

Housing Affordability and Homelessness Task Force



Meeting #8 Summary

January 23, 2019 | 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Development Services Building, Auditorium
150 Beavercreek Road, Oregon City, OR

Attendees:

Name

Anna Geller
Cole Merkel
Graham Phalen
James Adkins
Katrina Holland
Nate Ember
Ruth Adkins
Wilda Parks

Yelena Voxnyuk
Ellen Burns

Affiliation

Geller Silvis
Street Roots
Clackamas County Sherriff's Office
Home Builders Association of Metro Portland
Community Alliance of Tenants
Built Architecture, Community + Design
Kaiser Permanente
Clackamas County Economic Development
Commission
NW Housing Alternatives
Milwaukie Lutheran Church

County staff

Dan Chandler
Abby Ahern
Vahid Brown
Martha Fritzie
Becky Lee
Julie Larsen

Facilitators

Alice Sherring, EnviroIssues
Mari Valencia, EnviroIssues

Apologies – Alma Flores, Bart Berquist, Chris Scherer, Dave Carboneau, Jane Leo, Jerald Johnson, Kari Lyons, Ken Fisher, Larry Didway, Commissioner Nancy Ide, Nina Carlson, Patty Jay, Rob Hawthorne, Shelly Mead, Shelly Yoder

Welcome and housekeeping

Alice Sherring, facilitator, welcomed Task Force members to the meeting. She thanked all members that submitted feedback contributions from last session via email. She reviewed the group's meeting ground rules agreed to in the Task Force charter. Ms. Sherring then led group introductions and reviewed the agenda and meeting packet for tonight's meeting.

Ms. Sherring asked if any edits were needed to the meeting #7 summary. No edits were noted, and the summary will be considered final.

Opening remarks and task force updates

Ms. Sherring invited opening remarks from County Staff:

- Dan Chandler, Clackamas County, said the County is working with ECONorthwest on two studies that include an assessment of the historic roots of racial inequities in the County's housing system and an equity analysis of the current housing market. Both studies will be completed in June 2019. Mr. Chandler also shared that County staff developed draft recommendations for the Planning, Zoning, and Development topic area based on the Task Force's feedback. Tonight, task force members will review and refine recommendations for the topic area. He noted that if recommendations are approved by Board of Commissioners, they go into a workplan that must undergo a planning process. There is a level of generalization that the recommendations must go through.
- Vahid Brown, Clackamas County, provided the following updates:
 - The Frequent User Service Enhancement (FUSE) research initiative with Portland State University (PSU) researchers will be complete in June 2019. He reminded task force members that the FUSE analysis is looking at frequent utilizers of multiple systems that have a homelessness nexus, which will allow the County to quantify the cost to not providing housing.
 - The Clackamas Veterans Village, since commencing operations in October 2018, has resulted in four members transitioning from the village to permanent housing.
 - Street Root's Rose City Resource, a pocket-sized guide filled with a comprehensive list of all the services available to low-income and homeless individuals in the metro region, recently expanded coverage to include Clackamas County in addition to Multnomah and Washington counties.
 - The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, a pre-charging diversion program that seeks to reduce future criminal behavior by individuals involved in low level drug offenses, that began a month ago in Clackamas County has 11 participants currently. Two Central City Concern case workers are working with participants.
 - *Do we know where LEAD is currently focused in the County?* Mr. Brown said 82nd Avenue and 99th are corridors of focus.
 - *When will we see the Homelessness Point in Time Count (PIT)?* Mr. Brown said the PIT count is in process through January 30, 2019. The County has not identified a department to lead the development of the County report as they are considering a different approach for the development. Ms. Abby Ahern, Clackamas County, also noted that with HUD being closed right now due to the government shut down, the County does not have a specific deadline for the PIT report as of now.

Ms. Sherring invited updates from Task Force members:

- Nate Ember, Built Architecture, Community+Design, said the Oak Grove Community is considering freezing R-10 (low density) in the area to better protect neighborhoods from up-

zoning and incompatible development. He expressed concerns that this action doesn't seem to consider affordability and hopes the City Council does not act on this proposal.

