

DURHAM



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CITY OF MEDICINE

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**March 24, 2011**

# **Homeless Prevention in the City and County of Durham**

## **An Evaluation and Recommendation**

## **Homelessness and Homeless Prevention: An Evaluation and Recommendation**

### **Summary of Recommendations**

The City Manager and County Manager present the following recommendations to address oversight of homeless prevention plans, programs and services and administration of the HEARTH Act and the Continuum of Care (CoC) for the City and County of Durham.

Principally, the City Department of Community Development (DCD), on behalf of the City and County, and in addition to other related functions will: administer the CoC and other homeless initiatives while assuring that the City and County activities compliment and adhere to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness; provide an unbiased and fair distribution of any funds available for the CoC and other homeless activities; and coordinate with all aspects of homeless prevention services and programs provided by others in the community. These activities will be accomplished utilizing funds that currently are provided by the City and the County to the Durham Affordable Housing Coalition (DAHC) to carry out the CoC and other homeless initiatives.

Additionally, the City and County Managers recommend:

- (1) That DCD carry out all homeless efforts, including administration of the HEARTH Act and CoC, now being performed by the DAHC.
- (2) The hiring of Lanea Foster, currently working at DAHC, beginning April 1, 2011 as a Project Manager for the DCD for the CoC and other homeless initiatives.
- (3) Creating a second position, that would be advertised, to also provide staff support for the CoC and other homelessness initiatives.
- (4) Giving a CDBG Public Services award to the County to create a FTE to expand on its homeless initiatives.
- (5) Creating a homeless services advisory committee, appointed by the City Council and the County Commission, consisting of elected officials at the City and County, representatives from the City and County Manager's offices, local institutes of higher learning, homeless providers, someone who has formerly been homeless, private sector members and others deemed valuable to the efforts to end chronic homelessness in Durham (see attachment). The City's DCD will staff this committee and organize the meetings.
- (6) Utilizing the existing Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) appointed by the City Council and the County Commission to provide an initial review and ranking of applications pertaining to the CoC or other homeless initiatives.
- (7) Providing both the City Council and the County Commission reports on progress, innovative approaches and other related information.
- (8) The County will be responsible for coordinating a System of Care program to serve the homeless population.

The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness is referred to as *Opening Doors*. This strategy has, at its heart, a collaboration of federal, state and local housing, health, education and human service programs. *Opening Doors* understands that these efforts must be fully engaged and coordinated to prevent and end homelessness. This means increasing leadership and collaborative and civic engagement by focusing on providing leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors, as well as strengthening the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness. An Executive Committee is recommended with the following participants:

- County of Durham (1BOCC/1 County Manager)
- City of Durham (1 City Council/1 City Manager)
- Durham Public Schools (1 School Board Member/ 1 Superintendent)
- Duke University (1)
- North Carolina Central University (1)
- Durham Technical College (1)
- Veteran’s Administration (1)
- County Veteran Services (1)
- Corporate/Private Sector Business (1 County/1 City)\*
- Formerly Homeless Persons (1 County/1 City)\*
- Non-profit (1 County/1 City)\*
- Faith Community (1 County/1 City)\*

\*Members appointed through City and County processes.

**Overview of Need**

While a good quality of life in Durham is enjoyed by many, every month families, single adults, and even unaccompanied youth who have never been homeless, may lose their housing and enter a shelter or find themselves on the streets. In Durham, the DCD is the City’s entity that recommends funding and works with the City’s homeless advocates and providers. A major portion of these funds and efforts are to assist families and persons who have already become homeless.

Creating affordable and permanent housing has been one of the priorities for the City, which, since 2007, has produced 257 rental units affordable to low income and 128 special needs units.

