



## **A Home for Everyone: A United Community Plan to End Homelessness for Portland/Multnomah County**

Portland prides itself in being a wonderful place to call home. We possess the assets of a thriving urban center while maintaining the feeling of a close community. Here, “offering a helping hand” is not just a cliché, it’s how we interact with one another and our community.

Despite our city’s strengths, every resident does not experience the same quality of life. Increased unemployment and a widening gap between the wealthy and poor show that we do not share equally in the economic benefits and opportunities our city has to offer.

Homelessness is a crisis. We need to urgently respond because lives are at stake as a result of our actions. The facts are:

- 1,700 people sleep on our sidewalks each night.
- Nearly half (46%) of those experiencing homelessness are people of color, although they comprise only 29% percent of Multnomah County’s population.
- More than 3,000 school children in Multnomah County were homeless last year.
- Two out of three of our lowest-income neighbors pay more than half of their income on rent, placing them at risk of losing their homes.

### **Why a plan will make a difference**

- Homelessness can be solved. Prior to the 1980’s, it didn’t exist in the numbers we see today. And, it can be prevented; we know what works well in our community.
- Housing is the foundation of a person’s success in achieving good health, education and employment/income; it allows people to participate and contribute in their communities.
- There is a significant shortage of affordable housing in our community. Addressing this shortage is key to ending homelessness in our community. This plan will focus our efforts to expand affordable housing access for our lowest-income residents and prevent new people from becoming homeless.
- Ending homelessness will reduce disparities in housing access for people of color. There are significant racial inequities among those who experience homelessness. Our plan will offer effective solutions to decrease and eliminate these disparities.
- Homelessness is expensive for residents and businesses. It increases costs for health and mental health care, jails, police and schools. We save money and produce better outcomes when people have a place to call home. Our whole community advances when homelessness is ended.

### **Responding to the crisis of homelessness**

Over the past eight years, our community has come together in unprecedented ways to respond to the crisis of homelessness. The *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness (Ten Year Plan)* was launched in December 2004, which established ambitious goals, improved service delivery and targeted investments and partnerships across public, private and nonprofit sectors. Our successes are highlighted in **Attachment A**, “Ten Year Plan Summary: 2005-2011 (Years 1 to 7)”.

Highlights include:

- More than 12,000 homeless households found permanent homes. After 12 months, 84% were still stably housed.
- Opened the ground-breaking Bud Clark Commons, which includes a day center for housing access and services, emergency shelter for 90 men, and 130 units of permanent supportive housing. In its first 6 months, the day center provided basic services to 4,300 unduplicated individuals. Of these, 290 found permanent housing and 2,000 were connected to social services.
- Launched Bridges to Housing, an innovative four-county collaboration providing permanent housing, intensive family services and child care for homeless families with high needs. By 2011, more than 187 families had been assisted.
- Our nationally recognized Short-Term Rent Assistance program (STRA) was created in 2005 and consolidated federal, state and local funding from the City of Portland, City of Gresham, Multnomah County and Home Forward into a single, centrally-administered rent assistance and eviction prevention program.

To further our commitment to ending homelessness, we need a renewed vision and an updated plan that builds on our past success and shared learning, and refocuses our direction and investments for the next five years and beyond. We need to better align with new federal funding opportunities and mandates. And we have new and on-going challenges, such as the lagging economy and tight rental market, and opportunities such as those presented by the Affordable Care Act.

## **Envisioning “A Home for Everyone”**

Over the past decade, national housing and service resources have gradually diminished. Communities across the country are struggling to help families and individuals experiencing homelessness to return to housing, and our resolve to end homelessness has grown even stronger. In 2012, a new committee was convened by the City of Portland, Multnomah County and Home Forward which brought together diverse stakeholders to review data, listen to the community and learn from effective practices, locally and nationally. Participants are included in **Attachment B**.

Our vision:

**No one should be homeless – everyone needs a safe, stable place to call home.**

Our principles:

- **Prioritize vulnerable populations:** Homelessness has significant detrimental effects on everyone, yet there are some whose health and safety are placed at even greater risk for harm without a safe and stable place to call home. These groups include, but are not limited to: children, women fleeing from domestic violence situations and people with disabilities. Strategies to identify and assist the most vulnerable groups will be prioritized.
- **Promote racial and ethnic justice:** To eliminate the disproportionate rates of homelessness among many communities of color, we will adopt strategies to achieve equity in both access and outcomes in all areas of housing and services. These strategies

will include culturally specific services, using a racial equity lens across all program investments and dedicated funds to eliminate disparities by race and ethnicity.