- Wilda Parks, Clackamas County Economic Development Commission, shared that tomorrow is Lead the City Salem Day, an all-day event where roughly 160 people attend to meet with legislators to discuss various topics, including housing.
- Ellen Burns, Milwaukie Lutheran Church, said her church is working with various partners to support Safety Off the Streets (SOS). They are also starting conversations and discussions to address zoning related to SOS.

Information sharing – Shelter, Services, and Assisting Key Populations

Ms. Sherring invited County staff to share findings on the focused outreach to the homeless population in the County.

Mr. Brown began by noting this outreach effort was informed by the equity lens developed by the Task Force, specifically the criteria that asks who is/isn't at the table. From this criteria, Task Force members identified the homeless population as a key stakeholder to engage in the Task Force's work. On January 16th, he said he went to [insert warming shelter name] and engaged with 12 community members. He began by reading the draft SOS recommendations to participants and asked for their thoughts and general feedback. Mr. Brown received the following key takeaways:

- Overall participants supported the draft recommendations.
- Participants appreciate the work the County is doing to better support the homeless population and expressed gratitude for being included in this process to inform the recommendations.
- Participants expressed the need for places to sleep and access to basic amenities such as trash, toilets, showers and laundry facilities.
- Participants expressed the need for flexibility with placement and timing of services (i.e. where to stay, when to access, curfews, etc.).

Mr. Brown explained County staff will now update the draft SOS recommendations based on the feedback received from the affected communities and submit it to the Board of Commissioners for review. He said from there Dan Chandler will work to program recommendations.

Ms. Sherring invited questions from Task Force member.

- Cole Merkel, Clackamas County Citizen Representative, asked if participants expressed any concern for gaps in the recommendations.
 - Mr. Brown said no but did noted that he sees the survey planned for April to offer an opportunity to ask more specific questions. He added that several participants mentioned interest for marrying services to camps, support for dispute resolutions, and support for fee-based (a few dollars) campgrounds.
- Yelena Voznyuk, NW Housing Alternatives, asked what participants meant by no curfew.
 - Mr. Brown said that participants would like camping areas to not place a restriction on the time to check in/out and believe freedom of movement is important. He said many participants also felt that camps should not be fenced noting that people who

Commented [MV1]: Alice, I didn't capture the name of the shelter Vahid said he went to...could we ask him to supply this information so we can include this in the summary?

Commented [AS2R1]: Yes, let's follow up on this.

rent or own their home aren't required to have fences or have restrictions on when to go in/out of their home. He said that participants feel they are often criminalized for their basic life functions. Mr. Brown also added that findings from the Spring Water survey suggest that many people experiencing homelessness have no connection to services or case worker. He expressed his belief that by simply assigning a case worker to each person it could make a huge difference in that person's life.

- Anna Geller, Geller Silvis, suggested that contingency funds be made available for camps and allow self-governing camps to have agency in deciding whether they would like a camp or not. They would then use contingency funding to support a fence if it was determined by the inhabitants that it is needed.
 - Mr. Brown agreed with Ms. Geller's comment and said that we must lean on this population as they are the experts in this space and know resiliency techniques best. He also said that the County seeks to honor their expertise.
 - Ms. Sherring summarized this dialogue by stating that it's important to not assume problems and it's better to simply listen and respond accordingly.
- Mr. Ember said there are clear examples of camps that have been successfully self-governed when given the proper facilities but there are also examples that have not been successful such as the camp under Morrison Bridge or Forgotten Realms. Then asked why the difference in outcomes?
 - Mr. Brown said the Morrison Bridge camp is an odd case because it was not a sanctioned camp resulting in little support and conflict among its members. He said Forgotten Realms was a sanctioned camp but was not self-governed. Beyond a Pastor providing blankets there was no further support given to the camp and its members. He noted that camps tend to operate successfully when there is a community organizer to lead and support its members. He said that aside from Forgotten Realms all other sanctioned camps have processes to support the camps in the best way. Some are hybrid models like the Veteran's Village that is self-governed and receive support from a single organization. He also noted that house rules are important.

Ms. Sherring invited Mr. Chandler to talk about next steps related to the SOS recommendations.

