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MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas, A. Golden, Jr. 

FROM: Maura Fitzpatrick, Director of Homelessness Initiative

CC: Lisa Golden, Director of Health and Human Services

DATE: March 7, 2023

SUBJECT: **MOTION RESPONSE – HHS-9 -1/24/23 –C. Nuon– Req. City Mgr. Have The Director Of Homelessness Initiatives Revisit Strategies Outlined At The 2019 Summit, Which Convened At Inn And Conference Center With Local Businesses, Non-Profits, And Community Foundations; Assess The Feasibility Of Reconvening And/Or Implementing Said Strategies, Which Were Put On Hold Due To The Covid Pandemic.**

MOTION RESPONSE – HHS-10 -1/24/23 –C. Robinson/C. Nuon- Req. City Mgr. Provide A Report On The Status Of The 2019 City Manager’s Task Force On Homeless And Affordable Housing Action Plan And Final Recommendations

In response to the above motions regarding the 2019 Summit Strategies, the high-level Global Recommendations of this plan are below with current status listed. Since 2019, some of these strategies have been completed, some have not, some should change, and some should be eliminated. This plan was developed based on a “Housing First” strategy and primarily was recommended to develop and sustain permanent supportive housing and improve the homelessness crisis response system. The City Task Force worked with consultant Barbara Poppe to produce these recommendations. I have asked Ms. Poppe to work with us on an update to this plan. She has declined.

I. Strengthen collaboration and coordination for service delivery and cross-sector collaboration.

Recommendation	Current Status
The City will hire a Director of Homelessness Initiatives (HI) to implement this plan	Completed.
The City Manager will appoint a Homelessness Coordinating Council with working groups as needed, to help implement this plan	The City Manager has not appointed a Homelessness Coordinating Council. The Director of Homelessness Initiatives will discuss with the City Manager and evaluate if this should still be done. Groups that have been established or reestablished: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encampment Cleanup group • COET group • Lowell Connector group • Lowell Provider group • Inclement Weather group • Hunger and Homeless Commission
Educate the public on the ongoing homelessness issues in the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a goal of the Hunger and Homeless Commission. • First step in this process is to update the HI webpage which is in process.

II. Organize a crisis response system that focuses on diversion, problem-solving, and coordinated outreach that is housing and health focused.

Recommendation	Current Status
Ramp up diversion efforts through all organizations that come in contact with single adults who experience homelessness.	Diversion efforts have been ramped up and are practiced whenever appropriate by Lowell COOP, LTLC, CTI, and Eliot Church. A Diversion team made up of members from each of these organizations is being considered.
Transform SMOC/LTLC into a 24/7, low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter.	SMOC/LTCL has become a low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter and the front door to homelessness in the City of Lowell. Some possibilities are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand SMOC/LTLC by creating a satellite location • Move the entire operation to a new location • Provide a 7-day per week Day Program • Provide 24 hour access to some form of shelter • Woman’s only shelter • Dry shelter
Realign the City’s use of HUD entitlement funds to focus on services for single adults that promote diversion, problem-solving and Housing First.	

III. Merge with the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC).

Recommendation	Current Status
Merge the Lowell Continuum of Care (CoC) with the state-administered CoC adjacent to Lowell and work to create a regional system of housing options through the CoC.	Completed.

IV. LTLC transformation. Partner with SMOC and LTLC to support all elements of a transformation of their shelter operations.