- **Use data-driven assessment and accountability:** To best utilize our resources, we must understand the outcomes of our investments, evaluate progress and demonstrate accountability. We will continue to improve and expand our community-wide data system so funders and providers can efficiently collect data, share knowledge for better client outcomes and report outcomes against the goals of the plan.
- **Engage and involve the community:** Policy makers and community stakeholders must understand the magnitude of the challenge, the costs if we don't meet the challenge, our strategies for ending homelessness and the importance of obtaining and allocating resources equal to our aspirations. *A Home for Everyone* will ensure that the specific concerns and interests of our local, regional and national stakeholders are heard.
- **Strengthen system capacity and increase leveraging opportunities:** The long-standing solutions to prevent and end homelessness transcend multiples systems of care – foster care, domestic violence, community justice, health, mental health and addictions -- and available resources. To permanently end homelessness, we must strengthen efficiencies in our current system and better align other resources towards ending homelessness.

## Where do we begin?

Achieving *A Home for Everyone* is within our reach. To ultimately succeed, we will:

- Coordinate investments in safety net services and permanent solutions, which will help “break down silos” among various systems (health, community justice, mental health).
- Preserve public and private investments, with a commitment to align dollars to be used as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Set ambitious goals and hold ourselves accountable to measuring and achieving them.
- Create strategies to leverage additional resources among public, philanthropic, business, faith and secular nonprofit sectors.
- Identify new resources and develop proactive strategies to meet our goals.

We will start by focusing existing resources to support *priority populations* to achieve the greatest benefit for very vulnerable populations, particularly:

- Families with children
- Unaccompanied youth
- Adults with disabilities
- Women
- Veterans

Within each of these groups, we will prioritize assisting those who are the most vulnerable, including children and others whose health and safety is put at most risk from being with no home to call their own. Based on the unique and complex aspects found within each population, “vulnerability” may look and be defined differently across different groups. Race and ethnicity will be an important factor in assessing vulnerability. A racial equity lens will be used to inform and guide the allocation of resources to effectively address disparities based on race and ethnicity which are prevalent and pervasive within the priority populations and other groups experiencing homelessness.

We will also improve alignment of existing resources to support a more comprehensive, integrated approach to service delivery, consisting of six priority program areas:

1. Housing
2. Income and benefits
3. Health
4. Survival and emergency services
5. Access to services
6. System coordination

**Attachment C** provides a summary of each program area, including: a) accomplishments, b) challenges and c) opportunities. As our community's collective investments become increasingly aligned and additional resources are secured, we will have even greater capacity to reach our goals.

### **Next steps**

1. Develop an Action Plan that identifies effective strategies to end homelessness within the priority populations and six program areas. By April 1, 2013, staff from the local jurisdictions will convene subject matter experts, consumers and other community stakeholders to help develop the Action Plan. It will include specific goals, by population, with an estimate of the cost to implement. The plan will also include specific strategies to ensure an equity focus is maintained throughout the process of planning, implementation and evaluation. The Action Plan will be completed by November 2013.
2. City of Portland and Multnomah County elected officials will convene a new governing body by July 1, 2013, which will represent jurisdictions and stakeholder groups, including government, private foundations, businesses, consumers, faith and community organizations. The governing body's responsibilities will include: a) make policy recommendations to local government and funders; b) review and develop strategies to align and maximize the effectiveness of resources; c) oversee coordination of local efforts with state and federal policies; and d) be inclusive, accountable and transparent to the community. Funders may seek guidance from, or delegate authority to, this body to make coordinated decisions about the investment of local government dollars, private dollars, and federal funds.
3. Begin the process of coordinating public and private investments in ending homelessness.

The *Ten Year Plan* included highly effective approaches and programs that work, are cost-effective and keep people in homes. Locally and nationally, new strategies are emerging. As our work gets underway, we will together make great strides forward to ensure a future in which there is *A Home for Everyone*.