**Rental Housing Production (Low Income and Affordable) Since 2007**

Project	Units	HOME Funds	Total Cost
Maplewood	32	\$ 300,000	\$ 4,601,193
Franklin Village	74	\$ 200,000	\$ 9,750,000
DCLT - Carroll St.	<u>4</u>	<u>\$ 186,000</u>	<u>\$ 280,000</u>
	110	\$ 686,000	\$ 14,631,193

Project	Units	Bond Funds	Total Cost
Stewart HSC	147	\$ 1,160,000	\$ 7,915,477
<b>Total Units</b>	<b><u>257</u></b>		

### Special Needs Housing Production Since 2007

	Units	Income
Housing for New Hope - Andover I and II	20	30%
Volunteers of America - Maple Court	24	50%
Volunteers of America - Life House of Durham	24	50%
TROSA - Roxboro Street	4	25%
CASA - Buchanan Blvd.	4	30%
CASA - Vessons Court	10	30% & 60%
Housing for New Hope - Williams Square	24	30%
TROSA - Elizabeth Street	<u>18</u>	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>128</u></b>	

Even with this impressive production of rental units, and other effective services, reducing homelessness or ending it completely requires stopping these families and individuals from becoming homeless. Activities and strategies capable of preventing new cases are as important to ending homelessness as services that help those who are already homeless to reenter housing.

One of the most effective of these activities is to provide assistance to avert housing loss for households facing eviction. An example of funding provided through the DCD for this activity is the *Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP)*. The DCD administers this program, in partnership with the Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS). This \$789,101 grant focuses on those people and families most vulnerable to homelessness. To date, DSS has assisted 103 households in the form of prevention to those at risk of becoming homeless and has rapidly re-housed 42 households that were experiencing homelessness. To date, a total of 145 households have been served.

Other activities, such as those provided by the County's Durham Center, focus on solving problems that may cause homelessness, such as discharges from institutional settings including mental hospitals, jails and prisons.

Given that the causes and conditions of becoming homeless are often multifaceted, the City and County use a variety of strategies to prevent homelessness. One of these strategies has been working with the Durham Affordable Housing Coalition (DAHC), who for a number of years, has administered the Durham Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Durham Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (TYP).

DAHC's mission is to promote safe, just and decent affordable housing in Durham. It accomplishes this by facilitating the Campaign for Decent Housing, educating the public on affordable housing programs and lead-based paint hazards, assisting other non-profit affordable housing providers, providing financial counseling for home purchase, working on Fair Housing and Fair Lending practices and keeping housing issues before the public.

Administering a program to end chronic homelessness as well as a program to fund homeless activities seemed a good match for this organization. However, over time, two issues have surfaced. The first is the appearance of a conflict of interest since some recipients of the CoC funding sit on the DAHC's Board of Directors. Because scoring of the CoC applications has been a collaborative effort of the DAHC and the Triangle United Way, (the latter providing an unbiased review and scoring panel), there has always been an "arm's length" between the DAHC Board and the CoC application scoring. Nevertheless, there still exists "an appearance" of a conflict of interest, which is sufficient reason to examine this process.

The second concern, raised by the County of Durham, was that DAHC's capacity was not sufficient to engage the general public and raise additional resources to carry out the TYP's goals.

City and County leaders, as well as some providers, began discussions on how both the CoC and the TYP could be improved to provide maximum services in assisting homeless providers as well as ending chronic homelessness in Durham. This evaluation and recommendation summarizes the results of those discussions and recommends a course of action that would move the CoC from the DAHC to the City, as well as other related functions that would meet some recommendations of the Federal Strategic Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness - *Opening Doors*. Other aspects of *Opening Doors* would be transferred to the Durham Center.

The net effect of these recommendations would be to transfer all of the responsibilities now assumed by the DAHC to either the City or the County. The following indicate some of these duties. A number of these are tasks being handled by the staff at DAHC, and some of them are new tasks suggested by the HEARTH Act, *Opening Doors*, or the November 6, 2010 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Durham's proposal for a re-organization of the TYP.