Mr. Chandler said County staff will be working to pull together proformas on the resources (space, duration, funding) needed, including the Metro Bond, to bring the recommendations to fruition and to make them available for Board of Commissioner review. He said county staff is interested in holding an interim presentation with Board of Commissioners before the adoption hearing so that Commissioners are aware of the Task Force's work and intended outcomes. Mr. Chandler said he would presentation support from a few Task Force members at the interim presentation and asked if anyone would be interested in this opportunity.

- Ms. Parks asked if talking points would be developed for Task Force members to use for the presentation.
 - Mr. Chandler said County staff will develop talking points with project staff to support Task Force members.

- Ms. Sherring asked Task Force members to show a raise of hand if interested in presenting.
 - Ms. Geller, Mr. Ember, Ms. Parks, Ruth Adkins, and James Adkins raised their hands to show interest in the presentation opportunity.
- Ms. Parks asked if the Task Force is closing in on the recommendations given that the County will be working on material to meet budget planning timelines and while also seeking to present recommendations before the Board of Commissioners.
 - Mr. Chandler said yes but at this point the action may only be asking for a place on the Board of Commissioner’s agenda given the government shutdown is leaving a bit of uncertainty in the air with County functions.

Ms. Sherring requested Task Force members provide their approval of the draft SOS recommendations to allow County staff to move them forward. She requested members to show a thumbs up to show acceptance of the recommendations, thumb on its side to show some reservations but happy to accept recommendations, and thumbs down reject the recommendations. All Task Force members displayed thumbs up and SOS recommendations will be considered approved.

Information sharing – Transition from Homelessness to Housing

Ms. Sherring invited Abby Ahern to present on the topic of transitioning from homelessness to housing.

Ms. Ahern thanked all members for allowing her to present on the topic. She began the presentation by describing how transition services are used to move individuals experiencing homelessness into housing using a basic hand drawn diagram, then provided an overview of current transition services approaches, and ended by outlining transition services gaps and needs. A summary of each follows.

- Transition Services Diagram: The diagram depicted a cycle of an individual experiencing homelessness, then moving into shelter and later accessing transition services. The transition services help the individual into a home. To ensure their stability, a “stability wall” is built to prevent the individual from “falling off the cliff” or back into homelessness. Ms. Ahern said its important for members to understand how services like sheltering off the streets or other levels of services are in moving people into housing whether its fair market or affordable housing. Mr. Chandler noted that bringing Abby to present on the subject matter tonight is to help members understand transition services and its importance but also to help support future funding conversations.
- Three Current Approaches: Ms. Ahern explained there are three approaches to transitional services in the County.
 - Rapid Rehousing (RRH): Provides housing placement support in market rate or affordable units with short to medium-term rental assistance. Wrap-around case management and services to families with children and veterans is provided. There is not a time minimum for rapid rehousing but there is a max time of 24 months. However, due to funding families and veterans are realistically only able to stay for six months when rental assistance terminates.
 - Transitional Housing (TH): Provides homeless individuals and youth permanent housing placement including wrap-around case management and services. Individuals and youth begin by staying in transitional housing for up to 24 months

before moving into permanent housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) no longer funds this type of housing because they prefer to see stability offered to people in a single place rather than multiple.

- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Provides indefinite rental subsidy paired with supportive services to individuals and families to support housing stability. PSH is very similar to Section 8 Housing and intended for individuals who have/are experiencing long-term chronic homelessness (i.e. over a year of homelessness). Typically, PSH is serving individuals experiencing 5-10 years of homelessness who are very unlikely to transition without a long-term rental subsidy.
- Approximate number of units per approach in Clackamas County:
 - TH: 21 units (8 for families with children, 14 for singles)
 - RRH: 75 units (58 for families with children, 17 for singles)
 - PSH: 224 units (48 for families with children, 176 for singles) *Note: PSH serves far fewer people than the other two because the rate of turn over is lower given long-term rental support that is part of PSH.*
- Ms. Ahern summarized the following gaps in transition services:
 - There are currently 1,138 households (approx. 1,877 people) on the waitlist to access supportive housing.
 - The number of people experiencing homelessness paired with a disability is split evenly across.
 - There is currently no capacity in the RRH program and only one transitional housing program that serves 6 people. The waitlist is roughly 400 people; those of whom are at the will probably never make it to the top to access the transitional housing program.
 - Youth ages 16-24 are underrepresented in the system as they tend to not call to access services. Better engagement to this population is needed.
 - It will take roughly 20 years to house all people currently on the waitlist and assuming no else is added to the list. The number on the waitlist is currently 321.
 - *How do you calculate this?* Ms. Ahern explained this number is calculated using the average turnover number per year and the number on the waitlist.
 - *If there were additional vouchers for rent assistance and services is there a sense of supply?* Ms. Ahern said development is certainly needed but units are being secured for people. She explained the bigger issue lies in the lack of subsidies available for people. Ms. Ahern also expressed excitement in the Metro Bond's focus to support the most vulnerable and their needs to be paired with the wrap around case management and services. She said many individuals have long term health and mental health issues and won't be able to reach stability without the support of case management and services.
- Ms. Ahern provided some positive news:
 - Due to additional funding, waitlists for RRH programs for families with children has seen reductions and families are being served within 30 days.
 - *Was the funding source from the Department of Human Services (DHS)?* Ms. Ahern confirmed by saying yes.

- Homeless veteran numbers are decreasing dramatically in large part due to a push from HUD and other resources like vouchers specific to veterans. Ms. Ahern noted the Veteran's Village as a model supporting this population.
 - *What is the County's definition of a veteran?* Ms. Ahern explained the County only asks if they have served in the military and require only proof of a single day of service for eligibility where applicable.
- The County was successful in securing funding to support a Diversion Pilot project and train all homeless services staff.
- Ms. Ahern summarized the following needs in transition services:
 - More funding across all program types is needed.
 - More RRH program types is needed.
 - Additional supportive wrap around services associated with housing is needed.
 - *Ms. Geller asked what barriers exist, specifically for Communities of Color, in accessing the different housing programs. She noted requiring a social security number to access housing programs as a potential barrier to the Hispanic population. She also suggested for the County understand the barriers to be able to remove if possible.* Ms. Ahern explained the County continually analyzes poverty drop offs, how well they are matching people to programs, evaluating how easy people can access programs and how successful they are as attempts to understand existing barriers and opportunities to advance equity. She noted she is aware, anecdotally, that many undocumented community members are living in very harmful situations due to their status. The county and the Homeless System are working hard to reduce barriers for all people.

Ms. Alice welcomed any further clarifying questions from the Task Force.

- Mr. Merkel asked if there were truly only 75 units of Rapid Rehousing in the County.
 - Ms. Ahern clarified that 75 refers to slots per households eligible for the Rapid Rehousing program. She recommended members think about the number as funding versus a physical location.

Action planning – Focus Area breakout discussions

Following the information sharing session, the Task Force engaged in an action planning session to refine and add to the list of previously identified suggestions around Housing Stability and Shelter and Transition Services and Key Populations, and refine the draft recommendations for the Planning, Zoning and Development topic area. The group was provided a Recommendation Framework to use to record thoughts and suggested edits. Task Force members broke into three groups to discuss proposed refinements. Each group then reported out its recommendations to the group. The results of this discussion are captured on the Housing Stability and Shelter and Transition Services and Key Populations Draft Recommendation Frameworks and the Planning, Zoning and Development Recommendations document appended to this summary.

Next steps and closing remarks

Ms. Sherring reviewed the outcomes of the meeting and the following action items:

- County staff will circulate the results of this meeting's Action Planning process, and Task Force members are invited to provide additional feedback and suggestions via email to the County.
- County staff will refine draft recommendations for the Planning, Zoning and Development topic area and develop draft recommendations for the Housing Stability topic area based on results from this meeting's Action Planning process.

Ms. Sherring said future meetings will be presentation heavy to support the Task Force's forthcoming funding conversation. She asked Task Force members to complete a meeting evaluation form and, on the back, write down any organizations they feel aren't currently represented in the Task Force but should be, thanked members for their time and contributions and adjourned the meeting.

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