Attachment A: "Ten Year Plan Summary: 2005-2011 (Years 1 to 7)"

Attachment B: Reset Committee Roster

Attachment C: Summary of Priority Program Areas

# Home Again

*A 10-year plan to end homelessness in  
Portland and Multnomah County*

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## **Ten Year Plan Summary: 2005-2011 (Years 1 to 7)**

### **1. Move people into housing first**

- A. Since the start of the plan, 12,511 total placements of homeless households into permanent homes have been made. Of this total, approximately 40% were families, 23% were chronically homeless individuals and 21% were survivors of domestic violence. Of those contacted, 84% were still stably housed 12 months after placement.
- B. A total of 1,882 homeless youth were placed into safe and stable housing, which included 410 placements into permanent homes.

### **2. Discharge or release individuals to housing with appropriate services**

- A. Oregon Legislature SB 808 was passed, which requires a transition plan to independent living for youth ages 16 and older who are released from DHS care and custody.
- B. Effective June 12, 2012, all Community Corrections departments from 36 counties in Oregon will have access to the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) system. The system is a tool to support individuals experiencing homelessness who are released from an institution to more successfully reintegrate into the community and connect to housing and services.
- C. Since its inception in 2005, the Recuperative Care Program has served more than 1,000 medically vulnerable adults, decreasing unnecessary length of stay in the hospital and preventing many unnecessary Emergency Room visits. 100% of adults served were connected to primary health care and 70% left the program to stable housing.

### **3. Improve outreach**

- A. The Key Not A Card (KNAC) program, which ran from 2006 to 2009, placed more than 686 households into permanent housing directly from the streets. Since then, street-to-housing placement has been incorporated as a standard, effective practice for several outreach programs in our community.
- B. Completed the design and ground-breaking of the Bud Clark Commons, which provides a day center for housing and services and 90 beds of emergency shelter for men operated by Transition Projects, and 130 new units of permanent supportive housing operated by Home Forward. In the first 6 months of opening, the day center has served 4,300 unduplicated individuals with basic services. Of these, 290 found permanent housing and 2,000 were connected to social services.
- C. From 2005 to 2008, eight "Project Homeless Connect" events were held, mobilizing more than 3,000 volunteers and 36 businesses to serve about 3,500 homeless people annually.

- D. Provided expanded and enhanced information and referral services for the community through resources such as Housing Connections, a website to help people locate affordable housing, and the Rose City Resource Guide, a comprehensive list of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

#### **4. *Emphasize permanent solutions through homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing***

- A. Since 2007, the Short Term Rent Assistance program (STRA), coordinated by Home Forward, has prevented 4,569 households from becoming homeless through eviction prevention assistance and placed 1,683 households into permanent housing through rental assistance. After 12 months, 79% of households housed through the program are still housed.
- B. The Multnomah County Family Shelter-to-Housing Partnership brings together nonprofit agencies, the faith community and local government to provide year-round shelter and two shelters during winter months. The partnership focuses on moving families quickly from shelter into housing by providing housing placement assistance, day shelter services and nighttime shelter. From July 2010 to June 2012, the partnership successfully placed 246 families (793 people) from shelter into permanent homes.
- C. In 2009, tenant education curriculum “Rent Well” was launched to provide formerly homeless individuals with skills and knowledge to maintain rental housing. Across the four county Portland Metro area, there are currently 253 certified instructors and 72 community agencies.

#### **5. *Increase supply of permanent supportive housing***

- A. Bridges to Housing, an innovative four-county initiative provides permanent affordable housing, intensive family services and child care services for homeless families with high needs. By 2011, Multnomah County providers served 187 homeless families.
- B. Opened 130 new permanent supportive housing (PSH) units at the Apartments at Bud Clark Commons for homeless individuals with severe health conditions. In partnership with community clinics, 130 residents were housed and connected to a primary health care home. They also received access to mental health services and other essential support.
- C. In 2008, the goal was set to secure 300 additional VASH vouchers for homeless veterans with disabilities over the next five years. To date, 305 VASH vouchers have been secured.

#### **6. *Create innovative new partnerships to end homelessness***

- A. Several new and innovative partnerships among faith communities, government entities and service providers were formed:
  - *The New City Initiative* began in 2010 as a project of JOIN to engage the faith community in ending the cycle of homelessness by building supportive relationships. In 2010-11, a network of more than 20 congregations participated in community-building activities. In 2012, New City launched the Covenant of Hope project in partnership with Human Solutions, whereby congregations provide rent and other support to homeless families. To date, 15 congregations and faith-based organizations have committed more than \$26,000 to sponsor 11 families.