City	County
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate best practices and adopt as needed.</li> <li>2. Expand community involvement to include people with firsthand experience with homelessness, the private sector, businesses, nonprofits, faith based organizations, foundations, youth oriented groups and organizations, including the Durham Youth Commission and other agencies, groups and volunteers.</li> <li>3. Ensure that data is collected and evaluated and that all providers are using the same method to collect information.</li> <li>4. Ensure that all counts, including beds, are accurate.</li> <li>5. Assess current status of programs and progress to goals and align with goals of <i>Opening Doors</i>.</li> <li>6. DCD staff to organize meetings with the homeless services advisory committee.</li> <li>7. Be proactive in examining ways to meet needs that are identified, such as how to work with the chronic homeless who do not use the shelters.</li> <li>8. Supervise and staff all aspects of the CoC process and HEARTH.</li> <li>9. Conduct the annual Point in Time Count.</li> <li>10. Carry out Homeless Connect.</li> <li>11. Recommend new and innovative programs for both increasing community awareness of the issue of homelessness and develop approaches to solving homeless situations and issues.</li> <li>12. Increase affordable housing stock and opportunities.</li> <li>13. Other related duties as assigned.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that quality programs are implemented and services are delivered effectively and efficiently with a System of Care approach in compliance with federal, state, county and other local guidelines.</li> <li>2. Measure and track outcomes to determine effectiveness of County housing initiatives and identify strategic priorities for homeless programs.</li> <li>3. Serve as a resource to the CoC application process.</li> <li>4. Play an active role in ensuring that the provider community is aware of and involved with the ongoing implementation of the Durham Center housing initiatives.</li> <li>5. Participate in and lead collaborative efforts to address opportunities to reduce homelessness and provide effective system redesign for consumers in the mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities service fields, the criminal justice system and the other agencies that provides homeless services..</li> <li>6. Educate and/or coordinate with the community regarding homeless housing resources and services.</li> <li>7. Establish and maintain working relationships with local agencies and other community partners.</li> <li>8. Collaborate with local agencies to improve the coordination of ancillary services and outcomes for homeless persons experiencing acute or chronic medical conditions.</li> <li>9. Participate in the annual Point in Time Count using pertinent data to improve access to services and supports.</li> </ol>

Activities specific to the HEARTH Act include:

<b>City</b>	<b>County</b>
Conducting the Homeless Connect and other networking events	Evaluating the creation of a day services center
Conducting Point in Time	Performing Case Management
Data Collection/Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHIN/HMIS</li> </ul>	Coordinating services through the System of Care and other resources
Coordinating Performance Measures	Securing public funds to match housing funds
Preparing the CoC Application	Participating in housing initiatives for homeless
Organizing Capacity Building	Educating and coordinating with community on homeless populations and resources
Program Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of Supportive Housing</li> </ul>	Providing clinical oversight in serving homeless sector
Building Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and TA to subrecipients of funding and other providers</li> </ul>	
<b>City and County</b>	
Discovering new and monitoring current prevention resources	
Mainstreaming services and support coordination	
Enhancing outreach services	
Developing housing initiatives for the homeless	

## **Conclusion**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has indicated that they will support a City request to change the administration of the CoC from the DAHC to the City. Currently, both the City and the County provide \$68,000 annually (\$136,000) to the DAHC for the TYP/CoC staff. The CoC has been a function of the DAHC since its inception, while the TYP's duties were a relatively recent assignment. Durham has many reasons to be proud of how both these programs have functioned. There is a solid base to build upon, and the recommendations presented here are intended to identify the best aspects of these programs and take them to another level.

For these reasons, the DCD is providing the above recommendations under the following oversight: The DCD will employ two positions, under the supervision of the Assistant Director of Fiscal Management and Planning Administration that are dedicated to working on the TYP, the *Opening Doors* federal policy, the HEARTH Act and the CoC. The TYP will be renamed, in collaboration with the new advisory committee, *Opening Doors in Durham to Prevent and End Homelessness*. Additional DCD staff support will be provided by Fiscal Management for compliance and monitoring adherence to the CoC program goals and HUD guidelines. The CoC activities will continue but with tighter controls and adherence to the new HEARTH Act.