

Ending Homelessness Together: A Summary of 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness in the Metropolitan Washington Region

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**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
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Ending Homelessness Together: A Summary of 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness in the Washington Metropolitan Region

Prepared by the Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments' Homeless Services
Planning and Coordinating Committee

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A note on the cover:

Having a home is to know the feeling of permanence; that your bed, kitchen, and bathroom will be in the same place as the day before. A warm beverage in a paper cup can be had anywhere, but a mug is a symbol of comfort, of home.

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Introduction

Homelessness is an issue that affects every jurisdiction in the metropolitan Washington region. According to the annual Point-in-Time regional homelessness enumeration, there were 11,547 literally homeless individuals in 2013.¹ What is our region doing to prevent and end homelessness? The answer is a complex set of programs and support services that attempts to best address each individual's needs and return them to a safe, stable and independent housing situation. The 10 Year Plans developed in the Washington region were created to provide concrete strategies with measurable outcomes to guide each community's efforts to end—not just manage—this complex issue.

Creating a long-term plan to end homelessness began with the National Alliance To End Homelessness' (NAEH) report, *A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*, released in 2000. This charge caught the attention of former U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Mel Martinez, who revitalized the dormant U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and began encouraging cities around the country to create their own 10 Year Plans. In May 2009, Congress enacted the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, which resulted in the USICH's release of its own plan in 2010, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*², setting

1 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, *Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington, Results and Analysis from the 2013 Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons in the Metropolitan Washington Region*: 1

2 http://usich.gov/opening_doors/

a national goal to end veterans and chronic homelessness by 2015, and to end homelessness among children, youth, and families by 2020.

These resources have informed the nine Continua of Care (CoCs) that participate in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee. Seven CoCs in the

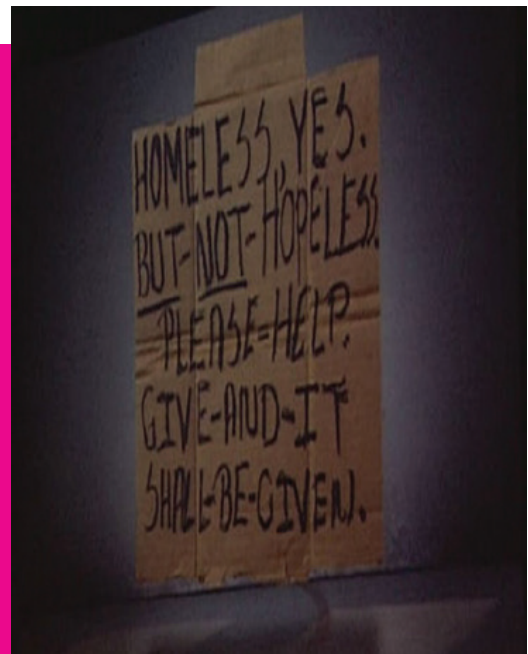


Photo credit: marsmet53

metropolitan Washington region have adopted 10 Year Plans: Alexandria, VA; Arlington, VA; the District of Columbia; Fairfax-Falls Church, VA; Montgomery County, MD; Prince George's County, MD and Prince William County, VA. Loudoun County, VA and Frederick County, MD are in the process of creating their own 10 Year Plans. Although Charles County, MD is a COG member jurisdiction, it reports to the Baltimore HUD office rather than the Washington, DC office and does not participate in COG's Homeless Services Committee.

Although the jurisdictions in our region have adopted their 10 Year Plans at different times, it has been more than ten years since NAEH made the call to end homelessness by 2010. Are 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness still relevant today?

The answer is yes.

Creating a 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness provides an important opportunity to educate and engage the community in solving the crisis of homelessness. Creating a 10 Year Plan provides focus on the goal of ending homelessness and sets benchmarks to measure and monitor progress. Creating a 10 Year Plan has the potential to focus scarce resources on efforts that demonstrate success in preventing and ending homelessness.

Our region’s homeless service providers face unique challenges that have made achieving the ultimate goal of our 10 Year Plans elusive. First and foremost, the lack of affordable housing for the lowest-income households continues to be the biggest and most persistent challenge to preventing and ending homelessness. A decrease over the past decade in our region’s supply of public housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers has further exacerbated this problem.

The great recession, persistent unemployment (or underemployment), and the changing economy have also had a significant, negative impact on our region’s ability to end the crisis of homelessness. Even if a family is working, the income earned in one or even two low-skill, low-wage jobs is insufficient to afford a one-bedroom apartment, as demonstrated in the chart below. The Center for Housing Policy’s *Housing Landscape 2014* states that, “. . .the share of working households with severe housing cost burdens actually

increased between 2009 and 2012, and in 36 states (and the District of Columbia) there was no significant improvement. . .”³ The adjacent graph represents this finding.

During 2009 to 2013, the region’s CoCs successfully placed 9,517 formerly homeless individuals into permanent supportive housing⁴. This represents an 83% increase in placements

