.
- Creative solutions are needed to the synthetics and heroin epidemics. Reduce time between referral, assessment and treatment.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This report is not a data-driven assessment of homelessness in St. Louis County, nor is it an attempt to rewrite the goals and strategies outlined in the original Ten Year Plan. It is a temperature check on efforts to decrease homelessness in St. Louis County, provided through the collective insight of 74 dedicated and knowledgeable service providers, community activists, political leaders, funding partners and people experiencing homelessness.

There was common agreement at the summit that homelessness is a growing problem in St. Louis County. More people are experiencing homelessness, there is less money to provide services needed, and there has been a net loss of affordable housing units. There was also a common commitment at the summit to the success of the Ten Year Plan and to cooperation between all stakeholders toward a shared vision of a St. Louis County in which everyone has a place to call home.

As outlined in the report, each breakout group offered a list of specific action steps to take toward its respective goal. There were repeated calls for more mental health support; more street outreach; a greater emphasis on community organizing, tenant advocacy and policy work; new solutions to address the severity of chemical dependency among the homeless and people at risk of homelessness; more supportive and transitional programs for ex-offenders, youth and other people with high barriers to housing; more education and supportive services for children and youth to break cycles of generational poverty; and a coordinated mechanism for assessment and intake to smooth the path to needed services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

The goal of the summit was not to address all of these unmet needs, though we are hopeful that the conversations that took place during the summit will bring us a step closer to solutions. Our goal was to create space for communication and collaboration going forward. Toward that end, two strong themes emerged from the summit.

The first is a need to build on Ten Year Plan decision-making and communications to be more accessible, transparent and representative of all stakeholders. The decision-mak-

ing bodies that guide the Ten Year Plan have changed in structure and membership since the plan was implemented. Among service providers, there is confusion about what role each group plays, and among the community at-large there is very little awareness of the Ten Year Plan. We need clear lines of communication between service providers, funders, government bodies and the community at large, a seat at the table for everyone involved in the work of decreasing homelessness, and regularly updated assessments of needs on the ground and available resources.

The Ten Year Plan called for annual reviews of the status of homelessness in St. Louis County and revision of action plans to address current needs. This has not happened on an ongoing basis. We submit this report to the Heading Home Leadership Council in the hope that it will serve as a starting point for a broader report card on the progress of the Ten Year Plan, to be made available to the community at large. In addition, we recommend the following steps to help facilitate communication and collaboration:

- Hold an annual summit to assess progress on our efforts and celebrate our successes. Meeting annually will allow us to focus on developing a set of project, funding and policy priorities for the year, rather than re-evaluating the entire plan. The summit should be hosted by service providers, with participation of the Heading Home Leadership Council. Effort should be made to include all stakeholders, including elected officials, representatives of community groups, and people who have experienced homelessness.
- Strengthen policy work and public education through advocacy committees of AHC and RHC. The committees would be tasked with coordinating lobbying efforts among agencies and advocates; advancing local policies to reduce homelessness and to codify the right to housing; and developing a network of advocates to respond to legislation and funding decisions affecting homelessness and homeless services. The committees should include representatives of service providing agencies as well as community groups and tenant associations.
- Provide more opportunities for input and partic-

ipation of people who are homeless or formerly homeless, service providers and community activists in Heading Home SLC decision-making. We strongly recommend increased representation of formerly homeless people and service providers on the Leadership Council and quarterly or semi-annual focus groups involving service providers and people experiencing homelessness to identify gaps in the system. changing community needs and best practices.

- The Heading Home Leadership Council should convene a meeting between Wilder Foundation, SLC and service providers to review HMIS and explore ways to build on and improve the system to be more user friendly and accessible. Input from the Goal 4 break-out group would be helpful in guiding the conversation.

The second theme to emerge from the summit is a call for more community involvement in the work to end homelessness. In an era of seemingly perpetual budget cut-backs, it is critical to build volunteer capacity and make room for creative, community-based solutions to homelessness. While St. Louis County is home to many effective non-profit agencies that deserve our support, a framework that is driven almost entirely by nonprofit and government agencies and foundations does not allow us to harness the full potential of the Ten Year Plan, particularly when it comes to quickly filling gaps in the system to address immediate human needs. The people of St. Louis County are resourceful and compassionate. Outside of social services and non-profit agencies, we are already doing the work to help our neighbors through food drives, mentoring, volunteering, and organizing against bank foreclosures. The Ten Year Plan belongs to the entire community, and its success depends on the knowledge, skills, passions and connections of individuals, faith communities, neighborhood groups, schools, landlord and business associations, and elected bodies across the county.

Loaves & Fishes and CHUM are pleased to offer this report of work undertaken on May 2 by many people committed to the success of the Ten Year Plan. Homelessness is indeed unjust and unnecessary. We dream of a St. Louis

County where everyone has a home, and together we can make that vision a reality. We hope this report serves as a starting point for further community conversation and action.