- Multnomah County hired an *Inter-Faith Coordinator* to support greater collaboration among faith groups, government entities and direct service agencies.
  - In 2011, the City of Portland and Multnomah County passed the *Overnight Sleeping Resolution*, which allows faith groups and other nonprofits to create safe spaces for families and individuals to park and sleep in their cars as they access services and long-term housing opportunities.
- B. The City of Portland funded a \$1 Million Special Appropriation for services to adults and youth experiencing homelessness in downtown Portland. In the first year, collaborations led by JOIN and New Avenues for Youth helped 310 individuals find permanent housing and reached 2,400 youth through outreach. Additionally, 78 people received benefits assistance, 39 youth secured employment and 34 adults were connected to employment training.
- C. Action for Prosperity (AFP), a successful pilot project launched in 2009 with federal stimulus dollars, assists low-income families to stabilize their housing and work towards employment and self-sufficiency. From late 2009 through 2010, 287 families participated in the program. Upon exit, 90% of families were renting or owned their own home, and 60% gained stable employment. In 2011, the effective AFP program model was replicated to help secure a \$1.365 million multi-year federal grant to provide integrated housing and employment services for homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS.
- D. Leadership from the area’s three jurisdictions (Home Forward, Multnomah County, Portland Housing Bureau) formed the “10YP Reset Committee” to look at what the community has accomplished thus far under the 10YP, and to identify areas for improvement and renewed public commitment to ending homelessness. The committee includes leadership from the three jurisdictions, representatives from the faith community, the healthcare sector, the police bureau, the business community, the Coalition of Communities of Color, the Coalition for Homeless Families, the homeless youth system, and four members of the current Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness (CCEH) Steering Committee.

**7. Make the rent assistance system more effective**

- A. In 2005, the Short-Term Rent Assistance program (STRA) consolidated federal, state and local funding from the City of Portland, City of Gresham, Multnomah County and Home Forward into a single centrally-administered rent assistance program. In 2011, more than \$4 million of consolidated funds went into STRA. The funds were successfully contracted out to 19 nonprofit providers in the community and served 2,365 households<sup>1</sup>.
- B. Home Forward significantly increased its commitment of Project-Based Section 8 Vouchers to projects serving households exiting homelessness and/or providing permanent supportive housing. At the end of 2011, 902 vouchers were in use supporting these projects.
- C. Home Forward’s Strategic Operations Plan directs Home Forward to “deploy resources with greater intentionality and alignment with other systems while increasing the number of households served.” Home Forward’s Strategic Operations Plan sets the stage for Home Forward to build on its existing commitment to the 10-year plan in new and innovative ways.

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<sup>1</sup> FY 2010-2011.

## **8. Increase economic opportunity**

- A. Since 2005, the City of Portland-funded Economic Opportunity Initiative (EOI) programs have assisted 737 homeless individuals in securing employment and provided services and training to over 1,050.
- B. 6,727 adults experiencing homelessness received employment assistance and training through Central City Concern's Employment Access Center. Of those served through the center, 2,182 secured employment with an average hourly wage of \$9.86.
- C. Central City Concern's Benefits & Entitlements Specialists Team (BEST) program (also known as the Homeless Benefits Recovery Program) supported 882 homeless individuals with disabilities to receive services to expedite their acquisition of benefits and entitlements. Of the 781 claims filed, 580 were awarded, with 101 decisions pending. Since 2008, the program has produced an estimated community benefit of over \$6.6 million in SSA income alone. Funding for the program is provided by the Portland Housing Bureau and Multnomah County.
- D. From 2007-2011, 62% (1,494 of 2,422) of homeless individuals receiving services through HUD McKinney funds secured employment income upon exit.

## **9. Implement new data technology throughout the homeless system**

- A. ServicePoint, Portland/Multnomah County's homeless management information system (HMIS) has greatly enhanced our community's capacity to collect and analyze data through standardized reporting. Currently 76% of shelter and transitional housing beds are included in the HMIS. More than 537 agencies and their programs are using ServicePoint.

