

CITY OF DURANGO AND LA PLATA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

"We live forward."

January 2020



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Planning and Action Team on Homelessness

The Planning and Action Team on Homelessness, also known as the PATH, met every four to six weeks, June through November 2019. They worked together to understand the challenges and different perspectives in the community and to develop a set of strategies based on common ground. They also reached out to the broader community through their networks to check group thinking and to bring additional perspectives and ideas into the discussion. Their efforts were indispensable to this planning process.

Members are listed in the table below, along with their organizational affiliations and networks of people in the community that could/did reach out to in this process.

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Community Networks
Ann Morse	Manna Soup Kitchen	People who are unhoused/with very low incomes, Greater Crestview neighborhood, Social/human service providers
Bob Brammer	Durango Police Department	Law enforcement officers
Brigid Korce	Housing Solutions of the Southwest	People who are unhoused/with very low incomes, Members of local Tribes, Social/human service providers
Caroline Kinser	St. Mark's Church, Neighbors in Need Alliance	Faith community
Charles Thomas	Unaffiliated community member	Neighborhoods in south Durango
Chuck Stevens	La Plata County	Local government, Social/human service providers, Downtown Durango businesses
Donna Mae Baukat	Community Compassion Outreach	People who are unhoused, Service provider partnerships, Faith community
Elizabeth Salkind	Housing Solutions of the Southwest	People who are unhoused/with very low incomes, Social/human service providers
Elsa Inman	Mercy Regional Medical Center	Hospital/Healthcare
John Gamble	Unaffiliated community member	General community, Social/human service providers
Kevin Hall	City of Durango	Local government, Social/human service providers, Downtown Durango businesses
Liane Jollon	San Juan Basin Public Health	Health community, Social/human service providers
Matt Harper	St. Mark's Church, NINA, Manna	Faith community

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Community Networks
Marsh Bull	Unaffiliated community member	Nonprofits, businesses, college
Matthew Dunham	Unaffiliated community member	People who are unhoused
Michelle Rich	Unaffiliated community member	People who are unhoused
Mike Segrest	La Plata County	Local government
Mike Todt	Manna Soup Kitchen, Neighbors in Need Alliance	People who are unhoused, Faith community
Miriam Willow Giles	Southwest Colorado Council of Governments	Local governments in region
Paul Marusak	Ella Vita Homeowners Association	Greater Crestview neighborhood
Peter Tregillus	Unaffiliated community member	Local Native American tribal members
Rachel Bauske Frasure	Volunteers of America	People in shelter (DV included), Social/human service providers
Richard Dilworth	Durango BID Homeless Outreach	People who are unhoused, Business improvement district, Social/human service providers
Sarada Leavenworth	Axis Health Care	Health community, Social/human service providers
Shannon Soignier	Unaffiliated community member	Greater Crestview neighborhood
Shawna Butler	Southwest Center for Independence	People with disabilities, Social/human service providers
Tim Walsworth	Durango Business Improvement District	Downtown Durango businesses
Tony Rocha	Boulevard Neighborhood Association	3rd Avenue neighbors

Project Sponsors

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Special thanks to the community!

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Manna Soup Kitchen

Project Participants

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Consultant Team



Meagan Picard, Principal
Jennifer Lopez, Principal



Chris Chopyak, Visual Strategist and CEO

Heather Martinez, Visual Practitioner (Independent)

Executive Summary

We Learn Backwards: Existing Conditions...

Homelessness is on the rise in Durango. The annual Point-in-Time count (PIT), mandated by the US Department of Housing and Development, found that people who are experiencing homelessness more than doubled in 2019 from the prior year's PIT count (from 91 to 192). And even with this increase in persons experiencing homelessness identified through this count, it is still widely considered an inadequate method for identifying and collecting data on households experiencing homelessness. This undercount can be verified when data is collected from major service provider partners such as Axis Health System who reported serving more than 1.5 times the number of people in the same year who self-identified as homeless when receiving services (300). Housing Solutions for the Southwest manages the PIT count annually and believes that part of the increase in the numbers can be attributed to better methods for collecting data; however, other data points and anecdotal evidence throughout the community points to myriad causes for the increase in persons experiencing homelessness in Durango and the surrounding area.

