



*helping people • changing lives* .....

**Lane County  
Poverty & Homelessness Board**

**Strategic Plan**

**2016-2021**

*Approved on April 21, 2016*

# Executive Summary

The plight of poverty and homelessness affects the lives of thousands of individuals and families who live in Lane County. The solutions to this growing problem are as myriad as the causes. Government agencies, nonprofit and civic organizations, schools, and churches all contribute resources through a wide variety of programs and assistance.

In an effort to facilitate better-coordinated efforts, the Poverty and Homelessness Board (PHB) was formed in 2014. It is an action-oriented group of elected officials, community stakeholders, and individuals who represent low-income and homeless people's concerns in Lane County.

The PHB serves as the administrative board for the Lane County Community Action Agency and as the oversight board for the Lane County Continuum of Care. It provides advice to the regional Human Services Commission and the Lane County Board of Commissioners with the goal of reducing and preventing poverty and homelessness in Lane County.

## PHB's Mission

Create innovative partnerships and programs that use best practices to reduce poverty and homelessness in Lane County. The PHB works to generate community and legislative support and other resources for housing and services to achieve its goals.

The PHB has identified three areas of strategic focus to guide its work to alleviate poverty and homelessness over the next five years:

- 1. Increase availability and access to coordinated, supportive housing, shelter, and services**
- 2. Prevent homelessness and poverty**
- 3. Inform and enhance public awareness and advocacy efforts**

To address these concerns and help define a path of coordinated action various agencies and organizations serving Lane County, the PHB has defined a set of five-year goals and supporting strategies. The strategies are built on the assumption that the core human services, supportive housing and healthcare services, supported by the community, will continue to be in place as a foundation to meet basic needs. Together, they will effect a significant improvement in the lives of the most vulnerable, chronically poor and homeless people in our community.

## Increase Availability and Access to Coordinated, Supportive Housing, Shelter, and Services

Over the next five years, the PHB partners will coordinate with other agencies in Lane County to create an additional 600 units of supportive housing for chronically homeless people, including veterans, youth, those who experience mental illness, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and those exiting the criminal justice, foster care and child welfare systems. This effort will include 200 Housing First

units in various configurations and with appropriate support services and 100 units of housing and rental assistance for veterans. In addition, the PHB will create a long-term plan to identify targeted needs and funding sources to develop an additional 300 units of supportive housing.

The temporary emergency housing needs of those who are homeless are ever-present and require different solutions based on unique needs. During the next five years, the PHB will work to create 300 emergency shelter beds for homeless singles, both seasonal and year-around; 30 emergency shelter units designed specifically for homeless families with children; 40 safe parking spaces for homeless people who live in their vehicles; an emergency medical care shelter; and a shelter dedicated to homeless individuals experiencing acute mental illness.

### **Prevent Homelessness and Poverty**

Prevention is at the center of all long-term strategies to eliminate homelessness and poverty. The PHB's goals include increasing the stability of low-income families with children in the seven Lane County neighborhoods with the highest concentration of poverty. Efforts will focus on ensuring those families live in safe, reliable housing and have opportunities for adequate employment income to meet their basic needs. To help prevent new generations from entering a life of poverty and homelessness, particular efforts will be made to reduce first-time homelessness among low-income families with children and school-aged youth by 30 percent by 2021.

### **Inform and Enhance and Public Awareness and Advocacy Efforts**

Most residents of Lane County encounter someone nearly every day that lives in homelessness and poverty. Some aspects of homelessness and poverty are highly visible while others are largely hidden from public view. Because the problems are extremely complex and interconnected, however, it is easy to form misunderstandings and misconceptions. The PHB believes that successful long-term efforts to reduce and eliminate poverty and homelessness in Lane County will require heightened public awareness, a well-informed understanding, and broad community support. The PHB will focus concentrated efforts to dispel myths and broaden community understanding of the multiple issues related to homelessness and poverty. In addition, the PHB will advocate for changes to state and federal policies and procedures that will remove barriers to service delivery and support more collaborative efforts. To turn advocacy into action the PHB will use a collective impact approach bringing volunteers, nonprofits, faith, businesses and government together around shared goals and strategies.

