

WAUKESHA COUNTY HOMELESSNESS
ALLIANCE

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUBMITTED TO THE CITY OF WAUKESHA,
COUNTY OF WAUKESHA, AND UNITED
WAY IN WAUKESHA COUNTY CONVENERS
GROUP

OCTOBER 20, 2014

Prepared by:

Patrick Linnane, Planning Facilitator

WAUKESHA COUNTY HOMELESSNESS ALLIANCE

Steering Committee

<p>Jerry Bratz, Department Head University of Wisconsin-Extension Waukesha</p> <p>Steve Crandell, Director City of Waukesha Community Development</p> <p>Joan Francoeur Waukesha City Council</p> <p>* Kristen Gardner-Volle, Manager of Community Impact, United Way in Waukesha County</p> <p>Greta Hansen, Executive Director Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin</p> <p>Steve Howard, Asst. Chief of Administration City of Waukesha Fire Department</p> <p>Russell Jack, Chief City of Waukesha Police Department</p> <p>Laura Kleber, Deputy Director Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services</p> <p>* Gary Liedtke, Pastor St. Luke Lutheran Church</p> <p>* Mary Madden, Executive Director Waukesha National Alliance on Mental Illness</p> <p>Katie Miller, Executive Director Greater Oconomowoc Area Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>* Shawn Reilly, Mayor City of Waukesha</p> <p>Antwayne Robinson, Director Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services</p> <p>* John Schiraj, Director Impact Strategies and Operations United Way in Waukesha County</p> <p>Eric Severson, Inspector Waukesha County Sheriff's Department</p> <p>Dale Shaver, Director Waukesha County Parks and Land Use</p> <p>* Sandra Scherer, Senior Planner Waukesha County Parks and Land Use</p> <p>* Kristin Silva, Community Development Coordinator, Waukesha County</p> <p>Jayne Thoma, Executive Director United Way in Waukesha County</p> <p>Joan Ullrich, Manager Palliative Care and Outreach ProHealth Care</p> <p>Stephen Welch, Manager of Agency Development Community Action Coalition of So. Cent. WI</p>
--	---

* Indicates participation in both Steering Committee and Design Team work.

WAUKESHA COUNTY HOMELESSNESS ALLIANCE

Design Team

Kris Androsky, Pastor First United Methodist Church	Tom Ludtka, Veteran Service Officer Waukesha County
Amy Bauman, Vice President Programs Safe Babies Healthy Families	* Mary Madden, Executive Director Waukesha National Alliance on Mental Illness
Ashley Berka Waukesha Housing Authority	David Neill, Community Policing Unit City of Waukesha Police
Steve Cigich, President St. Vincent De Paul Waukesha	Larry Nelson Waukesha County Supervisor
Mariha Dewberry, Executive Director Family Promise	* Shawn Reilly, Mayor City of Waukesha
Debra Farrington, Social Services Director Salvation Army	*Sandra Scherer, Senior Planner Waukesha County Parks and Land Use
* Kristen Gardner-Volle, Manager of Community Impact, United Way in Waukesha County	* John Schiraj, Director Impact Strategies and Operations United Way in Waukesha County
James Gorman, Pastor United Church of Christ	*Kristin Silva, Community Development Coordinator, Waukesha County
David Helling Community Volunteer	David Simmons, Pastor St. Matthias Episcopal Church
Sunni Hirschfield, Program Coordinator National Alliance for Mental Health	

Michael Hogan, Management and Operations Women's Center of Waukesha	Erika Trawitzki, Director of Operations Hebron House of Hospitality
Bernie Juno, Executive Director Hebron House of Hospitality	Karen Tredwell, Executive Director Food Pantry of Waukesha County
Sheila Knox, District Director WOW Workforce Development Board	Matthew Wych, Outreach Worker Hebron House of Hospitality
* Gary Liedtke, Pastor St. Luke Lutheran Church	Ralph Zick, Executive Director Hope Center
	Michael Zirbel, Associate Director Food Pantry of Waukesha County

* Indicates participation in both Steering Committee and Design Team work.

