

2015-2016 Winter Shelter Response Workgroup Recommendations

October 15, 2015

The Washtenaw Housing Alliance (WHA) and Office of Community & Economic Development (OCED) convened the Winter Shelter Workgroup on August 20, 2015 to consider winter shelter needs for the upcoming 2015-2016 winter season. In addition to WHA and OCED staff, representatives from the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Community Support & Treatment Services, Ann Arbor Police Department, and Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan were in attendance at the meeting.

The Workgroup reviewed what occurred during the 2014-2015 winter (see Report from the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County) and discussed that the response last winter worked quite well, although there were some challenges primarily with logistics and transportation. In 2014-2015, 502 unduplicated individuals utilized Warming Center 1, Warming Center 2 or Rotating Shelter. The Workgroup discussed the anticipated need for the upcoming winter to the best of their ability, particularly because of the community's recent success prioritizing individuals experiencing chronic homelessness for housing resources. The Workgroup decided it was best to plan for an extreme cold-weather winter, and to develop a plan that can be as flexible as possible. The Workgroup recommended building upon the model of success that was created last winter, and simply making tweaks where there were challenges.

Following are the Workgroup's recommendations for the 2015-2016 Winter:

- **Fund overnight Warming Center 1:** (WC1) to be operated by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County at the Robert J. Delonis Center (Delonis Center). Warming Center 1 will open on November 16, 2015 and can accommodate up to 50 individuals with a mat on the floor in the Delonis Center's dining room and common areas. Hours of operation are recommended to be from 7pm to 7am.
- **Fund one staff person and cleaning for overnight Warming Center 2** (WC2), to be operated by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County at volunteer churches. The churches will rotate on a monthly basis. The Workgroup recommends being flexible about when Warming Center 2 opens, based upon anticipated weather and demand for shelter. Tentative dates of operation would be January, February and March. Warming Center 2 can accommodate up to 50 individuals with a mat on the church floor. Hours of operation are recommended to be from 8pm to 7am.
- **Fund two part-time staff persons for a Daytime Drop-in Shelter**, to be operated by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, in conjunction with MISSION, at volunteer churches on

Monday through Friday – the hours are still being determined as locations are still being finalized. The Delonis Center will provide daytime drop-in shelter from 7:45am to 7pm Saturday and Sunday. Congregation partners will also provide volunteers for the daytime shelter. Daytime shelter at the churches worked well last year and it provides a space for people to go during cold days. It also alleviates some of the burden that the Ann Arbor District Library's Downtown location has held in previous years.

Last winter, the daytime shelter served between 35-80 persons per day. For 2015-2016, the churches will rotate on a to-be-determined basis. The Workgroup recommends being flexible about when Daytime Shelter begins, based upon anticipated weather and demand, and when congregations can offer up their space. Tentative dates of operation would be January, February and March.

- **Fund up to \$11,000 in hotel/motel vouchers** for Community Support & Treatment Services' Project Outreach Team (PORT) staff to utilize on an as-needed basis, when people are unable to go into shelter or warming center. Housing Access for Washtenaw County (HAWC) also has funding available to house literally homeless families in hotel/motels, as congregate warming centers are not the most appropriate setting for literally homeless households with children.
- **Fund up to \$18,000 in transportation costs** to transport people and supplies (blankets to be washed daily) between the Delonis Center and Warming Center 2 each evening and each morning. It is anticipated that TheRide and/or Golden Limousine will be able to transport people during their off-peak hours, as they did during the 2014-2015 winter.

The total request is to fund up to \$178,079, which will enable the homeless system to provide a safe daytime and nighttime shelter space to people experiencing homelessness during the 2015-2016 winter.

Mitigating Last Winter's Challenges:

- **Logistics/Timing:** During the 2014-2015 winter, there was about a one half hour gap on both ends of the spectrum for when breakfast at The Saint Andrew's Breakfast Program ended at 8:30am and when Daytime Shelter began at churches at 9am. People arrived early and are cold causing pressure at the day site church. The Saint Andrew's Breakfast Program deserves kudos for opening early when people arrived. In the afternoon some of the church facilities could not stay open until 4pm. Even if they did, there was still a gap, as the dinner room at the Delonis Center didn't open until 5pm. People arrived early and there was the same problem. The Delonis Center began opening at 3pm when the churches needed to close. The goal this year will be to ensure seamless availability of shelter/warming center space.
- **Transportation** to breakfast from the Delonis Center (Warming Center 1) on bad days was a problem in extreme weather. Normally people walk but with the extreme cold it was difficult and many people wanted to skip breakfast and stay inside. Some days during extreme weather, the Deloris Center was able to provide coffee and some food but they were not equipped to do

it every time the weather was extreme. The budget this year was changed to reflect additional transportation needs, and conversations with Food Gatherers have started to ensure food would be available for individuals unable to make it to the Breakfast Program at St. Andrew's.

- **Balancing WC1 and WC2:** Some people using warming center were resistant to going to the WC2 site. This caused difficulty in balancing numbers between the two sites, sometimes causing overcrowding at the Delonis Center when there was room at the church. Since the bus picked up at 8:30pm, people learned if they came in later they would not have to go to the church. It is unclear why this was problematic for people except that they would have to arrive before they wanted to arrive. The WC 2 at the church usually had 20-30 people while WC 1 had 40-60 at the Delonis Center. These challenges will unlikely change, but every effort to ensure efficient utilization of the spaces will be made by SAWC staff.

Budget Request

Below is the overall budget request for funding WC1, WC2, Daytime Drop-in Shelter, Hotel/Motel Vouchers and Transportation costs for the 2015-16 winter response. The Winter Shelter Workgroup again recommends that the Ann Arbor City Council and the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners consider covering half of the costs each for the winter shelter response for 2015-16.

Winter Shelter Response 2015-16	
Staffing	\$ 133,296
Transportation	\$ 23,073
Cleaning & Supplies	\$ 10,710
Hotel/Motel Vouchers	\$ 11,000
TOTAL	\$ 178,079

Moving forward, the Workgroup also recommends that the City and County consider increasing their commitments to Coordinated Funding to cover these costs through a directed investment to the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County within the 2016-18 Coordinated Funding cycle.