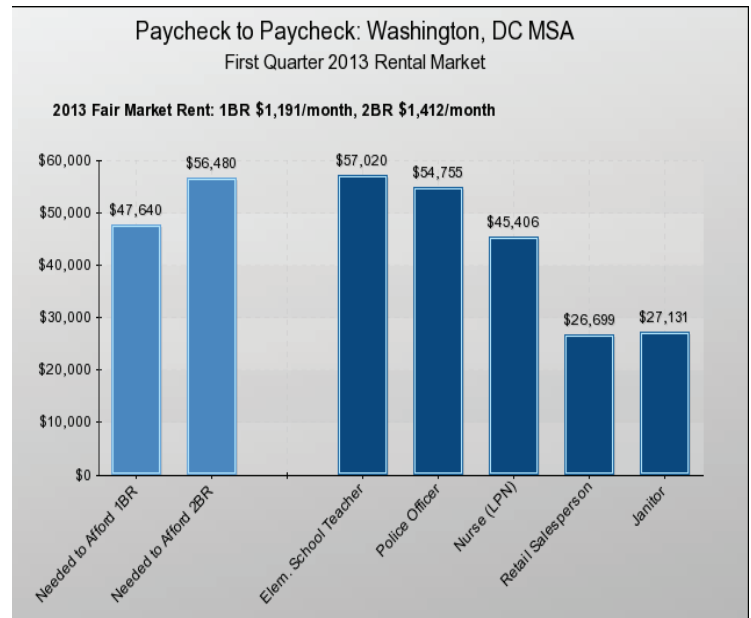
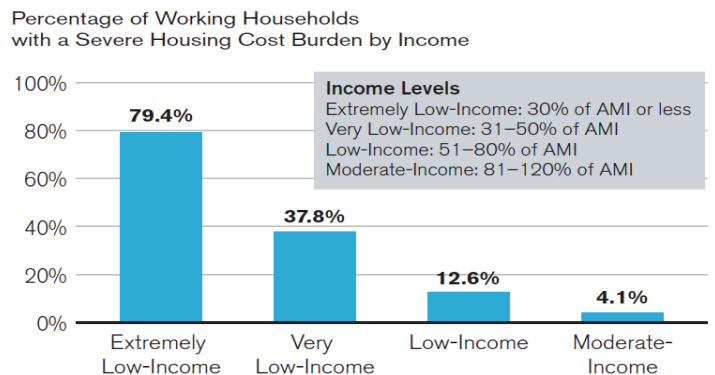


FIGURE 4. The Vast Majority of Extremely Low-Income Households Have Severe Housing Cost Burdens



3 Center for Housing Policy, *Housing Landscape 2014*: 3

4 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, *Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington, Results and Analysis from the 2013 Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons in the Metropolitan Washington Region*: 22

Regional Adoption of the 10 Year Planning Process

over the same period and is a remarkable accomplishment given the obstacles that our region faces.

The region's CoCs have prepared their 10 Year Plans at different times, and the contents of those plans reflect the changing approaches to ending homelessness during the past decade.

- 2002 – Montgomery County, Maryland
- 2004 – Alexandria, Virginia and the District of Columbia
- 2006 – Arlington County, Virginia and Fairfax-Falls Church, Virginia
- 2010 – Prince William County, Virginia
- 2012 – Prince George's County, Maryland

In 2012, Frederick County, Maryland began drafting the vision for its 10 Year Plan and in 2014 is beginning implementation. Loudoun County, Virginia's 10 Year Plan is in draft form and under review with its Continuum of Care to ensure that it is consistent with recent state and federal policy goals to end homelessness.

Best Practices for 10 Year Plans

The Washington region's CoCs have incorporated a number of strategies developed by the original NAEH plan⁵ that form the backbone of national

5 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*: 2-3

best practices for 10 Year Plans. These common elements include the following concepts:

- **Plan for outcomes.** Collecting and analyzing data allows jurisdictions to tailor their strategies for different types of homeless clients by developing measurable, quantifiable results. With these measures, strategies can be evaluated for effectiveness and modified as necessary during implementation.
- **Close the front door.** Prevention is a key component to keep individuals and families from becoming homeless.
- **Open the back door.** Increasing the supply and meeting the demand for affordable housing ensures that people can achieve permanent housing solutions.
- **Build the infrastructure.** As described by NAEH, "Ending homelessness can be a first step in addressing the systemic problems that lead to crisis poverty, including a shortage of affordable housing, incomes that do not pay for basic needs, and a lack of appropriate services for those that need them. Addressing all of these issues community by community is a necessary step to ending homelessness and poverty."⁶

Descriptions of the 10 Year Plans are listed in the order in which they were adopted.

6 <http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/ten-year-plan>

10 Year Plan Summaries

2002

Montgomery County, Maryland

Montgomery County was an early adopter of the 10 Year Planning process in our region and created its plan to end homelessness, “Homelessness in Montgomery County: Beginning to End” in 2002 after a comprehensive two-year planning process. The Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless began as an informal group of service agencies, staffed by a County-funded position. It was not incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3 until 1991. The Coalition served initially as the information hub for the 10 Year Planning efforts. In 2014, an update of the 10 Year Plan is underway with the County’s Department of Health and Human Services taking the lead.

Montgomery County’s approach to ending homelessness is premised on two main tactics: systemic change and tactical change. Systemic change involves reviewing the changes that need to be made across the entire community (for example, provision of mental health services). Tactical change involves determining the optimal means to deliver services that are currently offered to make the most of current resources.

The plan is focused on the objectives, actions and associated steps that it will take to end homelessness.

Key Strategies:

- Objective One: Increase the stock of affordable and subsidized housing for our entire County’s citizens.

Montgomery County has identified a lack of affordable housing as a critical barrier to ending homelessness. This objective has action steps associated with it, such as developing alternative housing models to serve people at 10-20% of the poverty line, developing 100 new housing units per year, and advocacy.

- Objective Two: Improve wages and work supports so that people can afford housing and provide better support services for economically disadvantaged and disabled people.

Increasing wages and income to Montgomery County residents is critical to being able to remain stably housed. Sample actions associated with this objective include supporting efforts to increase the minimum wage, improving and increasing job training programs, maximizing federal, state and county earned-income tax credits, and supporting child care subsidies for working families.

- Objective Three: Prevent entry into homelessness.

Montgomery County has partnered with other care systems and institutions to ensure that individuals leaving prisons, juvenile justice facilities, hospitals, child welfare and foster care as well as mental health facilities are not discharged directly into homelessness. Eviction prevention is also an important element in

helping individuals and families remain in permanent housing.

