

Initiative to End Homelessness in Colorado Springs



Community Update
March 2015

On January 29, 2014, the City of Colorado Springs launched the Initiative to End Homelessness in Colorado Springs - a two-year plan to raise awareness about the problem of homelessness in our community, build a collaborative framework for service delivery, and invest in urgent needs quickly.

Notable accomplishments

- The Continuum of Care (CoC) has a new charter and fresh enthusiasm, and is backed by the strength and vision of the Pikes Peak United Way. The CoC adopted the Initiative as its interim strategic plan.
- With leadership from The Salvation Army and Springs Rescue Mission, the community added 158 winter shelter beds over the last year.
- State and local government partnered to bring a housing “toolkit” to Colorado Springs to help with the development of new housing with supportive services aimed at preventing and ending homelessness.
- Collaborated with the Downtown Partnership to improve safety downtown by enhancing lighting, developing a social services resource card, and adding a downtown police substation.
- Joined the national Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, bringing additional resources to meet local and federal goals to house all Veterans by the end of 2015.
- Completed a contract to resolve outstanding floodplain issues along Fountain Creek, which paves the way for expansion of Springs Rescue Mission.

One year later, ending homelessness is now a more tangible community priority. The needs of the most vulnerable are being prioritized in community plans, relationships among local governments and service providers are stronger, and more people are being served. This update highlights some of those stories.

A number of goals in the Initiative will take more time to achieve, but plans are in the works. Funds have been allocated to support expanded day resources and the community is working through land use and operational challenges to develop a permanent day center and additional permanent shelter beds. Also, there is still a significant need for more affordable housing across the community.

Despite these challenges, we believe this community can end homelessness. **Colorado Springs can be a community where no one goes without shelter and homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.** The Initiative grew out of this spirit, and as our community prepares to elect a new mayor and new city councilmembers, we must not lose our momentum. We must continue to work hand in hand with the people experiencing homeless and the churches, volunteers and professionals helping these neighbors find hope and a home.

It has been an honor to serve alongside you and to help celebrate and enhance the good work being done in this community. Thank you for making Colorado Springs a great place to live for all of our residents.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzi Bach".

Vision

All citizens of Colorado Springs will have access to safe shelter and a strong safety net of services to help them avoid and end homelessness.

Goals

1. Increase access to emergency shelter, especially during winter months
2. Facilitate development of a day center offering comprehensive services and amenities
3. Expand outreach programs to reduce street homelessness
4. Increase access to stable and affordable housing
5. Strengthen the community's Continuum of Care
6. Develop a ten year plan to end homelessness with strong community buy in



Continuum of Care

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS/ EL PASO COUNTY

The City supports a Continuum of Care (CoC) approach to addressing homelessness - a collaborative community-based system of housing and services for those who are at risk or are currently experiencing homelessness. As its key guiding principle, the City of Colorado Springs/El Paso County CoC believes that the issues that contribute to homelessness can best be addressed once people are housed. The CoC brings

together service providers, consumers, businesses, public officials, and citizens to reach out and connect to those in need and move them toward permanent housing.

In 2014, with funding from the City, Third Sector Group facilitated the development of a governance charter and the selection of a governing board to oversee the CoC. The Pikes

We are dedicated to ensuring our community is healthy and vibrant so that all families and individuals have access to housing and services that allow them to optimize their self-sufficiency

- Continuum of Care

Peak United Way was selected as the Board's administrator and the City, County and local housing authorities serve as non-voting members. The CoC adopted the Initiative to End Homelessness in Colorado Springs as its interim strategic plan and will launch a comprehensive planning process in 2015 to build long-term strategies for preventing and ending homelessness.

Street Outreach

URBAN PEAK COLORADO SPRINGS

In summer 2014, Urban Peak Colorado Springs expanded its street outreach program with financial support from the City of Colorado Springs. There was a 79% increase (from 117 to 210) in the unduplicated number of youth and young adults the team connected with through street outreach. In addition, 20 more youth and young adults were brought into emergency shelter, an increase of 74% (from 27 to 47) over the previous year.

In addition to the 183 youth who entered emergency shelter, Urban Peak's outreach program helped 15 youth from the street reunite with family or find an alternative form of safe housing.

The vast majority of youth do not become homeless by choice. Homelessness has cumulative causes and we need systemic solutions.

- Shawna Kempainen,
Executive Director

Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HUMAN SERVICES

The *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* set a bold goal to end Veteran homelessness in the United States by the end of 2015. In 2014, the White House announced the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness - a call to action to mayors across the country. On October 16, 2014 in conjunction with the annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down, Mayor Bach joined this effort on behalf of the people working to end homelessness in Colorado Springs. The following goals were set for 2015:

- House 100 Veterans
- Reduce the number of unsheltered Veterans to 30 in the 2016 Point in Time Count
- Build capacity to rapidly house every homeless Veteran who wants housing

During 2014, Colorado Springs saw a significant increase in the resources targeted at ending Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers increased by 41, to a total of 176, and Colorado Springs was selected as one of 56 cities to receive "surge funding" as part of the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. With this funding, Rocky Mountain Human Services' (RMHS) Homes for All Veterans program will establish a Veteran Housing Resource Center for local Veterans seeking housing and employment services. The City is supporting RMHS with funding for outreach and rental assistance for homeless veterans.

Ending veteran homelessness means reaching the point where there are no veterans sleeping on our streets and every veteran has access to permanent housing. Should veterans become homeless or be at-risk of becoming homeless, communities will have the capacity to quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability. When those things are accomplished, our nation will achieve its goal.

