

PRIORITY AREA: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Community Partners Addressing Homelessness (August 8, 2016)

1. What is the problem?

Group One

- Fragmented data collection being determined by outsiders (i.e. funders)
- Lack of communication between agencies (stretched resources – not seen as a priority)
- No measurement is used for future planning, tracking etc.

- Lack of affordable housing (especially for fixed income, seniors, and current homeless) with supports (including mental health and addictions)
- Need to work with residents to determine their needs and work toward meeting this (e.g. employment or adequate income)
- May lead to job and living wage issues

- Lack of affordable housing
- More support for mental health
- Accessibility (can be physical – i.e. wheelchair)
- Education on applying for housing and how to sustain housing
- Discrimination – racism, how a person looks and dresses, language barriers

- Lack of affordable, adequate, safe, relevant (possibly enhanced transitional) housing
- Lack of innovative approaches

- From an income assistance perspective: shelter rates are very low – single people on income assistance/persons with disability assistance receive \$375/month to cover all housing costs including rent and utilities
- It is exceptionally difficult to find any safe housing in this price range
- This means that IA clients have to take monies from their support allowance (food, clothing, etc.) to cover costs of housing – leading to poor diets, lack of any surplus funds for emergencies

Common Themes

- AFFORDABILITY
- SAFETY
- SUPPORTS
- DISCRIMINATION

Group Two

- Lack of support for people entering housing
- Little understanding of “rules/norms” for being a tenant – having multiple people stay indefinitely, coming and going at all hours, smoking, drugs, how to pay rent on time, paying utility bills (i.e. responsibilities of being a tenant)

- Lack of affordable housing in desirable areas
- Lack of supports

- Lack of accessibility (i.e. to buses and services)
- Lack of affordable housing options
- Lack of support for individuals with vulnerabilities to gain and maintain housing (e.g. long term homeless, drug and alcohol addictions, mentally ill, brain injured, neurologically impaired, kids leaving foster care, etc.)
- Inventory of safe, affordable housing
- Income assistance rates
- Criteria required by some landlords prior to renting
- Lifestyle and health issues (i.e. addiction) which can inhibit ability to maintain housing
- Landlords who are not interested in maintaining housing

Common Themes

AFFORDABILITY

LACK OF SUPPORTS

2. Why is this happening? Keep asking “why” until you get to the root causes of the problem.

Group One

Theme One: Affordability

- Fixed income
- Low shelter rates
- Minimum wage is not a living wage
- Increasing costs for landlords (utilities and property taxes)

Theme Two: Safety

- Older buildings in poor repair
- Bad neighborhoods
- Poor access to health care or supports

Theme Three: Supports

- Demand exceeds supply
- Lack of family/life skills advocates
- Travel to supports

Theme Four: Discrimination

- Seniors
- Credit reports
- References
- Pets
- Racism
- Language barriers
- Family Structure
- Health/Disabilities
- Mental Health

Group Two

Theme One: Affordability

- Low income assistance rates

Theme Two: Supports

- Insufficient supports due to funding cuts have led of a lack of assessment to learn capabilities and provide appropriate/enough support
- Insufficient time for mentoring and entry level training
- Erosion of volunteerism – leads to lack of community support for those working to sustain housing
- Lack of knowledge on the part of tenants dealing with stigma (lack of a sense of community belonging) and focused on survival

3. What measures would help us determine if we significantly improved or solved the problem?

- Number of social housing units being built
- Number of employers adopting a Living Wage (could track through Kopar)
- Decreased number of homeless individuals
- More disposable income (decrease in percentage of income spent on housing)

- Availability of affordable rental units
- Reduction in the use of shelter beds
- Less hospital use for issues associated with homelessness and/or inadequate housing
- Increased funding for assessments

Working Group Consideration:

Goals in relation to themes: Affordability, Supports