- Objective Four: Reduce barriers to people exiting homelessness quickly.

This objective will be achieved through a multi-pronged effort to evaluate the current system of care for those experiencing homelessness, reviewing and revising policies that make entry into housing difficult, and providing housing counselors to act as a liaison for customers with rental companies and/or landlords.

- Objective Five: Develop appropriate community resources for people needing treatment for mental health or substance abuse.

The Montgomery County plan encourages providers of mental health housing and those serving clients with substance use disorders to develop along the range of services needed, such as skilled nursing facilities, group homes, assisted living facilities and satellite housing.

- Objective Six: Raise public awareness about homelessness, its prevalence in Montgomery County, its impact and potential solutions.

Montgomery County's plan calls for developing

relationships with the local media to encourage accurate portrayals of the existence and depth of homelessness in the County and continuing education and advocacy to engage the community and combat NIMBYism ("Not In My Backyard") reactions to development of affordable and supportive housing.

Lessons Learned

Montgomery County began updating its 10 Year Plan in 2013 by reviewing the existing plan and the federal strategic plan to end homelessness (Opening Doors) to ensure better alignment. There has been progress on several aspects of the 10 Year Plan, such as increasing the amount of permanent supportive housing, implementing a rapid re-housing model and realigning emergency shelters to be more assessment- and prevention-oriented. Many of the goals and themes identified in 2002 remain relevant today, including:

- The critical need to increase the stock of affordable housing;
- Preventing homelessness;
- Increasing education and training opportunities to increase employment, and
- Access to mainstream services.



Photo credit: scribbletaylor

One area that is a newer focus of concern is homeless youth -- both unaccompanied minors and young adults aged 18-24 who may have aged out of foster care or other settings into homelessness. This group has unique needs that differ from older homeless adult individuals and families, requiring significant support services that are typically time-limited. Another challenge the County is aware of is homeless individuals who may avoid seeking shelter and services due to immigration status.

2004

Alexandria, Virginia

The City of Alexandria's Homeless Services Coordinating Committee (HSCC) prepared its Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and Other Forms of Homelessness in October 2004. The HSCC developed a strategic plan in 1999, prior to the national effort to create 10 Year Plans, built upon outreach and consultations with key stakeholder groups. The 1999 strategic plan identified five objectives. The HSCC made progress on three of the five objectives but determined that a longer-range plan that adopted principles from the NAEH framework as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia's action plan, would better guide their efforts to end homelessness.

When the HSCC reached the mid-point of its 10 Year Plan in 2009, it decided to revise its goals and strategies and created the Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria. The purpose of this new plan was to align the plan to end homelessness with the City Council's Strategic Plan objectives and with the federal government's plan to end homelessness, Opening Doors. In 2012, the HSCC renamed itself "The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria" (The Partnership), to better reflect its membership composition and mission. The Strategic Plan is designed to end homelessness between FY2014 and FY2020. The current version of the plan, still in draft form, is estimated to be completed by the

summer of 2014 and will be integrated into the City's consolidated plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The new Strategic Plan has four overall goals, with strategies that are developed annually. Currently, the goals and key objectives are as follows:

Goal 1: Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement;

- a. Objective 1: provide and promote collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors to inspire and energize Alexandrians to commit to preventing and ending homelessness.
- b. Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaborations, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness.

Goal 2: Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing

- a. Objective 1: provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness;
- b. Objective 2: provide permanent supportive housing to prevent and end chronic homelessness;
- c. Objective 3: advance housing stability for youth aging out of foster care and juvenile justice systems and persons who are being discharged from hospitals and criminal justice institutions.

Goal 3: Increase Economic and Health Security

- a. Objective 1: increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness;
- b. Objective 2: improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness.
- c. Objective 3: integrate primary behavioral health care services with homeless

assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness

Goal 4: Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System

- a. Objective 1: transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing

Lessons Learned

- The updated Strategic Plan will focus more on outcomes rather than on the process by which The Partnership will achieve success in ending homelessness. Best practices continue to evolve. When the first 10 Year Plan was adopted, Alexandria was focused on providing shelter and services. Currently, the emphasis is on implementing a "housing first" model. The Partnership will continue to monitor best practices and evaluate what is working best in the City of Alexandria to adjust strategies on a regular basis.
- The Partnership has updated its plan to align with the federal plan to end homelessness (Opening Doors) as well as integrating it with the City's overall Strategic Plan and its consolidated plan to HUD. This will allow for streamlined service delivery, better alignment and allocation of resources, and ultimately, improved outcomes for Alexandria residents experiencing homelessness.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia adopted its plan, Homeless No More – A Strategy for Ending Homelessness in Washington, D.C. by 2014, in December 2004. It grew out of a "Focus Group on Access to Housing for Homeless and Very Low Income Persons" and its committees. This focus group engaged in an extensive planning process that involved numerous stakeholders and resulted

in three long-term policy recommendations to end homelessness:

1. Increase homeless prevention efforts within local and federal government.
2. Develop and/or subsidize at least 6,000 net additional units of affordable, supportive permanent housing to meet the needs of the city's homeless and other very low-income persons at risk of homelessness.
3. Provide wrap-around mainstream supportive services fully coordinated with the Continuum of Care programs and special needs housing.

At the time the plan was adopted, the focus of this plan was to shift from a "shelter first" to a "housing first" model that ends homelessness, enriched with supportive services to rapidly rehouse those with and without special needs.

In order to achieve the long-term policy goals, the plan includes three implementation strategies to guide the work of the CoC as follows:

- Implementation Strategy A: interdepartmental coordination and cross-system policy implementation.
- Implementation Strategy B: community education and community outreach to gain support for the 10 Year Plan and the "housing first" and "housing plus" approaches.
- Implementation Strategy C: advocacy for reduction of federal and other barriers to delivering services and housing that can prevent and end homelessness.