Respectfully submitted to the Heading Home SLC Leadership Council and to the people of St. Louis County on May 29, 2013 by:

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APPENDIX 1

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACT

Assertive Community Treatment

AEOA

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

AHC

Affordable Housing Coalition

AICHO

American Indian Community Housing Organization

ARMHS

Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services

CADT

Center for Alcohol & Drug Treatment

CAIR

Center for American Indian Resources

CD

Chemical Dependency

CFMH

Crime Free Multi-Housing

CIG

Community Intervention Group

DHS

Minnesota Department of Human Services

DIC

Duluth Information Center

DPD

Duluth Police Department

DTA

Duluth Transit Authority

FHPAP

Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program

GED

General Equivalency Diploma

HDC

Human Development Center

HEARTH ACT

Homeless Emergency Assistance & Rapid Transition to Housing

HMIS

Homeless Management Information System

HOPE

Help & Opportunity in Pursuit of Employment

HRA

Housing & Redevelopment Authority

HUD

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

ISD 709

Intermediate School District 709, Duluth public schools

LISC

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

LSS

Lutheran Social Services

MACV

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans

MFIP

Minnesota Family Investment Program

MI/MH

Mental Illness / Mental Health

MPIRG

Minnesota Public Interest Research Group

RHC

Rural Housing Coalition

RMHC

Range Mental Health Center

SOAR

Service, Opportunity, Action, and Responsibility

SLC

St. Louis County

SSDI

Social Security Disability Insurance

SSI

Supplemental Security Income

STEPS

Steps to Economic and Personal Success

T-Act

Transitional Assertive Community Treatment

APPENDIX 2

Summit Survey Results

Prior to the community Summit on the St. Louis County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness on Thursday, May 2nd, 2013, service providers/advocates in the St. Louis County area were surveyed on their thoughts on the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. There were fourteen responses to the survey.

What is working well within the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness:

- Has brought people together from agencies in the county.
- Raising overall awareness of homelessness.
- Coordinated intake and assessment program.
- Increased involvement from COC leadership council.
- Inventory of existing housing when plan began.
- Continued homeless data through Wilder Foundation and other organizations.
- Expansion of site-based case management.
- More permanent supportive of housing.
- Landlord/tenant trainings.
- Agencies committed to the well-being of their clients.
- Cooperation between agencies.
- San Marco, Memorial Park Apartments, Gimaajii, Firehouse Flats, Hillside Apartments, New Moon, Virginia Youth Foyer.

What is not working well within the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness?

- Need for more affordable housing and shelter beds.
- Lack public communication about the plan itself and what county is doing.
- There needs to be overall supervision and direction.
- Lack of clarity in division of responsibility resulting in too many meetings/committees.
- Need to fix our referral system.

- Coordination of services needs to be more effective.
- Case loads are too high.
- Not enough progress in housing the hard-to-house.
- We still have way too few units of both shelter and permanent housing.
- Not enough stabilization services.
- Changes in cause and amount of homelessness have not been addressed, i.e. use of synthetic drugs.
- Dwindling resources at federal level.
- HUD rules aren't working on local level.
- Plan lacks voice for people experiencing homelessness and for service providers.
- Stats on homelessness have not been kept current within plan.
- Not enough affordable housing.
- High cost of rent in Duluth.
- Long housing waiting lists.
- Need for supportive services.
- Housing assistance start-up money (security deposit, rental application fee, etc.).
- How the change in economy is impacting people experiencing homelessness.
- Lack of good-paying jobs.
- Need for more mental health beds and outreach workers.
- Too reliant on agency staff, need to engage community as activists and volunteers.
- Need printed resource booklet & better community allies, especially churches that get lots of requests for assistance.
- Need a wet shelter or squat.
- Need a new Housing Access Center, with tenant organizing component.

What is not being addressed within the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness?

- Increased drug use, including use of synthetics.

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- Worsening of US economy.
 - Homeless intervention in schools.
 - Discharge plans for those exiting Corrections system.
 - Concrete actions to resolve barriers.
 - Community organizing and education.
 - Public accountability process for county social services and mental health system.
 - Preventing homelessness among the newly poor: addressing bank foreclosure, tax forfeiture, connecting working class jobless with community resources.
 - Right to safe and affordable housing written into county law.
 - Board & Lodge: Finding a way to use GRH money to put people into apartments or other more permanent and affordable housing than board & lodges.
 - Improvement of referral system.
 - Annual Ten Year Plan Summit giving voice to service providers and those experiencing homelessness.
 - Action steps to meet inadequacies in the plan and/or to push forward in new ways to end homelessness.
 - Increased awareness and understanding of homelessness and how it affects us all.
 - COC leadership involvement with service providers.
 - Increased transparency from the county.
 - Better lines of communication between city, county, and social services.
 - New momentum to solve problems together.
 - More options for helping clients who need affordable housing.
 - Community commitment to end homelessness: engage faith communities, communities of color, and other allies.

What are some Goals and/or end results we hope to achieve at the Summit?

- County review of housing stock, amount of affordable housing, comparison of affordable housing units now and in 2007 including public report of findings.