## Attachment B

### Ten Year Plan Re-Set Committee Participants

<b>Executive Jurisdictional Leadership</b>	<b>Organization/Role</b>
Mary Li, Manager, Community Services, Department of County Human Services	Multnomah County
Steve Rudman, Executive Director	Home Forward
Traci Manning, Director, Portland Housing Bureau	City of Portland

<b>Elected Officials Representatives</b>	
Beckie Lee, Chief of Staff for Commissioner Deborah Kafoury	Multnomah County
Daniel Ledezma, Policy & Equity Director, Portland Housing Bureau	City of Portland

<b>Key Partner Representatives</b>	
Andrew McGough, Executive Director	Worksystems, Inc.
Carly Riter, Director of Government Relations, Portland Business Alliance	Portland Business Alliance
Doreen Binder, Executive Director, Transition Projects	Adult System
Ed Blackburn, Executive Director, Central City Concern	Central City Concern
Eric Bauer, Executive Director, Portland Rescue Mission	Faith Community
Erika Silver, Deputy Director, Human Solutions	Coalition for Homeless Families
John Miller, Executive Director, Oregon ON	Oregon Opportunity Network
Kris Billhardt, Director, Volunteers of America/Home Free	Domestic Violence System
Liesl Wendt, CEO, 211info	211info
Liv Jossen, Manager, Transition Services Unit, Multnomah County	Multnomah County Corrections
Marc Jolin, Executive Director, JOIN	CCEH Co-Chair
Matt Morton, Executive Director, Native American Youth and Family Center	Youth System
Priscilla Lewis, Community Services & Development, Providence Health & Services	Health and Hospitals
Sara Westbrook, Captain, Central Precinct	Portland Police Bureau
Serena Stoudamire Wesley	Coalition of Communities of Color
Shannon Singleton, Program Manager, The Royal Palm, Cascadia BHC	CCEH Co-Chair

<b>Facilitator</b>	
Joe Hertzberg	Solid Ground Consulting

<b>Support staff</b>	
Ian Slingerland, Assistant Director, Rent Assistance	Home Forward
Jacob Fox, Assistant Housing Director	Portland Housing Bureau
Jennifer Chang, Ending Homelessness Program Coordinator	Portland Housing Bureau
Jodi Shaw, Administrative Analyst, Human Services	Multnomah County
Julie Osburn, Administrative Assistant	Multnomah County
Kristina Smock, Principal	Kristina Smock Consulting
Mary Welch, Sr. Administrative Specialist	Portland Housing Bureau
Rachael Duke, Manager of Operations and Partnerships	Home Forward
Rachel Post, Public Policy Advisor	Central City Concern
Randi Moore, Office Manager & Executive Assistant	Solid Ground Consulting
Ryan Deibert, Ending Homelessness Program Coordinator	Portland Housing Bureau
Sally Erickson, Ending Homelessness Initiative, Program Manager	Portland Housing Bureau
Sonia Schmanski, Policy Director for Commissioner Nick Fish	City of Portland

## **Summary of Priority Program Areas: Accomplishments, Challenges and Opportunities**

The Action Plan will expand upon the following summary of accomplishments, challenges and opportunities. The information contained in this summary was collected through a community process that included: more than a dozen focus groups, meetings with provider networks, and input from Reset Committee members. This summary is a starting point.

### **I. Housing**

#### **Accomplishments**

Since the start of the *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness (Ten Year Plan)*, more than 12,000 individuals and families found permanent homes. After 12 months, 84% were still stably housed. Effective approaches include:

- First solve the housing problem, then provide services to help keep people in housing (“housing first”).
- Move people from the streets and shelters into homes with rent assistance and connect them with services.
- Increase affordable rental housing for people earning extremely low-incomes (0-30% MFI).
- Increase the supply of permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities.
- Provide transitional housing when it is the most effective method, such as for youth, people with addictions who want to get sober, those with serious mental health issues and those escaping domestic violence.
- Offer eviction prevention and rent assistance connected with services to keep people in their homes. For families, this means that school-aged kids are able to be more successful in school.