One of the first steps in implementing the 10 Year Plan was forming the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), which was tasked in 2005 with establishing the standing committees to achieve the stated objectives of the plan. The ICH prepared and published a strategic plan to provide concrete actions that achieve the vision of the District's 10 Year Plan. The Strategic Plan provides guidance and tasks for a five year period and develops an annual work plan.

The strategic plan developed by the ICH includes ten outcome measures that the District of Columbia tracks and evaluates annually. In 2010, the District further refined its plan to end homelessness by committing to achieve three goals, each with three key initiatives as follows:

1. Reduce the overall number of individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, including significant efforts at prevention and rapid re-housing.
 - a. End homelessness for those who are already homeless, as quickly as possible, and assure that people remain housed.
 - b. Prevent homelessness for as many people as possible who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless, and assure that people remain housed.
 - c. Improve the odds that people can remain housed by increasing income and other resources, through employment or benefits receipt.
2. Redesign the Continuum of Care to develop an appropriate mix of services, interim housing, and permanent housing options in order to help people move out of homelessness as rapidly as possible.
 - a. Ensure there is a sufficient number of low-barrier shelters to keep people safe.
 - b. Ensure that there are sufficient, appropriate, interim housing options (temporary and transitional) that address specific needs.
 - c. Develop and/or subsidize units to reach the goal of producing at least 2,500 units of permanent supportive housing.
3. Develop a mechanism and an evaluation strategy to track the District's progress in preventing and reducing homelessness.
 - a. Develop benchmarks for key client outcomes based on national data and data from local providers.

- a. Develop a system of performance-based contracts that rewards providers for successful outcomes and ensures accountability.
- a. Track and analyze outcomes annually to assess improvement, areas of needed resources, areas for better interagency coordination, etc.

Action steps and budgets are tied to each of these goals on an annual basis. In addition to the CoC's efforts, an advocacy campaign, "The Way Home", began in 2014 with a goal to end chronic homelessness in the District of Columbia by 2017.

2006

Arlington County, Virginia

Arlington County, Virginia's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, *A Passageway Home*, outlines the steps it is taking to end homelessness through five guiding principles and four broad goals. Arlington County has operated a Continuum of Care since the 1970s to provide outreach, emergency shelters, transitional housing and the long-term development of permanent supportive housing. The CoC determined that a strategic long-term plan was needed to broaden the community support network and end chronic homelessness. Following a collaborative planning process, Arlington adopted its plan in April 2006. The plan includes one to three strategies associated with each broad goal that lead directly into action steps that are mapped out in a five year action plan.

The Guiding Principles include:

- Commitment from all sectors of the community;
- Best practice, evidence-based solutions;
- Affordable, appropriate housing options;

- Culturally competent and consumer-centered services and
- Sufficient, committed financial resources.

The Broad Goals include:

- Affordable Housing;
- Comprehensive Support Services;
- Prevention and
- Income Maximization.

Each broad goal has several strategies associated with it, which is then further broken down into specific tasks outlined in Arlington’s 5-Year Action Plan. The strategies to achieve the broad goals are as follows:

Affordable Housing:

1. Increase the supply of housing affordable to homeless individuals and families.
2. Increase the supply of rental assistance provided to homeless individuals and families.
3. Facilitate access to affordable housing for homeless individuals and families.

Supportive Services:

1. Enhance resources for provision of supportive services to those in supportive housing.
2. Develop rapid re-housing plans within each existing homeless shelter.
3. Promote an integrated, comprehensive system of care.
4. Expand the capacity to serve people with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders.
5. Expand current multi-service centers to serve as “one stop shops.”

Prevention:

1. Educate service providers, landlords, persons at risk of homelessness and others

on indications of potential homelessness and availability of homeless prevention services.

2. Develop proactive homeless prevention strategies.
3. Create and implement a 24/7 Housing Crisis Response Plan.

Income:

1. Expand access to employment and training opportunities for homeless persons.
2. Facilitate access to public benefits programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans’ benefits, and Food Stamps.
3. Educate homeless persons on financial management.

The County’s vision for their plan states that, “Arlington will have an integrated, community based support system which will prevent homelessness and provide the necessary resources to end homelessness for individuals and families living in the county.”

Since the plan was adopted, Arlington County has identified a few areas in which the plan and their strategies have had to adjust to remain effective.

Lessons Learned

- Passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009 created changes in funding priorities. The act prioritizes rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing. This change in focus resulted in a major change in how outreach and shelter services are funded in Arlington, as the outreach funding had to be reallocated.
- The supply of affordable housing in Arlington has always been a challenge, given the low vacancy rates in Arlington, the high cost of housing and the need for rental subsidies. While the supply of affordable housing continues to remain a significant barrier to ending homelessness, the Continuum is focused more now on helping clients

overcome barriers to housing, such as having poor credit.

- The changing economy for low-wage earners has created new challenges to ending homelessness, particularly for families. Even if homeless family members are employed, the income is not enough to allow them to be stably housed. Only being able to find part-time work, or insufficient or unaffordable child care, compounds the difficulty that low-wage earners face.

Fairfax – Falls Church, Virginia

The Fairfax-Falls Church plan includes the County of Fairfax, City of Fairfax, and City of Falls Church, Virginia. Fairfax-Falls Church organized a Continuum of Care (CoC) in the 1990s to seek federal funds from HUD to provide services to the CoC’s homeless population. By 2007 the Planning Committee to End Homelessness, comprised of local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities and businesses, had produced a strategic road map to prevent and end homelessness. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors appointed a 95-member Implementation Committee to develop a plan based on these strategies. Following an extensive and collaborative planning process, they adopted the Fairfax-Falls Church plan to end homelessness by 2018, titled, Blueprint for Success: Strategic Directions for the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community, in March 2008.