Decreasing numbers elsewhere in the country indicate that recent strategies to get people who have been chronically homeless housed in supportive housing and to rapidly re-house others are helping to stem the tide and that additional steps need to be taken to address the root causes of homelessness in order to eliminate it. Furthermore, communities that are seeing a decrease in homelessness are doing so by implementing coordinated housing and services programs, collecting robust data and using the data to deploy limited resources to address homelessness at its root cause through the provision of permanent housing.

Systematic causes of homelessness include: 1) the cost of living rising at a faster rate than income, generally; 2) a substantial rise in housing costs; 3) insufficient public support mechanisms for people struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse; 4) a substantial rise in the cost of health care; and 5) isolation/disconnection from personal support. Housing and a network of related services must be strategically aligned to reverse the trend in Durango. Furthermore, the community should continue to look at ways to prevent homelessness through increasing affordable housing resources, increasing access to affordable health and behavioral health services, continued work to increase wages and other strategies to address the structural causes of homelessness.

Local efforts to address homelessness are significant and offer a full range of critical services to address homelessness – but they are limited:

- *Housing Limitations:* New affordable housing, including 40 units of supportive housing, is being built but still won't meet demand for the foreseeable future, given nearly 200 people identified as unhoused in the 2019 Point-in-Time Count. Furthermore, access to existing housing units for persons with rental housing vouchers or rental support through rapid rehousing programming is limited; policy changes are needed to increase state and federal resource limits to increase the effectiveness of these existing housing programs. Upwards adjustments to existing rent subsidy levels would make a significant increase in the short-term by enabling deployment of existing resources to immediately house local community members experiencing homelessness.
- *Shelter Limitations:* There aren't enough shelter beds available at the existing shelters operated by Volunteers of America, and people who are using drugs or alcohol, have histories of violence or live with severe mental illness may not be permitted to use the shelter. No low

barrier shelters exist in the community. Volunteers of America is not able to expand their services currently, and there is no other local organization with existing capacity to develop and manage one. Interviews with unhoused community members also indicated that some unhoused community members would not choose to use shelter resources even if they were available due to a variety of reasons.

- *Mobility Limitations*: Some transit services exist locally, but they are insufficient to meet needs. For instance, there is no regular service to the hospital. Services that are provided also have limited hours of operation and unhoused community members camping, or not living within the core of Durango, struggle not only with access to services but in getting to employment when it is secured, especially if the position requires nighttime hours.
- *Single-Provider Limitations*: This is common in rural communities, even in hub communities like Durango. It is an asset that all critical services are provided in the community, but no single provider can work well for all people. Having only one provider to offer regular mental health services, for instance, can mean that some people forego accessing services they really need.
- *Local Government Funding Limitations (and Opportunities)*: While the number of people in need of housing, shelter and other services has been growing, resources had been decreasing – particularly those from local government, primarily due to the decrease in oil and gas revenues in southwest Colorado. Local governments faced constrained spending as a result. However, revenues have recently stabilized. As Durango and La Plata County move forward to implement this strategic plan, some local investments will be critical for improving the system overall. Ideally, local funding would be used in part to leverage additional outside funding in order to implement the full range of system enhancements that are needed to successfully implement this plan.
- *State Funding Limitations (and Opportunities)*: State funding has been a challenge for years due to the limitations of TABOR which restricts the state’s ability to retain tax revenues to fund critical programs including essential safety net programs, behavioral health services and affordable housing. However, over the last four years the state legislature has found creative ways to significantly increase affordable housing funding. The challenge with these new funding resources is that they do not fund staff for program implementation or organizational capacity for local communities. As a result, it will be critical for key housing providers in the community to find new sources of funding to increase capacity and successfully access and deploy new housing resources. Ideally, local funding would be used to leverage these timely housing and homeless program resources in order to maximize and grow the effectiveness of existing programs providing rental assistance and case management to persons experiencing homelessness.