## Poverty and Homelessness in Lane County - What are the Facts?

### Poverty

On any given day, on any given street in Lane County, on average, one of every five people you meet are living in poverty. Despite the fact that Lane County is home to a major state university and a highly regarded community college, along with several large industrial employers, its poverty rate of 21.5% is still higher than the Oregon statewide average of 16.6%. A Lane County family of three whose income is at or below 100 percent of the federal level lives on an annual income of \$19,790 or less. The high poverty rate coupled with the high cost of rent creates an environment in which it is difficult for thousands of households to maintain stable living situations.

**78,203 Lane County residents live on an income below 100% of the federal poverty level.**

*--2104 U.S. Census data*

### Insufficient Affordable Housing

The housing market in Lane County is not unlike many other counties across the country. The economic recession of 2007 and the resulting tight mortgage market led to increased demand for rental housing. Demand pushed rental rates higher while the supply of available rental units decreased. While mortgage lending for homebuyers has eased somewhat in recent years, many households with healthy incomes are still choosing to rent rather than buy.

Moreover, in Lane County, the presence of the University of Oregon creates additional demand for rental units by students. The construction of new multi-family rental units in Lane County has been largely concentrated near the university campus, and the rents are relatively high, well above what families with poverty-level incomes can afford.

### Who Are the Homelessness?

The sub-population of Lane County residents who are in poverty *and* are homeless lives on little or no regular income. The life circumstances that led to their homelessness are many and varied; however, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and involvement in criminal activity all play significant roles. In 2014, 11,668 homeless individuals sought social services through the Lane County Human Services Division.

During the 2015 Annual Homeless Point in Time Count, 656 individuals were staying in emergency shelters; 101 were living in "transitional housing;" and 716 men, women, and children were living *without* shelter. The count included 210 homeless veterans; 100 of them were living unsheltered. Nearly 400 of the homeless were identified as suffering from mental illness; 206 were believed to have chronic alcohol or substance abuse issues. Finally, 23 homeless youth under age 18, were youth unaccompanied by an adult.

**Of the 1,473 homeless people counted in Lane County on January 25, 2015, 697 were chronically homeless.**

*- Lane County 2015 Annual Homeless Point in Time Count.*

**2,154 homeless students attended public schools in Lane County during the 2013-14 school year (including doubled-up or homeless).**

*--Oregon Department of Education*

## The Cost of Homelessness

The problems associated with homelessness are expensive for the community. People without shelter often require medical care that is frequently accessed in hospital emergency departments, one of the most expensive points of medical care at an average of \$200 to \$1,800 per visit. Emergency mental health care is even more expensive. A day of in-patient mental health care at Sacred Heart Medical Center's Johnson Unit costs between \$2,500 and \$2,900. Unfortunately, people living without shelter and who may be experiencing drug or substance abuse problems or mental illness frequently run afoul of the law and end up incarcerated and involved in the criminal justice system. Both bring additional expenses to the community that could have been averted through better access to housing and supportive services.

## What is Being Done?

Government agencies, nonprofit organizations and the faith community together provide a variety of housing programs aimed at assisting those in poverty and homelessness in Lane County. Emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, rapid-rehousing and extreme weather shelter are all part of the mix. Each is different and uniquely designed to accommodate a different segment of the population depending on its particular needs.

**During the winter of 2014-15, 948 individuals slept in our Extreme Weather Shelter Program, Egan Warming Center, on sub-freezing nights.**

- **Emergency Shelter** is short-term, generally up to 60 days, and might include large communal settings or a single unit for a family without stable housing. Seasonal emergency shelters provide protection from the elements when temperatures drop below 30 degrees during winter months.
- **Transitional Housing** provides rent assistance and supportive services for up to 24 months and facilitates the movement of homeless households to permanent housing.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing** provides long-term, community-based housing and support to homeless households that include individuals with disabilities.
- **Rapid Re-Housing** provides homeless households with rent assistance and supportive services for up to 24 months with the goal of moving into permanent housing and long-term stability.
- **Safe Havens** are supportive housing units that serve those who are often referred to as "hard-to-reach" homeless persons with severe mental illness and other debilitating behavioral conditions.