Photo courtesy of Fairfax County

The Fairfax-Falls Church plan is based around four key conclusions that the Planning Committee to End Homelessness reached to guide its strategies during implementation. Those conclusions are as follows:

- There must be a change in focus, direction, and service priorities about homelessness in Fairfax County that centers on ending homelessness, not managing it.
- Housing is an essential resource for homeless families and individuals. The lack of affordable housing in Fairfax County has been studied, researched, and lamented for decades. But the fact remains: Ending homelessness will be impossible without increasing the supply of affordable housing of all types; preservation alone is not enough.
- Directing resources to prevention, rapid re-housing, and “housing first” works; this approach has proven to be a cost-effective means to ending homelessness in other communities.
- To successfully implement the Ten Year Plan, there must be sustained political will and strong support from all sectors of the community.

The Fairfax-Falls Church 10 Year Plan’s four guiding principles are associated with four strategies; those four strategies have objectives, tasks and milestones associated with each to achieve the goal of ending homelessness.

Key Strategies

- Strategy One: Prevent homelessness due to economic crisis and/or disability.

As Fairfax-Falls Church’s plan states, “Fairfax County data suggest that single adults become homeless due to disability; families become homeless due to poverty.” Therefore, coordination and intervention can prevent individuals from entering the homeless system at all. Prevention is also more cost effective than re-housing someone who is already homeless. Objectives associated with this strategy include creating Neighborhood

Prevention Assistance Teams; streamlining prevention efforts and providing more flexible and longer-term financial assistance; provide a single access point for referral information about services; change and improve policies on eviction prevention response and work to end the practice of discharging from institutions into homelessness.

- Strategy Two: Preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing to prevent or remedy homelessness.

The need to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing is a key element of success. The lack of affordable housing options contributes to increased length of stays in the shelter system, where housing that is designed to be an emergency, stop-gap measure, has become the only affordable housing option for homeless individuals or families who are otherwise stabilized. The Fairfax-Falls Church plan objectives under this strategy involve allocating funds from the real estate tax, giving priority to homeless individuals in housing programs, developing residential studio units, providing incentives to affordable housing developers, converting transitional housing to permanent housing, developing more permanent supportive housing, and creating giving circles in the faith community to adopt a family or subsidize the creation of an affordable housing unit.

- Strategy Three: Deliver appropriate support services to obtain and maintain stable housing.

Providing appropriate services to those individuals whose housing needs include more than just money and affordable housing options is the key to an effective, integrated system. The Fairfax-Falls Church plan to end homelessness using this strategy includes the following objectives: implementing a “housing first” model; persons with mental health, substance abuse or

other developmental disabilities who are homeless must be a priority for receiving supportive services; building trust with clients rather than demanding adherence to strict

requirements is key to successful service delivery; developing interdisciplinary neighborhood service teams; providing increased outreach to homeless individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disorders; better integrating mental health and substance use disorder services; addressing the unique needs of subpopulations, such as domestic violence survivors and youth aging out of foster care; establishing a housing assistance fund to provide resources for housing placements; providing ongoing training opportunities for county and non-profit service provider staff and volunteers and engaging volunteers and faith-based organizations in service delivery through mentoring, tutoring and other activities.

- Strategy Four: Create a management system for plan implementation with the collaboration of the public and private sectors that ensures adequate financial resources and accountability.

The Fairfax-Falls Church plan recognizes that a great plan is not a static document, and that a management system, with periodic evaluation and reassessments, is how a plan achieves its stated goals.



Photo credit: Steve Rhodes

The objectives that Fairfax-Falls Church have set to ensure successful implementation include: creating a leadership structure to oversee implementation that builds on existing public-private partnerships; developing additional funding options and refocusing existing resources

on plan priorities; linking specific actions with resources, responsible parties and performance plans; creating opportunities for the voices of the homeless and front line service providers to be heard; developing outcome measures at both the system (plan) level and at the program level. Measurement of success against targets set in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS); issuing and widely distributing annual performance reports and ensuring the community and its elected leaders are informed about the plan and its implementation.

Lessons Learned

The Fairfax-Falls Church CoC is halfway through the implementation of its 10 Year Plan. Since adopting this plan, the structure has remained consistent and new aspects of the Partnership (forming the governing board, interagency groups, and the consumer advisory council, for example) have all moved forward. The operationalization of the plan, the first step in implementing the Blueprint, is based upon the reality of available resources and how to realize the intent of the 10 Year Plan.

- The most challenging, but perhaps important, work that has been underway since 2008 has been systems change. The CoC has realigned its system to ensure that it is working as effectively as possible to improve outcomes for its residents.
- The CoC has realigned a portion of its local dollars to support the 10 Year Plan, which is an important element in the successes that it has achieved thus far.
- Expanding the Partnership (government, non-profit and business communities) is another critical aspect of the Fairfax-Falls Church CoC's ability to achieve reductions in its homeless population. One event supporting the expansion of this collaboration that the CoC has held annually for the past three years is called "Jeans Day." Jeans Day aims to raise awareness and funding to support housing needs for homeless persons.

- In addition to the many ongoing aspects of the Partnership's work internally, (systems change, creating more permanent supportive housing, creating a housing locator service, implementing rapid re-housing, etc) the Partnership has been motivated by and engaged in ending homelessness through the 100,000 Homes Campaign and the Virginia Learning Collaborative's Rapid Re-housing Challenge⁸ (through the Virginia National Alliance to End Homelessness).
- As with all of the other CoCs in the region, the high cost of housing and availability of affordable housing continues to challenge the success of Fairfax-Falls Church in ending homelessness.

2010

Prince William County, Virginia

The Greater Prince William Area Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, 2010-2020 was developed in 2007 by an Advisory Committee that included input from multiple government agencies, non-profit organizations and neighborhood focus groups.