Leadership, coordination and mutual support are also limited in this community’s current efforts to address homelessness, though recent collaborations offer a promising foundation for the future. Establishing a more reliable system of shared leadership and coordinated action is an important step toward making an impact – by both reducing the occurrence of homelessness locally and the negative impacts of homelessness on the broader community.

...and a Call for Action

A large part of the reason individuals and organizations have been reluctant to lead is that the community has been divided on what to do – ranging from pushing people who are unhoused out of

the community to shifting all local resources from things like community art to focus on building and getting people into housing as quickly as possible.

After a man was found dead in his sleeping bag, covered in a dusting of snow, one February morning in 2019, and another man had to have his feet amputated after getting frost bite while sleeping in his car that same winter, compassionate community members expressed urgency for actions to address these inhumane conditions. Furthermore, housed community members insist that action must be taken now to stop scattered camping in the woods behind their homes and businesses, downtown and in neighborhoods, generating large amounts of trash in public spaces and causing safety concerns. Whatever the perspective, the call for action is clear, and it is now.

Potential for actionable common ground was uncovered in this planning process. Generally, people who are unhoused and housed alike share interests in:

- Enhancing **coordination** among community leaders, service providers and housed and unhoused community members, **with dignity and respect** for all involved;
- Providing for a **range of housing and shelter** needs;
- Ensuring that needed **health and other support services are available, accessible, affordable**;
- Improving **community safety**, especially reducing incidents related to substance abuse, and keeping **public spaces clean** and free from human waste and other trash;
- Creating **more work opportunities that work** for people struggling with mental and behavioral health challenges; and
- Building sense of community in a way that is **inclusive and connected**.

We Live Forward, Part 1: Strategic Implementation Plan

The Strategic Implementation Plan is designed to serve as a framework for guiding and supporting successful implementation of strategic action items in the Actionable Management Plan (We Live Forward, Part 2) and allowing for nimble responses to challenges with implementation and emerging issues or new opportunities. Grounded in both best practices and community dynamics and needs, this plan seeks to:

1. Provide for an array of strategies built on common ground and effectively balance the array of interests in the community.
2. Establish a systematic approach that aims to keep people housed or get them into housing as quickly as possible, enabling a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one time whenever it can't be fully prevented.
3. Leverage existing strengths in order to create a much greater chance of success in reaching that major goal of preventing or limiting the occurrence of homelessness.

4. Develop a system that is highly coordinated and supportive of more shared leadership, also to enhance chances of success.
5. Promote dignity and respect for all involved throughout the system.
6. Build community connections and understanding over time – eventually as a part of all strategies that could include broader community involvement and/or learning opportunities.
7. Whenever resources are insufficient to meet all needs at any given time, give priority access to those individuals and families who lost their housing while living in the area and/or who choose to continue living here for the foreseeable future.

With these objectives and principles as a guide, the Strategic Implementation Plan is focused on a core set of strategies that build a more coordinated system within the 12 months following adoption of this plan. It focuses on systems and resources needed to evaluate short-term action items, sustain and scale strategies that work (achieve desired impact), eliminate or adjust strategies that are not working, and maximize efficiencies and impact through coordination.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES:

1. BALANCE ALL INTERESTS.
2. ENABLE FUTURE IN WHICH HOMELESSNESS IS RARE, BRIEF AND ONE-TIME.
3. SUPPORT AND/OR BUILD ON EXISTING STRENGTHS.
4. PROMOTE DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ALL.
5. BE COORDINATED.
6. BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING.
7. PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO SCARCE RESOURCES FOR “LOCALS”.