#### **Challenges**

The shortage of decent, safe, affordable housing for our lowest-income neighbors remains our biggest challenge. Due to historic low vacancy rates and increased rents, low-income people have fewer options for affordable housing and experience more barriers to accessing and securing housing. As a result, thousands of people remain on our streets or in shelter each night and more than 63% of extremely low-income households are severely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income on rent. Thousands more are doubled-up for economic reasons, often living in unsafe or unstable living conditions. In addition, a growing percentage of extremely low-income wage earners who are people of color are concentrated in areas with less desirable housing stock and few community amenities.

#### **Opportunities**

Data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows a shortage of 22,780 affordable units for renter households with extremely low income (below 30% MFI) in Multnomah County. To effectively address our community’s critical housing shortage, we need ongoing

investments to create and preserve additional units of rental housing. The Action Plan will also address a range of critical housing issues, including: effective strategies for access and retention, innovative lower-cost housing models and housing with access to amenities. Some promising practices we will explore include:

- House the most vulnerable in our community first by using a vulnerability assessment tool in both congregate and scattered-site housing.
- Continue to creatively use rent assistance to reach more households, perhaps including medium-term rent assistance or permanent shallow subsidies.
- More efficiently use longer-term housing subsidies by helping transition people from supportive housing who no longer need it.
- A program to support individuals to take advantage of housing and opportunities available to them in other communities.
- Utilize data to identify geographic areas of opportunity for families to thrive, including opportunities to find affordable homes free from discrimination, and neighborhoods with strong schools, good parks and recreation healthy natural areas, safe streets and quality food stores.

## **2. Income and benefits**

### **Accomplishments**

A strong economy with family-wage jobs is an important component to ending homelessness for multiple reasons. Homelessness prevention is much easier if individuals and families have sufficient income to pay for their basic needs, which include housing. Also, securing employment or income is critical to establishing stability and self-sufficiency for people transitioning out of homelessness. Furthermore, the revenues generated by income taxes from employed residents pay for important public services that go toward helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The City, County and Home Forward have prioritized job readiness, job placement and benefits eligibility, resulting in more than 3,000 persons experiencing homelessness securing employment since 2005. Effective approaches include:

- Supported employment and an initiative that aligns job training/placement services with housing and family support services, including child care.
- Comprehensive employment opportunities with supportive services for individuals to begin a path to economic self-sufficiency. Private-sector employer partners have given some individuals with barriers to employment “second chance” opportunities in their workforce, helping end the cycle of homelessness.
- Streamlined access to federal disability benefits, provided by dedicated programs, has helped more than 680 individuals obtain benefits since 2008. This programming has brought in an estimated community benefit of more than \$6.6 million in Social Security Administration income alone.

### **Challenges**

Our region continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, with significantly higher rates among African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and immigrant communities. This is partly due to lagging wages and incomes in our region and the deep job

losses suffered in the recession combined with a slower recovery period. Lack of access to affordable child care and transportation remain among the most significant hurdles for homeless families and very low-income families seeking employment.

### **Opportunities**

The Action Plan will support programs, entities and businesses that create employment opportunities for individuals. This includes on-the-job training, workforce, supported employment programs and partnerships with businesses. The plan will also improve alignment of local investments with mainstream employment and benefits systems. Some promising practices we will explore include:

- Education and training programs for individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are eligible for an uncapped federal match of \$1 for every \$2 of local funds. Two programs have successfully applied for this match to fund education and training programs for youth experiencing homelessness. We will apply for these funds to meet the demand for employment and training needs for homeless families and adults.
- Comprehensive housing, service, training and employment programs that support an individual through stabilization and into greater levels of self-sufficiency. We will support the existing programs and expand where there are opportunities to assist more individuals.
- Partnerships with businesses that hire individuals with barriers to employment (i.e. criminal background, training and skill gaps). We will work with businesses on supporting employees' progress and success.
- Expand programs that assist homeless or formerly homeless people gain employment and/or benefits (like Medicare, SSI and SSDI) for which they are eligible. Expansion will factor in evidence-based practices, such as Supported Employment and focus investments to effectively leverage funding in other sectors.
- In recognition of the importance of economic development in our efforts to end homelessness, we will: explore opportunities to work collectively to grow private sector jobs and raise wages and incomes to the national average; advocate for policies that grow small businesses, promote job creation and economic development; collaborate and scale up supportive employment programs, job training and education opportunities; and promote other efforts to secure the benefits that keep our most vulnerable individuals in housing and services.