- Mayors Challenge to
End Veteran Homelessness



Permanent Supportive Housing

PATHWAYS HOME COLORADO PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TOOLKIT

The issues that may contribute to homelessness can best be addressed once people are housed.

The City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County Housing Authority, in partnership with Governor Hickenlooper's Office, are bringing the Pathways Home Colorado Supportive Housing Toolkit to the Pikes Peak region. A five-month series of technical assistance and peer learning sessions, the toolkit brings together local, state, and federal housing experts and resources to reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. It expands community dialogue around housing stability and works to increase permanent supportive housing units - affordable rental housing combined with wraparound supportive services. Supportive housing is a nationally recognized best practice for successfully reintegrating highly vulnerable homeless families and individuals back into their community.

Created by the State of Colorado, the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) and LeBeau Development, the toolkit provides service providers with logistical support and best practices in project development including funding, property management and service provision. Bringing these projects to fruition can be a challenging process. The toolkit aims to make this process easier by giving teams the expertise they need to build, operate, and maintain effective supportive housing.

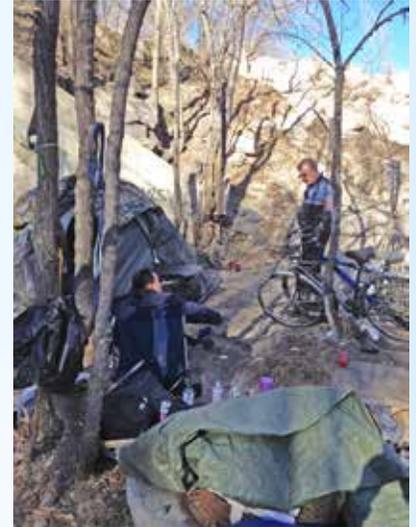
First launched in January of 2014, the toolkit has expanded Colorado's development pipeline to include a dozen projects on the Western Slope and Front Range with the expectation of more than 200 new units in the next three years.

Homeless Outreach Team

COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Colorado Springs Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) works throughout the city to reduce the number of complaints made about the activities of people experiencing homelessness. HOT builds relationships with homeless individuals and coordinates assistance with service providers. In 2014, these officers responded to 1,100 calls for service and made 2,055 contacts with homeless individuals in our community. The officers made 759 referrals to local service providers, established appointments or immediate visits as necessary, and coordinated mental health and medical transportation.

HOT also assists with removing trash and debris from public and private land as a result of illegal camping activities. These clean ups take place on a monthly basis in partnership with Keep Colorado Springs Beautiful.



Community Challenges and Opportunities

 **2,564**
students in El Paso County experiencing homelessness during the 2012-2013 school year

 **100**
homeless veterans the community aims to house by the end of 2015

 **4,695**
deficit in available affordable housing units for extremely low income renters (<\$17,259) in El Paso County

1,147
unduplicated clients served by winter shelters between November 1, 2014 and March 25, 2015

 **291**
year round emergency shelter beds including domestic violence shelter (32)

82,708
households spending more than 30% of their income on housing and utility costs

158
new winter shelter beds

75,363
persons living below the poverty line in El Paso County

 **2,055**
contacts the Homeless Outreach Team made with persons experiencing homelessness in our community

\$23,850
federal poverty line for a household of four



Investments

By re-evaluating its grantmaking process and targeting highest priorities first, the City was able to invest \$1,027,156 in homeless programs in 2014 – an increase of 75% over 2013 (\$587,161). Support was maintained for essential shelter and meal programs, while also expanding respite care and street outreach and increasing the number of winter shelter beds. In addition, the City supported development of 54 units of affordable housing and funded critical repairs to transitional housing units with \$960,500 in grants and loans to Greccio Housing and Colorado House, LLC.

\$1,766,966 **HOUSING AND SHELTER**

Ascending to Health Respite Care
Colorado House, LLC
Colorado Springs Housing Authority
Ecumenical Social Ministries
Greccio Housing
Homeward Pikes Peak
Interfaith Hospitality Network
Partners in Housing
The Salvation Army
Springs Rescue Mission
UrbanPeak

\$120,260 **SUPPORT SERVICES AND OUTREACH**

Catholic Charities
The Salvation Army
Urban Peak

\$100,400 **PLANNING**

Colorado Springs/El Paso County
Affordable Housing Needs Assessment
Colorado Springs/El Paso County
Continuum of Care
Pikes Peak United Way

Thank You

Though not a service provider, the City engaged with service providers, business leaders, policymakers and the general public to champion and invest in strategies that prevent and end homelessness. A community based Trustee Committee was formed to consult on and allocate funding to the strategic initiatives. Many thanks to these people and organizations and the many others who work daily to serve our homeless neighbors.

Trustee Committee

Suzi Bach
Carol Bruce-Fritz
Mike DeGrant
Nechie Hall
Deborah Hendrix
Kathy Hybl
Jan Martin
Chris Riley
Andre Spencer, Ph.D.
Jason Wood

Mayor Steve Bach
Colorado Springs City Council
City of Colorado Springs
Housing and Community
Initiatives
Homeless Outreach Team
(CSPD)
Planning
Public Works
Fire Department
Colorado Springs Utilities

Office of Governor
John W. Hickenlooper
El Paso County
Board of County
Commissioners
El Paso County
Housing Authority Board

Continuum of Care Governing Board
Pikes Peak United Way
El Pomar Foundation
First Mortgage Company
Downtown Partnership
The O'Neil Group Company
Third Sector Group
Keep Colorado Springs Beautiful
Coats4Canines

For more information, please contact City of Colorado Springs Housing and Community Initiatives at housing@springsgov.com or visit www.coloradosprings.gov/housing.