Special Acknowledgements

There are two organizations that deserve special recognition for their contributions to the work of the Alliance: Impact 211 and the Institute for Community Alliances.

IMPACT 211 is a central access point for people in need that is new to the Waukesha community. During times of personal crisis or community disaster, the free, confidential helpline and online resource directory make it easy for residents to get connected to information and assistance. During the Alliance's planning process, which under contract with Waukesha County and United Way in Waukesha County was being introduced to the community. IMPACT 211 staff generously participated in discussions with the Design Committee regarding coordinated intake, case management, and service coordination. In particular, IMPACT 211 was helpful in the vetting process for the Alliance's final recommendations.

The Institute for Community Alliances is a non-profit organization headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa that operates Homeless Management Information Systems in multiple cities and states across the Midwest. Staff members from the Wisconsin offices were particularly helpful for understanding the information that is available to a community through the data collection procedures of the HUD sponsored Continuums of Care statewide and the Waukesha Continuum of Care locally.

HOMELESSNESS IN WAUKESHA COUNTY

Recommendations from the Waukesha County Homelessness Alliance

Background

Homelessness is a complex and challenging circumstance facing individuals and families in communities everywhere, especially as the impact of the recent financial crisis continues to wind its way through recovery. It hits home for people often in surprising and unsuspected ways and reverberates through the whole community as it tests a community's social infrastructure from law enforcement, to faith based organizations, and from food pantries to philanthropy. The Waukesha County community experience is no different. While substantial private and public resources have been brought to bear to help community members experiencing homelessness, there has been a growing concern among community leaders that these resources could be organized more efficiently to prevent homelessness, shorten episodes of homelessness, and more effectively move individuals and families to stable long term living arrangements.

On October 29, 2013, representatives (the Conveners Group) from the City of Waukesha and the County of Waukesha met with representatives of the United Way in Waukesha County to consider the benefits of a comprehensive and sustainable plan for addressing homelessness in Waukesha County.

The meeting was motivated by concerns that the current community response was fragmented and unpredictable in terms of general and specific resource requirements. It lacked a full understanding of those who are homeless, the conditions that lead to homelessness, and what it takes to address those conditions before, during, and after homelessness. Decision makers needed more information to identify gaps and/or shortfalls in services and do something about them. With a comprehensive planning approach resources could be maximized and impact improved. Planning, resourcing and coordination of services would have the benefit of broader community support.

The Conveners Group agreed to invite a broad array of community experts and community stakeholders who would be engaged in a planning process that would be facilitated by United Way in Waukesha County. The intention was to ensure that any planning process would be informed by the people who were working with homeless individuals and families on a daily basis and any planning work that had already been produced by community initiatives around

homelessness issues would be used as building blocks for developing the approach. The approach, in the form of recommendations to the community, would be available for use by all homelessness stakeholders for planning, designing, organizing and, in particular, coordinating resources to help community members who may be experiencing the effects of homelessness.

A letter of invitation was sent out to community leaders and homelessness service providers inviting them to become active in the discussion.

The response from the community was strong. The result was the formation of the Waukesha County Homelessness Alliance (Alliance), a community-wide voluntary planning effort made up of a leadership steering committee and a plan design team. The Steering Committee consisted of persons charged with collecting, managing, and allocating community resources that have a direct impact on services to homeless individuals and families. The Design Team was made up of persons who are involved in the day to day delivery of services to the homeless population. The Convener's Group charged the Alliance with the task of producing a plan that can be used to enlist the support, participation, and resources from the community needed to achieve the vision of the elimination of homelessness in Waukesha County.

This group of volunteers has now completed its work and produced a set of guiding recommendations for Waukesha County public and private entities to consider, endorse, and implement based on their own mission, resources, and accountabilities. The recommendations are built on inputs from all of the affected parties. They are meant to be practical and achievable and match the size and scope of the problem. Some of the recommendations are already being implemented, some lend themselves to short term implementation, and others will take time for the community systems to adapt and adopt. The recommendations are described later in this report.