## **3. Health**

### **Accomplishments**

Oregon's Medicaid waiver and expansion, under the Affordable Care Act, will expand Medicaid coverage to an additional estimated 160,000 individuals in Multnomah County beginning in 2014. Health Share of Oregon and FamilyCare, the Coordinated Care Organizations identified to manage the care of people covered by Medicaid in the Tri-county area, are implementing new service delivery models to increase health outcomes and reduce costs. With the 2014 expansion, nearly every homeless person will qualify for Medicaid coverage. This will build on our community's success in leveraging resources such as:

- Bud Clark Commons (BCC) Apartments, that helped move 130 people out of health clinic waiting rooms and into housing, by providing subsidized housing linked to primary health care. All residents were screened for vulnerability at one of four Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs) that continue to provide primary health care once housed.
- Since 2005, Central City Concern's Recuperative Care Program has served more than 1,000 medically vulnerable adults, decreasing unnecessary length of stay in the hospital and preventing many unnecessary emergency room visits. 100% of adults served were connected to primary health care and 70% left the program to stable housing.

### **Challenges**

While there is great promise in Medicaid expansion, the lack of treatment for disabling health conditions and the financial burden of uninsured care remain major reasons people and families become homeless in Multnomah County. The rates of individuals who are uninsured are even higher among communities of color. Additionally, more than half of the people sleeping on the streets of Multnomah County were found to suffer from potentially life-threatening medical conditions. National surveys have found homeless people are three to six times more likely to become sick than housed people. The lack of adequate community-based treatment for mental illnesses and addictions has broad impact on resources and community safety. A high percentage of people in our jails and prisons struggle with mental health and addiction issues.

### **Opportunities**

The implementation plan will look at critical issues related to health care access for homeless and extremely low-income households, leveraging the opportunities created by the Affordable Care Act and Oregon's Healthcare Transformation. Efforts will be designed to better integrate the health care system with other systems of care, including the delivery of social services. Some promising practices we will explore include:

- Prepare to get every homeless and at-risk person in Multnomah County enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan when eligibility changes in 2014.
- Work with the public safety system for more effective integration with crisis intervention and emergency services, to better assist individuals with mental health and substance use disorders become housed.
- Partner with Health Share of Oregon and FamilyCare to provide coordinated housing and services for the most vulnerable chronically ill people as a way to improve health outcomes and reduce the cost of care.

## **4. Survival and emergency services**

### **Accomplishments**

Our community offers a diverse array of safety net programs, including emergency shelter, winter/severe weather shelter, meal programs and street outreach to unsheltered individuals and families. Since 2005, our community has improved effective outreach to people experiencing homelessness:

- Equipped street outreach workers and shelters with flexible rent assistance to house people quickly.

- Engaged the faith community to play an essential role in providing emergency shelter, meals, and other survival programs – nearly 40% of shelter beds are funded by faith-based providers. All shelter beds for families in Multnomah County are provided in partnership with the faith community.
- Invested in strong information and referral services, including 211info, our local information and referral line, the Rose City Resource Guide, and enhanced coordination to access emergency services.
- Supported homeless self-help initiatives, faith-based and other private initiatives.

### **Challenges**

While our community must be focused on long-term solutions to homelessness, we must also respond to the immediate needs of the more than 1,700 people each night who sleep outside. Their health, safety and ability to work on ending their homelessness is improved if they have adequate basic needs met, including a safe place to sleep, food, bathroom facilities, access to a mailing address, transportation and a place to store their belongings. While these needs are being addressed in a variety of ways, including partnerships with service providers, faith-based organizations and non-profit entities, there are still people sleeping and living outside. We must address and minimize the barriers that individuals experience from accessing the shelter system. The health, public safety and sanitation concerns associated with individuals living and sleeping outside negatively affect both the individual and the broader community.

### **Opportunities**

The implementation plan will look at the full range of unmet basic service needs and evaluate the effectiveness of our current efforts. Some promising practices we will explore include:

- Rapid rehousing and shelter diversion efforts that start the housing placement process (such as obtaining identification, paperwork, etc.) while individuals are still outside, rather than waiting for them to enter shelter.
- Low-barrier, high-tolerance shelter options, with some beds reserved for people who are the most vulnerable while sleeping outside.
- Create opportunities to provide storage options for individuals sleeping outside or in shelters that don't offer storage space.