- The main elements of the plan were developed through a collaborative planning process and include the following:
 1. Prevention;
 2. Supportive services;
 3. Affordable housing and
 4. Employment and training.

Key Strategies

- Strategy One: Prevention Strategies

The first strategy in preventing homelessness in the Greater Prince William Area (GPWA) is to develop grass roots citizen advocates who are

8 <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/Virginia-Learning-Collaborative-Rapid-Re-Housing-Challenge>

well-informed regarding the need for a range of housing solutions for a variety of housing needs. The complementary parts of having a well-informed citizenry include having the political will to create a variety of housing solutions and advocacy for ending homelessness.

The second objective in prevention strategies is providing data to support the need for homeless programs and prevention solutions and create measurable outcomes to determine whether these programs are effective in addressing homelessness. Data-driven policies will enable the GPWA providers to refine their tools to ensure the best outcomes for their residents.

The third objective is to create effective discharge plans with institutions reintroducing homeless clients into the community. Coordination among community providers can reduce the burden on the shelter system and help prevent individuals from entering shelter in the first place.

The fourth objective is to maximize all the resources that provide available income to the homeless, chronically homeless, and those at risk of homelessness. Increased public awareness of other sources of support (such as SSI, TANF, Medicaid, Veterans' benefits) will support the greatest number of eligible persons receiving benefits.

- Strategy Two: Housing Strategies

The first objective in providing affordable housing solutions for all Prince William County residents is to create and maintain a database of local property that could meet the housing needs of residents of the GPWA who earn 50% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI). In the GPWA, as in the rest of the COG jurisdictions, 50% of AMI for a family of four is \$53,500 in FY 2014. This database may be developed as a public-private partnership.

The second objective in housing solutions is to create and maintain Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs) for those who earn 50% or less of AMI in the GPWA. Creating incentives to developers and public-private partnerships will support

the creation and retention of permanent and long-term affordable housing for the chronically homeless and for other households to remain stably housed.

The third objective recognizes that financing mechanisms are an important part of providing affordable housing. "The plan calls for leveraging funds for local projects by obtaining one million dollars to support the goal and increase supply of affordable units for low and moderate income levels." These tools include using Virginia Housing Development Authority low income housing tax credits, proffers, land donations and capitalization of the Housing Preservation Development Fund.

The fourth objective is to reduce homelessness and stabilize families by maintaining sufficient emergency shelters and temporary housing leading to permanent housing.

- Strategy Three: Supportive Service Strategies

While the first step in ending homelessness is providing housing, often additional resources and support are required to maintain that housing and to effectively end the cycle of homelessness.

The first objective in providing supportive services is to centralize the intake and referral process so that community organizations can share and provide quicker access to necessary services for the homeless.

The second objective is to increase services to marginalized populations (such as people with disabilities, young people aging out of foster care, and ex-offenders) by better coordinating the system of care to match existing need. Success in this addressing this strategy is incumbent upon finding funds for adequate resources to fill any identified service gaps.

- Strategy Four: Employment and Training Strategies

Another key aspect of housing stability is providing employment and training opportunities to be able to obtain a job that pays a wage sufficient to afford suitable housing.

The first GPWA objective is to identify issues affecting employment and training of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. From there, the CoC will have an assessment of what types of training requirements there are from local employers and will develop a plan to remove barriers to employment for homeless residents. This strategy will support both residents and employers, who gain access to skilled employees.

The second objective is to support efforts to develop affordable local and long distance public transportation to eliminate transportation barriers for those seeking training and employment.

The third and final objective is to identify diverse funding sources to provide necessary training or retraining that will lead to employment for the homeless. Securing income from employment will support longer-term housing stability for homeless individuals and families.

The GPWA Plan recognizes, like many of its peer jurisdictions, that diversifying and increasing the funding sources available to prevent and end homelessness is necessary to achieve success. The community strategies to expand and diversify funding resources include involving a diversity of stakeholders; research into funding sources and advocating for housing for households at or below 50% AMI and for funding to sustain housing at that income level.

2012

Prince George's County, Maryland

Prince George's County's plan, Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Prince George's County, 2012-2021, was completed in December of 2012 in partnership with 68 stakeholder organizations. During the 1980s, the County's Homeless Advisory Board helped develop a unified countywide set of strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness. In 1994, the Homeless Advisory Board was renamed the Homeless

Services Partnership (HSP) and became the official advisory body to the County Executive. The HSP now has assumed implementation of the 10 Year Plan, which began in Prince George's County's Fiscal Year 2013.

The Prince George's plan is based upon six core strategies to prevent and end homelessness:

1. Coordinated entry;
2. Prevention assistance;
3. Shelter diversion;
4. Rapid re-housing;
5. Permanent supportive housing and
6. Improved data and outcome measures.

The plan also addresses special populations (chronically homeless, veterans and domestic violence survivors, for example) as well as incorporating the 2009 federal legislation in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act.

Key Strategies

- Strategy One: Coordinated Entry

Prince George's County created measures under each core strategy to facilitate implementation of its plan. Strategy one, coordinated entry, has eight distinct aspects:

1. clear communication and cooperation between providers (this allows intake workers to make the best possible referral for services);
2. a clear and consistent assessment process (assistance to households will be focused on their level of need);
3. expanding the number of providers involved in HMIS (providers not required to use HMIS due to receipt of government funds will be encouraged to share data through this program);
4. information warehousing (information on

providers and services offered will be kept in one place and up-to-date);

5. data centralization (related to the last aspect, but this item relates to the use of HMIS to automate and share data across providers);
6. warm hand-offs and referrals (intake workers share data with providers to ensure clients transition into programs smoothly);
7. centralized triage (one or more locations will be identified to enhance the warm hand-off and referral process) and
8. emergency shelters and transitional housing (the County and HSP will continue to explore options to providing permanent housing solutions, while recognizing that moving away from transitional housing and emergency shelters will take a great deal of time and resources).