## **Solutions**

The current inventory of housing for homeless individuals in Lane County includes 870 units of Rapid Re-Housing, transitional, and permanent housing, and 481 year round emergency shelter beds. With all types combined, only about 10% are designed to accommodate households with children. Based on the 2015 Point in Time Count, a minimum of at least 600 additional housing units would have to be added to house all of the homeless individuals in the county. Experience has proven that emergency shelters alone are not the optimal solution for helping people escape homelessness.

At the same time, however, shelter capacity needs to be expanded if the supply of available private market and affordable housing, coupled with supportive services, is insufficient to meet demand. For some people, access to permanent housing is all they need to escape homelessness. Others need supportive services to be successful in gaining permanent housing.

### ***Housing First***

Housing First is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements. *Housing First* offers people immediate access to permanent housing along with services appropriate to their needs. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, this model yields higher success in treatment outcomes, higher housing retention rates, lower returns to homelessness, and significant reductions in the use of crisis services, hospitals, and jails.

### ***Human Rights and Alternatives***

Human rights and alternative community strategies should be pursued in tandem with Housing First and the other strategies in the PHB Strategic Plan. While these strategies are not prioritized or incorporated into the strategic plan it is recognized the City of Eugene Human Rights Commission and other community based non-profits and advocacy groups should continue to pursue solutions that are inclusive of people living in poverty, people who are homeless including minority communities and underrepresented groups.

- Decriminalization of homelessness
- Restorative Justice
- Community Courts with alternative sentencing
- Legal protections (fair housing)
- Alternative legal places to live e.g. rest stops, micro-shelters, safe spots, unsanctioned camps, legal overnight parking, small size tent encampments (10 per camp)

## STRATEGIC GOALS

### 1. Strategic Focus: Availability and Access to Coordinated Supportive Housing, Shelter, and Services

**GOAL 1.1: Create 600 additional housing opportunities throughout Lane County by 2021 for chronically homeless individuals and people with particular needs, including: veterans, youth, domestic violence survivors, those with mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse problems, and those exiting criminal justice, foster care and child welfare systems.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Develop 100 Housing First units, including a 50-unit apartment building with on-site behavioral health services, and 50 micro-apartment housing units with mobile support services by 2019.	Lane County/ HACSA/ Non-Profits	Facilities
b. Dedicate 100 units of Housing First, including 50 scattered site HUD housing vouchers and HACSA units, and 50 units integrated into low-income housing developments for special populations by 2019.	HACSA/ Non-Profits	Facilities
c. Develop assertive engagement “wrap around” services and supports for 150 scattered site and integrated Housing First units by 2019. Promote successful housing outcomes and move more individuals to independent living.	Lane County & Trillium Behavioral Health	Services
d. Develop and dedicate an additional 100 units and rental assistance for Veterans to meet the goal of ending veteran homelessness.	HACSA/St. Vincent DePaul/VA	Facilities
e. Create a long-term, supportive housing production and operations plan for 300 units for individuals and family households.	HACSA/ Eugene/ Springfield/ Non-Profits	Facilities
f. Develop tactics to help reduce risk to private landlords and help incentivize them to rent to people with special needs.	Rental Owners Assoc.	Services

**GOAL 1.2: Create additional emergency shelter and respite care for homeless individuals, youth and families with children awaiting housing by 2021.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Create 300 beds of emergency shelter for homeless singles including 150 year-around beds and 150 beds of winter season shelter.	Lane County/ HACSA	Facilities
b. Create 30 units of year-around emergency shelter for homeless families with children, including domestic violence survivors with children.	Lane County/ HACSA	Facilities
c. Create 40 Safe Parking spaces for homeless persons who live in their vehicles.	Lane County	Facilities
d. Create 16 infirmery beds of emergency shelter to provide immediate medical triage, assessment, and care.	Trillium, local hospitals	Facilities
e. Create 20 beds of crisis respite for persons experiencing acute mental illness.	Lane County	Facilities
f. Develop ACT Team and multidisciplinary services for shelter and supportive housing.	White Bird/CHC	Services
g. Expand Rapid Re-housing funding and services to more quickly move people into housing.	State of Oregon/ HUD	Services

