

Homeless Taskforce Recommendations

1) Promote an intentional, proactive, and healthy approach to engaging with the homeless.

- Administration/City Council Action: Enter into a contract for Professional Services with a selected organization for a two-year pilot project—street outreach team. Ensure that trauma-informed practices, peer support strategies, Native American experience, and partnership with the Helpline Network of Care is required in the contract with the selected organization. Review pilot project between SFPD and Southeastern Behavioral Health to help determine specific goals in the contract. Establish clear metrics for reviewing the effectiveness of the program. For example, determine if there was a reduction in 911 calls for service in certain areas and determine how many individuals were connected to a continuum of care throughout the two years.
 - ESTIMATED COST—\$500,000 (\$300,000 in year one and \$200,000 in year two)
- Administration/City Council Action: Collaborate with other nonprofit organizations to develop a public education campaign that helps the public understand the challenges of homelessness, healthy approaches to helping, and specific action the public should take regarding panhandling. A key emphasis should be placed on helping people understand why individuals are panhandling. Give consideration to replacing current signage with a QR code or specific web address or phone number with resources.
 - ESTIMATED COST—\$125,000 (Look at pooling resources with other entities that are also considering some sort of public education campaign around the issue of homelessness.)

2) Encourage community-wide participation in the Helpline Center’s Network of Care.

- City Council Action: Establish a fund that incentivizes nonprofits or other agencies to participate in the Helpline Network of Care.
 - ESTIMATED COST—\$250,000 Incentive Fund, \$102,000 support to the Helpline Center for HIPAA compliance
- Administration/City Council Action: Host a roundtable discussion with other key leaders across the city, county, and state regarding database operations and the continuum of care.

3) Enter into formal planning with Minnehaha County officials to start new or grow existing “Housing First with Wraparound Services” strategies.

- City Council Action: Establish joint committee with the Minnehaha County Commission to explore grant funding opportunities for identified priorities, and partnership options to strengthen existing efforts, and develop new efforts that promote a “Housing First” strategy with appropriate wraparound services. Determine impact of the “Just Home” project underway and where gaps will continue to exist
 - ESTIMATED COST—TBD in partnership with County

4) Review the existing loitering and panhandling ordinance with Law Enforcement, City Attorney’s Office, and other impacted individuals.

- Administration/City Council Action: Conduct a thorough review with Chief of Police, City Attorney, and others to determine if changes to the loitering ordinance are necessary.
 - ESTIMATED COST—\$0

Notes on Other Issues or Ideas Discussed: The Task Force does not have specific recommendations on the following items but believes the Mayor and the City Council need to be aware of these issues. In some instances, there are efforts currently underway in the community. It is best to not create any other efforts at this time, but support and monitor what comes of the current efforts before exploring other potential actions the City could take.

- Shelter Capacity: A need may exist to identify a location and operator for a temporary emergency shelter this winter to handle overflow from existing shelters who have reached their occupancy limits. There may be a need to secure city, county, and private support for operations with the intent that this is a short-term solution while other strategies are implemented (family shelter, additional housing first units) to reduce overall shelter use. It is recognized that an additional temporary emergency shelter is not ideal, and brings with it a variety of other challenges such as location, staffing, and funding. A temporary emergency shelter may also have unintended consequences to other efforts of moving people forward in the continuum of care. Therefore, the current effort and energy should be dedicated to strengthening the “Housing First” strategy, and other initiatives recommended herein or are already underway.
- Proactive Measures: It is recognized that a disproportional number of our homeless population are Native Americans. There is a need for community conversation on creating a community campaign focused on prevention by strengthening Native American graduation rates and strengthening partnerships in Native American services.

- **Identifications:** The task force has discussed the consistent challenge for homeless individuals having access to needed State or Federal IDs. There are multiple entities in the community that are making resources available, but many believe that there needs to be a simpler process for people to get needed identifications.
- **Mental Health Services:** There needs to be a clear strategy for how the community provides mental health services to the homeless population. Conversations should be consistently pursued with various community partners regarding intentional efforts to serve the homeless population once the Link has completed its strategic planning process.
- **Sheltering Homeless Families:** Create a collaborative effort to provide an alternative shelter for homeless families, and develop a broader community effort to meet capacity needs of existing shelters. Discussion and planning is currently underway to utilize the existing Children's Inn facility to house homeless families.
- **Create More Housing Units:** It appears there is a growing need for the consistent creation of more housing units for individuals/families under 60 percent of the Average Median Income. Thrive's Housing Action Team is currently in the process of creating a Housing Trust Fund. The Accessible Housing Advisory Board is in the process of reviewing opportunities as well. The Administration/City Council will need to determine whether to provide funding, ongoing or otherwise, if the Housing Trust Fund becomes a reality.