The Alliance discussion groups began meeting at the end of January, 2014 with the first meeting of the Design Team. Over the course of the next four months the Design Team would meet twelve times and the Steering Committee four times. There were five volunteers who participated in both Design Team and Steering Committee discussions to ensure that the work of both groups was coordinated.

One of the first challenges for both the Steering Committee and the Design Team was to answer the questions about what was expected of the Design Team and the project overall. With the Steering Committee taking the leadership with input from the Design Team, a Charter was developed to guide the work of both the Design Team and the Steering Committee. The following Charter was the cornerstone for this planning process and, hopefully, a key foundation piece for any community planning going forward.

ALLIANCE CHARTER

This Charter is an agreement between individuals and organizations to guide the preparation of a community based strategy to eliminate homelessness in Waukesha County.

Background:

In the Fall of 2013, leaders from the United Way in Waukesha County, the City of Waukesha, and the County of Waukesha met to consider the need for a comprehensive and sustainable plan for addressing homelessness in Waukesha County. The result of that meeting is the Waukesha County Homelessness Alliance, a community wide planning effort consisting of a leadership steering committee and a plan design team. The Steering Committee is made up of people charged with collecting, managing, and allocating community resources that have a direct impact on services to homeless individuals and families, while the Design Team is made up of people who are involved in the day to day delivery of services to the homeless population. United Way, the City of Waukesha, and the County of Waukesha have charged the Alliance with the task of producing a plan that can be used to enlist the support, participation, and resources from the community needed to achieve the vision of the elimination of homelessness in Waukesha County.

Vision Statement: Eliminate homelessness in Waukesha County through broad based community support.

Core Values:

- An action plan that is based on a clear understanding of causes to direct case management and prevention efforts.
- Decisions for new or expanded or restructured services are supported by data.
- The plan addresses mutually agreed upon measurable outcomes.
- Proactive response to changing conditions, either in population characteristics or resource availability.
- Greater understanding by the community of the homeless issue.
- The plan includes input from persons who are homeless.

Goal: To produce a comprehensive community-wide plan that:

- Maintains a service array that matches and keeps pace with the needs of people who are homeless or who are about to become homeless.
- Identifies and maximizes resources to address documented need.

- Establishes a strategy to direct resources to maximize impact.
- Supports long term sustainability.
- Is supported by strong documentation and data.

Outcome expectations of the plan include:

- Stakeholders will recognize the plan as credible, incentivizing broad community participation in resourcing its implementation.
- The plan has been benchmarked in a way that identifies what is working and what is not.
- The community will be able to determine what resources, service structure, and service delivery system can best meet need and achieve desired results.
- The plan contains a strategy that addresses the needs of hard to reach homeless, especially those who may be severely mentally ill or are chronically homeless.
- The plan is adaptable.

Using the Charter as their guide, the Design Team moved forward with an extensive examination and consideration of who it is that is homeless in Waukesha County, how they became homeless, what services they need and receive, how services are organized and delivered, and how the community and its institutions are engaged in addressing the needs of homeless individuals and families.

The deliberations were based on past projects, data from provider agencies, federal, state, and local indicators data, expert testimony, model projects from other communities and design and build scenarios. These deliberations delivered a set of important observations that were used to develop a set of consensus recommendations. The recommendations were tested through a vetting process with both the Steering Committee and the Design Team. The Final Recommendations were submitted to the Convener's group on August 12, 2014.

SOME OBSERVATIONS THAT SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Size and Scope. Fixing the number of homeless on any given night or over any given period of time is challenged by a number of practical issues, the greatest being a lack of coordinated intake coupled with a limited capacity for outreach. While individual service providers keep data on the individuals and families they serve and reach out to, the ability to take that data and describe the overall experience of the community has been limited at best. Nevertheless, using reports generated by provider agencies that describe occupancy rates and discussions with the Design

Team, it is possible to establish an estimate of the number of persons who may be homeless and sheltered. These numbers range between 200 and 225 at any given period of time. Persons who are homeless but unsheltered range from 15 to 25 at any given period of time. Persons who have exhausted their own resources, are homeless, and are living temporarily with family and/or friends and are about to lose that living arrangement are part of a population that is primed to move into homelessness, but there is no capacity to count them. Knowing and understanding this population is critical to the design of homelessness prevention efforts. Finally, at certain times of the year, when it is dangerously cold or hot, the unsheltered homeless population tends to swell to a range of 25-35.