- Strategy Two: Prevention Assistance

The goal of prevention assistance is to reduce the number of people entering the homeless system and increase the percentage of individuals permanently housed. The actions associated with achieving this goal include:

- ◇ providing prevention services through the coordinated entry process (the Homeless Hotline screens callers for prevention services);
- ◇ careful targeting of households that are truly the most at risk of homelessness through the use of shelter data; (the HSP Assessment Committee will monitor shelter data to update the tool used to evaluate households, using a common set of standards that the HSP will develop);
- ◇ improving coordination with mainstream resources; (TANF, SNAP, OHEP, medical assistance, etc are programs that can help provide additional financial support for homeless families and individuals. The HSP

will also reach out to private, foundation and faith-based organizations to leverage as many existing resources as possible);

- ◇ improving coordination with the Department of Corrections; (the Countywide Re-Entry Roundtable is working on a protocol to establish housing needs for individuals exiting institutions);
- ◇ providing case management, landlord/tenant conflict mediation, and development of a housing plan as needed or required by funding sources; (the services each household receives will be tailored to their individual need, and may include mediation services, financial assistance or short-term case management);
- ◇ follow-up services; (The Housing Development Committee will develop a basic follow-up procedure to contact individuals three months after services ended to assess whether each person remains stably housed) and
- ◇ identify gap financing; (HSP will create the Fundraising Committee to be able to identify ways to fill funding gaps for programs and services).

- Strategy Three: Shelter Diversion

The goal of this strategy is to reduce the number of individuals entering the homeless system and increase the number of people placed in alternative housing. Intake workers will assist individuals in identifying alternatives to entering the shelter system, and may include financial assistance, case management, mediation or other services.

- Strategy Four: Rapid Re-Housing

The goal of implementing rapid re-housing is to shorten the length of stay in shelter for homeless individuals and reduce the number of returns to shelter following a rapid re-housing subsidy. Prince George's County is already implementing a rapid re-housing program but will continue to expand and improve it by:

- ◇ identifying funding opportunities; (using new funding from the Emergency Solutions Grant, and working cooperatively with the Department of Housing and Community Development to possibly reallocate funds and revise the county’s consolidated plan);
- ◇ converting the transitional housing programs to new models; (the county will explore converting transitional housing to “transition in place” and permanent supportive housing models);
- ◇ bolster landlord outreach efforts and partnerships; (the county will work with providers to expand the network of landlords involved in the rapid re-housing program);
- ◇ encouraging reunification when possible; (particularly for unaccompanied youth, the best permanent housing solution may be with a family member or friend);
- ◇ developing a housing barrier tool; (the
- ◇ HSP will develop a tool once a person is referred to rapid re-housing to ensure that the right mix of subsidy and services are provided);
- ◇ training for case managers and

- ◇ identifying gap financing; (the Fundraising Committee will be charged with seeking additional outside resources).
- ◇ Strategy Five: Permanent Supportive Housing

The goal of providing permanent supportive housing is to decrease the length of stay in homelessness and reduce the number of returns to the shelter system. The Prince George’s County HSP plans to do this by:

- ◇ developing and consistently using a vulnerability test as part of the universal assessment tool; (this assessment tool will help prioritize higher-barrier and chronically homeless individuals);
- ◇ creating new units, including conversion opportunities; (the HSP and county will explore expanding the permanent supportive housing (PSH) program by converting transitional housing beds into PSH beds);
- ◇ exploring the use of Medicaid in funding supportive services; (the HSP and County will be proactive in determining how best to use new resources available through the Affordable Care Act);



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Creative
Communities

- ◇ identifying gap financing; (as with the other strategies, the Fundraising Committee will seek resources for PSH as well).
- Strategy Six: Improved Data and Outcome Measures

This strategy is focused on improving and expanding the performance measurement tools used in Prince George’s County in order to inform current best practices and to measure the success of the plan in meeting its goals.

This will be accomplished by:

- ◇ defining performance measures that will drive funding requirements in the future; (HUD may define some measures, but County data points will likely include new episodes of homelessness, length of stay, returns to homelessness, exits to permanent housing and housing retention);
- ◇ implementing a new measurement process; (providers and stakeholders will be engaged in defining baseline data and benchmarks against which to measure progress);
- ◇ creating an incentive process based on performance; creating quality improvements for low performers and
- ◇ creating new structures around performance measurement.

The Prince George’s County plan also addresses special populations, such as unaccompanied homeless youth; chronically homeless, domestic violence survivors and returning citizens.

As the HSP and Prince George’s County implements this plan, it is worth sharing their observation that,

“Making changes in focus, direction and service priorities needed to prevent and end homelessness could require major changes in how programs are structured and what services are funded and it is important to remain mindful that true system change never ends. It is a circular process involving planning, implementing and evaluating and then starting the cycle again.”

2012 - Ongoing

Frederick County, Maryland

The Frederick County Coalition for the Homeless began the process of creating its 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in 2012 with its vision statement and will continue to work collaboratively with a wide variety of stakeholders to finalize the plan in 2014. Implementation on certain tasks will begin in 2014.

Established in 1983, the Frederick County Coalition for the Homeless (FCCH) is the oldest local coalition working to end homelessness in Maryland. The FCCH is a coalition composed of governmental and non-profit human service and community development organizations, religious institutions, local government officials, interested citizens, and people that are homeless or formerly homeless. The FCCH meets monthly in order to coordinate the planning of local homeless services, discuss local needs and review new projects, and advocate for additional resources to address homelessness.

In preparing its 10 Year Plan, the Frederick County Coalition created the following framework:

Vision: “What will homelessness look like in 2022?”