**GOAL 1.3: Increase opportunities to enhance services for frequent users through service integration and coordination, and the development of new partnerships.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
Create a Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) Workgroup as part of an initiative to break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness among individuals with complex behavioral health challenges who are the highest users of jails, hospitals, emergency medical, homeless shelters and encampments, and other crisis service systems.	Inter-governmental	Services/ Ad Hoc Work Group

**2. Strategic Focus: Prevent Homelessness and Poverty**

**GOAL 2.1: Increase the stability of low-income individuals and families in Lane County. Ensure they are stably housed and have adequate employment income and/or benefits to meet their basic needs.**

*Note: A draft action plan for goals 2.1-3 should be developed by the PHB Services Committee and submitted to the PHB by October 1, 2016.*

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Develop nutrition, employment services and affordable childcare for residents at affordable and supportive housing programs.	Non-Profits	Services
b. Develop transportation options for program participants.	LTD	Services
c. Expand rental assistance programs.	HACSA DHS	Services
d. Support the preservation of existing affordable housing.		

**GOAL 2.2: Reduce homelessness among low-income families with children and school age youth, as measured by the Oregon Department of Education, by 30 percent by 2021.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Develop a homeless diversion program families and unaccompanied youth in conjunction with the school districts (i.e. periodic homeless, precariously housed, doubled up). Identify flexible funding to address critical barriers to stabilization.	McKinney Vento Schools 15 <sup>th</sup> Night Initiative	Services

**GOAL 2.3: Increase employment opportunities, education, and employment and training activities for participants who are in poverty, and/or homeless with special needs.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Support collaboration among job partners to develop employment and training programs for individuals who are homeless or in supportive housing with significant barriers to employment.	Lane Workforce Partnership LCC DHS Goodwill	Services/ Ad-Hoc Work Group
b. Implement employment training programs. Identify resources for targeted employment programs for people who are unstably housed.	St. Vincent Voc Rehab	

**GOAL 2.4: Increase access to integrated health care for persons who are unstably housed, homeless or are community members in supportive housing.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Support collaboration among community health care organizations that serve people who are homeless and supportive housing community members.	CHC Lane County VIM White Bird Clinic Occupy Medical	Ad Hoc Integrated Workgroup TBA
b. Develop expanded outreach and site based healthcare for people who are homeless and supportive housing community members.		

**3. Strategic Focus: Inform and Enhance Public Awareness and Advocacy Efforts**

**GOAL 3.1: Increase public understanding of poverty and homelessness issues and how they're being addressed.**

*Note: A workgroup of the PHB will be formed by June 1, 2016 to address Goal 3.1*

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Develop a brand and communication plan for PHB.	PR firm	Ad-Hoc Work Group
b. Promote the capabilities of the Coordinated Entry System, in conjunction with HMIS, to identify the characteristics or trends of individuals in the homeless system.	Non-profits	HMIS
c. Educate and engage the community on poverty and homelessness issues through social media (highlight best practices).	University of Oregon	

**GOAL 3.2: Advocate for support to reduce poverty and homelessness.**

Strategy	Potential Partners	PHB Committee
a. Align and coordinate legislative agendas (early) with other groups that are working on similar efforts or have common interests. Develop a one-page "leave behind" sheet with key talking points. Coordinate with federal and state agencies.	Housing Alliance Assn. of Counties League of Oregon Cities Oregon Opportunity Network	Legislative, Ad-Hoc Work group TBA
b. Align and coordinate policy agendas among cities in Lane County and the county government.		
c. Participate and collaborate with public, private, and community organizations to advocate for support.		