Information. The community has a substantial underutilized capacity for data reporting and information sharing. The ability to collect and organize data for management and administration of individual services has not kept pace with the ability to report that data in meaningful ways for community planning and resource development as well community awareness and understanding.

Service. There are several service gaps and shortfalls that cannot be addressed by individual providers alone. Gaps exist in services for some populations, e.g.; unaccompanied youth. Shortfalls exist, especially for single men, persons experiencing mental illness, and persons involved in abusing drugs and/or alcohol.

Housing Resources. There is a shortage of housing capacity that needs to be addressed by a community-wide development strategy which would include new housing, working with developers, enlisting landlords, and becoming informed about and engaged in a variety of financing options and opportunities.

Collaboration. There is a strong practice of collaboration and cooperation among homelessness stakeholders that has been driven by identification and remediation of immediate and emergency demands on the homelessness system. That practice needs to be elevated and expanded to include addressing long term and system-wide threats to the integrity and sustainability of the homelessness service system.

That brings us to the Final Recommendations listed below and delivered to the Convener's Group on August 12, 2014.

Final Recommendations

For Immediate Action

Recommendation 1: The Waukesha County Continuum of Care consider reviewing its current mission and structure to consider its capacity and interest in becoming a backbone organization to address homelessness in Waukesha County.

For Near Term Implementation

Recommendation 2: Support and promote IMPACT 211's coordinated entry to shelter in Waukesha County.

Recommendation 3: Develop a Community Housing Specialist position to address the volatile and often unpredictable living arrangements of families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Recommendation 4: Encourage the Continuum of Care, 211 Impact, and UW Extension and others join together in an information collective to ensure as much as possible access to information for developers, elected officials, landlords, et al.

Recommendation 5: Establish a special needs workgroup to address and improve upon the limitations of fragmented, unpredictable, and narrowly assigned categorical funding and to develop intensive case management approaches designed specifically for these targeted and special needs populations.

Recommendation 6: Create a public education/awareness strategy that can be used to engage and enlist a broader set of concerned community members and to ensure all community members that investments in housing and preventing homelessness are well managed, properly targeted, and highly beneficial for the whole community.

Recommendation 7: Support the Waukesha Housing Authority in its role as a key player and contributor to the supply of safe and secure affordable housing for low income families and individuals in the community.

For Future Implementation

Recommendation 8: Focus more attention on understanding, deliberating, and acting upon Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission housing studies and recommendations.

Recommendation 9: Develop a county-wide affordable housing development task force to interface with elected officials, planning commissions, developers, and others who have a say in adding affordable housing units within the county and its municipalities. The emphasis will be on adding more and smaller units, not adding large developments.

The most important recommendation that needs attention is Recommendation 1. It is elaborated on below.

Recommendation 1: The Waukesha Continuum of Care consider reviewing its current mission and structure to consider its capacity and interest in becoming a Backbone Organization to address homelessness in Waukesha County.

Many Waukesha County public sector organizations and agencies have formally established responsibilities for addressing parts of our community's housing challenges through federal, state, and local legislative action as well as administrative code guidance. Many other organizations in the community have mission driven commitments to meeting the needs of individuals and families for safe and secure housing and represent community interests beyond what is legislatively enacted. At the same time no one organization has a role in bringing everyone together. The Continuum of Care could assume that role.

Responsibilities of a Backbone Organization

The Backbone Organization would take responsibility for convening community stakeholders in a planned and predictable schedule to:

- collect, organize, and disseminate information about housing in our community;
- establish priorities for policy development, funding, evaluation, and benchmarking for the community;
- identify and promote opportunities for collaboration and the use of best practices;
- increase resources through supporting affordable housing development, fund development, and planned resource allocations;
- build confidence in resource utilization and effectiveness.