SYSTEM COORDINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Setting up an effective system of coordination is considered a foundational step toward success. To be effective, major objectives in the design of this system include:

1. **Build and expand on productive collaborations among service providers that are currently in place.** This objective is achieved by a) formally developing coordinated access to services for people in need, which is reflected in the *System Coordination Recommendation (SCR) 1* to *develop a formal resource navigation center*, and b) creating a structure for coordinated decision-making as the plan is implemented and requires updates, which is reflected in *SCR 2* to *organize a Coordinating Council* that capitalizes on the collaborative planning efforts of the PATH.
2. **Identify an appropriate funding source that supports rapid as well as sustainable implementation.** This is reflected in *SCR 3* to *leverage local government funding for up to three years* until another long-term source can be sufficiently vetted and allocated for this purpose. Note that additional outside resources may not completely eliminate the need for local funding support but should decrease resources needed for this coordination system over time.
3. **Be efficient, effective and accountable in the use of public funds to manage the coordination system.** This objective is achieved by:
 - *SCR 4*, integrating *a coordinated data collection system* into the resource navigation center that is linked to the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for housing and annual counts of people who are unhoused and for use with center intakes and check-ins;
 - *SCR 5*, establishing a *new Systems Navigation and Coordination Director position* (referred to as Director throughout this document) to both manage the resource navigation center and support the Coordinating Council in its responsibilities, including facilitating priority resource acquisition; and

- **SCR 6, evaluating and reporting on progress** toward reaching desired outcomes for each Tier 1 Strategy, with a focus on how well they individually and collectively help to meet the plan's ultimate objective of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. Furthermore, evaluation will provide critical information to guide when it is important to adapt the plan to increase or decrease strategies based on their effectiveness.

This new coordination system is anticipated to be funded jointly by the City and the County and that a lead agency locally would be selected to manage all elements of this system through a competitive RFP process in the first quarter of 2020.

We Live Forward, Part 2: Actionable Management Plan

The Actionable Management Plan, describes the array of strategies planned in each strategic theme identified for viable action during the planning process, including Housing and Shelter, Health and Other Support Services, Safe and Clean Community, Connected Community and Work that Works. Strategies that are ready for implementation within 12 months of plan adoption are considered Tier 1 strategies. These are displayed in Figure 1, the Tier 1 Strategy Map, and details about each strategy can be found in the Actionable Management Plan chapter, including identification of strategy leads and their partners, new funding needs and planned sources, and SMART goals and measures.

Tier 2 strategies, those that have been identified as highly desirable strategies but either need to wait for other strategies to be implemented first or need more development, are listed at the end of each strategic theme section. They are slated for consideration to be advanced as a Tier 1 Strategy during each annual review or in response to an emerging need or new opportunity to implement. A template community report card is provided in Appendix E to help with evaluating and reporting on the system's and its component parts' effectiveness in reaching the overall goal making the occurrence of homelessness rare, brief and one-time, whenever it can't be prevented.



Figure 1:
Tier 1 Strategy Map

Key: Tier 1 Strategy Leads



Local Government Investment and Returns

As described in more detail in SCR 3 in the Strategic Implementation Plan, it is recommended that the city and county identify funding to support the set-up and build out of coordination system for at least the first three years of implementation (2020-2023). After that time, the community can evaluate its effectiveness, and hopefully, other resources are identified to augment the need for funding from local government. Total local government investment in this new system is estimated to cost up to \$170,000 annually, plus potential additional investment in an organized camp. These investments are described in the table below.

Strategic Plan Implementation New Investment Opportunities	
<i>Primary Investment Request</i>	
Establishing Coordination System	Cost Estimates
Systems Navigation and Coordination Director position*	\$95,000
Support staff for position and navigation center*	\$50,000
Data system enhancements, including possible technical assistance for set-up	\$10,000
Office support, supplies and set-up	\$15,000
Total	\$170,000
<i>Additional Investment Opportunities</i>	
Permanent Camp Establishment	
Consulting Support and Feasibility Analysis**	\$15000-\$20,000
Site improvements	TBD based on site
Bathroom facilities and portable water	TBD based on site
Nonprofit sponsor and part-time staff support	\$30,000-\$40,000
Camp Manager Stipend (\$1000 a month for 12 months)	\$12,000
Transportation	TBD based on site
Supplemental Support for Tier 1 Action Items	
There are a number of opportunities to help fund tier 1 activities. If interested, the team suggests waiting for establishment of the council to help prioritize which actions may be most impactful for local government to support.	TBD