Recommendation	Current Status
<p>Discontinuation of the community meal program. The crisis response subcommittee catalogued the food pantries and meal programs in the area. In Lowell alone, there are 10 food pantries and 9 other meal programs in operation. Although not all are open daily for three meals, there are sufficient alternative resources to meet the needs of these community members.</p>	<p>Eliminate. The meal program at LTLC is a necessary component of their program. Though there are other meal programs throughout the city, serving meals where guests are living is preferable to transporting them to other locations.</p>
<p>As an affiliate organization to SMOC, the LTLC governance responsibilities are under the purview of the SMOC Board of Directors. The LTLC Board has recently shifted from a governing to an “advisory board” role. The Coordinating Council will identify business leaders to join the LTLC Board and to help them meet their fundraising and “good neighbor” goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director of HI is investigating the possibility of serving on the LTLC Board of Directors. • The City has a very good working relationship with both LTLC and SMOC leadership. • One of the ‘good neighbor’ goals that we have accomplished together is ‘Operation Cleanup’ where the SMOC has created a ‘Clean Team’ at the City’s prompting to keep the area around the shelter and Robeson Street free from litter. The Clean Team patrols these area’s every few hours and is reimbursed with incentives. The City provides extra Lowell Police patrolling to ensure that tents are not being erected on the property or Robeson Street.
<p>LTLC will remain open 24 hours a day as it is a best practice in shelter operations. If LTLC remains open to clients during the day, there will be less loitering out in front of the building, less of a line at 4:30 in the afternoon, and clients will have access to additional staff support. LTLC will partner with other agencies to offer groups, workshops, and one-on-one services through the development of a monthly calendar of events for clients.</p>	<p>The City is in the process of developing a Day Program that will include, group support, workshops and case management. The Eliot Church is currently filling this need where at least 40-50 individuals each day spend time there. The Eliot currently offers activities including but not limited to case management, document support, painting and poetry sessions, breakfast and lunch. St. Paul’s Soup Kitchen offers dinner at the Eliot Church five evenings per week. We have been in the process of working with the Eliot church to create a stronger 7-day per week program, however we have recently discovered limitations that may prevent moving forward. Other locations are being considered for a 24/7 Navigation Center/Shelter</p>
<p>Implement a diversion approach as part of the screening process and ongoing programming. This would divert people in cases where an alternative plan to shelter entry exists.</p>	<p>Completed. Diversion is part of the screening process. Diversion is practiced whenever appropriate by Lowell COOP, LTLC, CTI, and Eliot Church. Diversion is part of the triage process at LTLC. A Diversion team made up of members from each of these organizations is being considered.</p>
<p>Hire a Re-Housing Specialist. SMOC re-housed 66 homeless individuals in less than six months through the creation of a housing search position in the Metro-west region.</p>	<p>In the research process.</p>
<p>The City and the Coordinating Council will work with SMOC to undertake a “surge” to help exit long-term shelter stayers during 2019. This will free up space for unsheltered individuals and help reduce the daily census during 2020.</p>	<p>There are currently limited places to exit shelter guests to. This is a bottleneck of the homeless problem in Lowell.</p>
<p>The City and the Coordinating Council will work with SMOC to identify sufficient additional resources to support the transformation of LTLC.</p>	<p>Ongoing work with SMOC, LTLC, Dir of HI and the City Manager.</p>

V. Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing Stabilization.

Recommendation	Current Status
Annually review the number and types of housing units/slots and health services that are needed to implement the Task Force recommendations then develop an updated plan to meet these housing and health needs.	I believe this plan needs to be updated which would adjust these metrics to include more than housing units and health services.
Work with partners, especially private partners including the Lowell Development & Financial Corporation, to develop a new loan fund to facilitate new construction and conversion of existing properties to meet this need. Expand the conversation to include private and philanthropic funders.	
Realign the City's use of HUD entitlement funds to focus on the creation of new permanent supportive housing (PSH). The City will update the 5-year Comprehensive Plan to support this work and reduce duplication of services.	The first step in this process is to identify locations which is what is currently being done by the City, SMOC, CTI and other providers. The amount of real estate in the City is limited. The City Manager is working with the leaders of Greater Lowell Communities to explore the possibilities in those towns.
Create incentives for private property developers and non-profit affordable housing managers to support serving high-barrier clients (history of eviction, poor credit, and/or criminal history) who are participating in rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing.	
Focus on opportunities for rental assistance to support the conversion of existing private units into PSH including new funding sources such as HUD Mainstream Vouchers and the Massachusetts Medicaid CSPECH program.	
Create additional scattered-site PSH across the City and, where possible, the region to provide diverse housing options to match the Coordinated Exit and Case Conferencing/By-Name List Process (CE-BNL).	The first step in this process is to identify locations which is what is currently being done by the City, SMOC, CTI and other providers. The amount of real estate in the City is limited. The City Manager is working with the leaders of Greater Lowell Communities to explore the possibilities in those towns.
Focus on new rapid re-housing opportunities that maximize the benefit of existing programs such as CTI RAFT, ACO flexible funding programs and others. Providing rapid rehousing for unsheltered adults and LTLC clients will be prioritized.	These approaches are currently being utilized, however there are limited units available.
Engage with providers for specialized housing (DMH and DPH) and think about alternative housing opportunities such as respite housing and repurposed nursing homes, among other options.	We are engaged with DMH working on Coordinated Entry for individuals who fit their parameters.

VI. System Integration and Performance Management.

Recommendation	Current Status
<p>Establish a local Coordinated Exit and Case Conferencing/By-Name List Process (CE-BNL Process) for single adults. The City of Lowell will take lead in convening this process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The By-Name list is currently being used to track the status of homeless single adults. • Needed is a real-time HMIS-type platform that all housing providers can access and update regarding status of individuals and availability of units and beds. I am looking at existing programs used by the city like IntakeQ and GIS to track our homeless individuals in real-time.
<p>Develop a system of metrics and benchmarks to track progress. Data will be used to inform planning, resource allocation, and adjust strategic directions to improve results and outcomes.</p>	<p>In Process. We currently have data on individual homelessness, resources available, units available and more. These numbers indicate two things as top priorities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need more shelter space • We need more housing units <p>This is the focus of the City and other providers such as CTI and SMOC.</p>