Relationships of a Backbone Organization

The Backbone Organization should consider establishing relationships with housing stakeholders and other key partners, either through membership, partnership, or interest area affiliation.

These relationships could include but are not limited to:

- local governments (elected and administrative offices)
- publicly contracted services
- nonprofits
- faith community
- businesses
- schools
- health care
- law enforcement
- safety services
- hospitals
- philanthropies

Regional relationships are also important, especially with adjacent counties. Many individuals and families in need of housing assistance move from one county to another seeking temporary assistance. The Backbone Organization would work with other counties to share lessons, best practices, important information, and possibly create shared initiatives in legislation, service development, and housing options.

Goals of a Backbone Organization

1. Establish a stable and sustainable set of public and private funding sources complemented by volunteer resources that support a comprehensive service system.
2. Establish community-wide priorities and community-wide strategies.
3. Inform and coordinate Funder commitments, goals, and expectations.
4. Promote community awareness and education regarding housing conditions and needs for the county.
5. Develop capacity to manage spikes in demand for temporary or transitional housing.
6. Build community recognition of the Plan as credible and incentivize broad community participation in resourcing its implementation.

Within each of the long term goals, the Backbone Organization would have the following objectives:

1. Assure funding and other resources are linked to documented need, are coordinated and leveraged to maximize mutually agreed upon impact.
2. Support collaboration, research, and development.
3. Support accountability infrastructure for the system of services.
4. Recruit and engage business, government, and philanthropy on behalf of community members who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

What outcomes might the community expect from a Backbone Organization?

- Community knows the housing challenges facing it and sees a shared path for addressing them.
- Community understands and shares the priorities set by the Backbone Organization.
- Funders have confidence in the information they use for resource allocation decisions.
- Funders share information and understanding to set their priorities and allocations.
- The Community Plan guides the deliberations and actions of the Backbone Organization, its members, and community stakeholders.
- Resource gaps are identified and reduced.
- Time spent in insecure and unsafe housing is eliminated.
- Time spent in emergency shelter is reduced.
- Communities share information that stakeholders report helps the well-being of the systems of support.
- Individuals and families receive assistance so that they do not need emergency shelter assistance.

Why the Continuum of Care Can Be a Good Fit

According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) documents, the Continuum of Care Program is designed to:

- assist individuals (including unaccompanied youth) and families experiencing homelessness;
- provide the services needed to help such individuals move into transitional and permanent housing;

- achieve the goal of long-term housing stability;
- promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness;
- improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness;
- improve data collection and performance measurement; and
- allow each community to tailor its programs to the particular strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community.

Community Support for a Backbone Organization

The Alliance recommendation for establishing a Backbone Organization is based on the clear understanding that any organization that would choose to become a Backbone Organization will need substantial new and additional support to perform that role successfully.

The Alliance foresees a combination of direct and indirect support coming to the Backbone Organization from both public and private sources. The active participation of Municipal and County government along with the Business and Philanthropic Communities form the essential building blocks for a successful and sustainable Backbone Organization.

Some of the items that a developing Backbone Organization will require support for include:

Mission and Vision Development

Identification and Commitment to Measurable Outcomes and Community Impact

Governance Structure

Membership Structure and roles, responsibilities, and relationships

Financial structure and processes

Operating Procedures

Staffing Requirements

Community Engagement

Funder Relations

In Conclusion

None of the Alliance's recommendations are meant to be prescriptive in any way. In fact, the Alliance learned during the process of vetting the recommendations that in order to move them forward, the recommendations should:

- Match any interventions to problem size and scope.
- Make connections to the current developing homelessness system as seamless as possible.
- Avoid mission drift. Focus on homelessness. Don't lose sight of homelessness in larger affordable housing issues but keep connected to them.
- Make it easy to understand what people are signing on to.
- Don't disrupt existing structures and processes unwittingly or unnecessarily.
- Build capacity of existing organizations to collaboratively achieve the targeted outcomes of the recommended backbone organization.
- Respect each contributing and participating organization's mission and vision.