Housing

- Homelessness is a rare and brief event.
- Affordable housing options are plentiful.
- A wide array of housing options on the continuum of care consisting of emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing with sufficient operational funding exists.
- Frederick County’s population is aging but decent, affordable housing options are available for seniors’ needs.

Self-sufficiency

- A clear developmental path to self-sufficiency exists which is the basis for service provision.
- Employment opportunities abound with training and placement.
- The educational community exerts a greater effort to ensure life skills and school achievement among its students.
- All community members are sufficiently trained to be self-sufficient and full contributors to the economic system.

Public policy

- Public decision makers are committed to all sectors of the community.
- Frederick County leaders take a prominent role in advocacy for the needs of the community beyond its boundaries.

Community at-large

- The middle class is stable.
- Poverty is significantly reduced.
- Private sector is fully engaged and invested in a financial commitment to meet the needs of the community.
- Creative ideas and best practices are a part of community wide planning.

Changes

- The community can depend on an innovative plan to address homelessness that is responsive to a changing environment.

Health

- Behavioral health and health care services are adequate, appropriate, and accessible.

Service Provision

- Services to the homeless are fully coordinated and seamless in real time.
- Programs for children to break the cycle of poverty are coordinated.
- The foundation is in place to consolidate funding for homeless services.

The FCCH vision translates into four draft goals:

1. Increase shelter and service capacity within the continuum of care;
2. Sponsor an annual forum for all facets of the community, including business, nonprofit, and government, to address issues around homelessness and to encourage collaboration and positive change;
3. Identify and promote best practices in homelessness prevention programs so that the number of working families spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing is decreased (percentage reduction to be determined) and
4. Define, quantify and increase the current status of affordable permanent housing options (percentage increase to be determined)

Proven Strategies

The metropolitan Washington region's homeless service providers are facing many similar challenges in ending homelessness in their respective communities. Common elements in our region's plans include the following:

- Research into national and local best practices in developing the 10 Year Plan;
- Extensive community engagement and consultation in creating the 10 Year Plan;
- A recognition that sustained political will and leadership is critical to success;
- Measurable, quantifiable outcomes are required to measure what is working and what isn't;
- Systems change is a critical and ongoing process and Regular assessments of the tasks and objectives during implementation to ensure accountability.



Photo credit: Steve Rhodes

While many aspects of the plans region-wide incorporate elements recommended by the NAEH or by HUD, certain elements reflect the strategies and challenges that are specific to the metropolitan Washington region. For example:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing. This strategy is found in all of the region's 10 Year Plans and remains the greatest challenge to ending homelessness in the Washington area.
- A focus on increasing income, through employment and benefits receipt. Even if an individual or family is employed in the metropolitan Washington area, low-wage earners often do not have sufficient income to afford permanent housing in our region.
- A shift from an emergency shelter model to a "housing first" model and implementation of a rapid re-housing approach. A national best practice, many successful rapid re-housing programs have recidivism rates of less than 10%. Although this strategy has been successful in reducing family homelessness, the ability to end homelessness for this group is severely challenged by the high cost of housing in the metropolitan Washington region.
- Although not explicitly addressed in the 10 Year Plans, the loss of the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Foundations will be felt by every one of the area Continuum of Care, all of which identified the need to diversify funding and seek outside financial support. The Federal Housing Finance Administration directed the Foundations to wind down operations at the end of 2014. The Foundations were significant private sector partners on affordable housing initiatives, including homelessness. As federal resources to end homelessness continue to decline, the financial burden for additional resources from local governments and non-profit service providers may increase.

What Else Are We Doing to End Homelessness?

In addition to the dedicated front-line case management and the systems-wide management improvements that CoC members and partners are doing every day to assist individuals and families, there are several other ongoing efforts in the metropolitan Washington area to prevent and end homelessness.

The 100,000 Homes Campaign⁹ is a national effort to house 100,000 of the most vulnerable and chronically homeless individuals. A number of the metropolitan Washington area CoCs have joined the campaign, including Arlington County, Virginia; the District of Columbia; Fairfax County, Virginia; Frederick, Maryland; Montgomery County, Maryland and Prince William County, Virginia.

Related to the 100,000 Homes Campaign, in Virginia, the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness is leading a state-wide campaign “1,000 Homes for 1,000 Homeless Virginians.”¹⁰ In a complementary effort, during



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October 17, 2013 to January 24, 2014, the Virginia Learning Collaborative (in partnership with the National Alliance to End Homelessness) sponsored a “Rapid Re-Housing Challenge”¹¹. Thirty-three Virginia organizations participated in the effort to house as many homeless families as possible within 100 days. In total, 545 families were placed in permanent housing. Fairfax County, Virginia holds an awareness and fundraising event each fall called “Jeans Day”. This event brings in a great number of participants from the business, public and non-profit sectors to educate and inform residents about homelessness in their community. Funds raised from the event go to support permanent housing options and homeless services in the County. In Washington, DC, a new advocacy effort that launched in January 2014, “The Way Home” aims to end chronic homelessness in the District of Columbia by 2017.

Each November in Maryland, every county Department of Human Services participates in a “Homeless Resource Day” which is designed to be a “one stop shop” for persons and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Homeless Resource Day became a statewide event in Maryland beginning in 2011. The event brings together homeless service providers and government agencies to assist with items such as health education and enrollment, benefits, credit counseling, housing assistance, legal assistance and a variety of other personal services.

This list is not exhaustive and these efforts are just some of the many ways that **our region is working together to not just manage homelessness, but end it, for all.**

9 <http://100khomes.org/>

10 <http://www.vceh.org/1000-homes/1000-homes-for-1000-virginians>

11 <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/Virginia-Learning-Collaborative-Rapid-Re-Housing-Challenge>

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