## **5. Access to services**

### **Accomplishments**

Over the years, our community has worked towards providing individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with a variety of ways to access services. They can seek assistance from community-based service providers with which they have an existing relationship, or visit a community service access center that has a “no wrong door” policy. They can also call 211info, our centralized information and referral line. For those who are unable or choose not to utilize these methods, there are street outreach programs that seek people out and offer them information and services, wherever they are.

In 2011, our *Ten Year Plan* helped give rise to the ground-breaking BCC, as mentioned previously in this document. The BCC consists of: a day access center which offers basic services and housing placement assistance, a 90-bed emergency shelter for men and the BCC

Apartments, 130 new units of permanent supportive housing for highly vulnerable homeless people. In its first year of operation, the day center served more than 7,000 unduplicated individuals with basic services. Of these, 630 found permanent homes and 3,600 were connected to social services.

The Gateway Center for victims and survivors of domestic violence is another valuable resource center for our community. Within the first several months of opening in 2010, the center served 562 individuals, providing them with access to services, advocacy and resources.

### **Challenges**

We need a more refined focus on addressing more equitable access to services for historically underserved communities, particularly communities of color. For instance, we know that the word “homeless” doesn’t resonate and isn’t meaningful in some communities that have traditionally strong community ties and support. Furthermore, we will need better data collection and sharing techniques to improve service coordination among providers and attain more reliable comprehensive data to measure community-wide success.

### **Opportunities**

Our community has been thoughtful and creative in “doing more with less” to improve access to services for people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of losing their housing. In the upcoming years, some promising practices we will explore include:

- Create a more robust and coordinated system to provide access, perhaps in tandem with central information from 211info.
- Increase capacity to send access staff into the community to meet clients wherever they are.
- Develop improved access pathways for historically underserved and emerging communities, including staff that is able to identify culturally-specific conditions, risk factors and “access points” for services, to better meet the needs of specific groups.
- Align to new federal mandates, such as the HEARTH Act, to remain eligible for federal resources.

## **6. System coordination**

### **Accomplishments**

Through the *Ten Year Plan*, we’ve committed to building greater cross-jurisdictional collaboration among the City of Portland, Home Forward, Multnomah County, State and federal governments. Jurisdictional partners have also worked closely with the Steering Committee of the Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness, the community stakeholder group that oversees the progress and goals of the *Ten Year Plan*. Together we’ve addressed system-wide issues to further align, coordinate and sustain our services and resources, most notably in the development of the successful Short Term Rent Assistance (STRA) program.

We have strengthened partnerships among community and faith-based agencies to initiate, support and replicate approaches with demonstrated success in permanently ending homelessness for families, adults, and youth in our community. Accomplishments include improved inter-faith coordination and new federal funds for housing/service collaboration.

## **Challenges**

System coordination is the area that offers the most challenges and also the greatest potential benefit. Rather than create parallel systems of health, employment, education and other services for people based on their housing status, we must work to ensure that homelessness does not exclude someone from the mainstream systems that provide those supports. Our programs will more effectively assist people with low incomes and who experience homelessness if they link systems, including community justice, domestic violence, foster care and other services. We have made strides in this direction locally, with healthcare reform, benefits access programs and employment initiatives. Additionally, we've used local funds to better leverage federal rent assistance programs. However, much more needs to be done.

## **Opportunities**

The Action Plan will look at all levels of system coordination among the local and State jurisdictions involved in housing and anti-poverty services, as well as other divisions of local government (e.g. law enforcement, parks), the nonprofit, faith, philanthropic and for-profit sectors. It will also look at strategies to improve access to and leverage state and federal mainstream resources. Some promising practices we will explore include:

- Support the development of a foster care pilot program which will better coordinate services for young people aging out of the foster care system.
- Leverage HUD-VASH vouchers (providing housing and services for homeless, disabled veterans) with flexible local funds.
- Implement approaches to align more closely with existing systems, including the healthcare, workforce, law enforcement, corrections, mental health and human services systems, and mainstream programs serving low-income families and individuals, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Utilize the new governing body to promote better coordination and alignment across the community.
- Learn more about existing cross-jurisdictional collaborations, such as the Oregon Prosperity Initiative and others, to improve system coordination and form effective solutions to end homelessness.