**Actual costs associated with these positions may be adjusted to align with local market rates; a comparative wage analysis may be warranted. Additionally, organizations that submit proposals for managing the coordination system should submit proposed salary ranges that will work within their organizations while also attracting highly qualified candidates to the positions.*

***Cost estimates for the camp are best guesses; The Athena Group does not have expertise in establishing or managing homeless camps. Accessing energy impact grant funding or other*

sources to hire consultant support to develop an approach/feasibility analysis for a permanent camp program is recommended.

These initial system investments have the potential to create greater impact with existing resources as well as create the needed capacity to access new resources. The state is investing millions more in housing and homeless solutions, and there are policy changes at the state level that could increase funding for substance abuse services in the very near future.

Investment in this coordination infrastructure would leverage the following returns:

- 1) Immediate increased capacity in the community for decision-making, program development, policy development and fundraising.
- 2) Decreased reliance on local government staff through the development of this oversight body that can review requests concerning resources, projects or policies and provide guidance to local government.
- 3) Increased capacity for grant writing.
- 4) Streamlined access to services to reduce barriers and support faster access to housing.
- 5) A clearinghouse for information about homelessness and a place for businesses and private community members to go to learn about the issue, get involved or donate.

Conclusion and Final Recommendations for Making the Plan Reality

The Athena Group recommends establishing an interim working group in early January 2020 (IWC) to guide the first steps toward making this plan reality. This working group should have two major tasks:

1. Work with the City of Durango and La Plata County to create an RFP for development and management of the coordinated system on homelessness.
2. Support on-going efforts to establish a permanent organized camp, which is currently identified as a Tier 2 strategy but should be moved to Tier 1 as soon as this group is able to identify an organization willing to manage it.

Once a contract is secured with an organization to manage this new community coordinated system, the first order of business should be to hire the Director to support all aspects of plan implementation. Once this position is filled, this staff person will establish the new Coordinating Council (council), based on the recommendations of the IWC. Once council members have been appointed, the director and council should begin working to launch the service navigation center, including agreements with partners and data management system design.

Quarterly meetings of the council can begin as soon as it is established, even if the service navigation center takes longer than three months to officially launch. After the first meeting, council members should plan to include the following regular agenda items to support them in becoming a high-functioning shared leadership group:

- Success stories – what’s going well?
- Emerging challenges – what’s happening, and how can we address it?
- Need for support – who needs support, and who will lend a hand?

Annual review meetings should begin 12 months after the coordination system is in place and should include reviews of all strategies that have been underway for at least six months. The annual review process should include a recap of success stories and challenges that emerged in the prior year and how the group can improve how they work together as they move forward. It should also include an assessment of how well the system is doing at preventing homelessness and getting people access to housing when prevention has not been possible and how well the system is caring for the broader

community, making it safer and cleaner and building a stronger and more connected sense of community among housed and unhoused neighbors alike. A more detailed description of this recommended approach is provided in the Conclusion chapter of this report, with select tools in the appendices offered as a starting place to support implementation.

If successful in implementation, this approach over time will help to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time in the greater Durango area, with limited unintended consequences and a stronger community of which everyone can be proud.

We Learn Backwards: Existing Conditions and a Call for Action

The greater Durango community – including unhoused and housed residents and the businesses and organizations that serve them – has been undergoing a great deal of stress related to the local experience of homelessness. The rise in the number of people experiencing homelessness in the area, the impacts of homelessness on neighborhoods, downtown business and recreational trail users, the changing community conditions that are related to the rise in homelessness, and passionate and differing opinions on what to do about it all are all contributing to this stress. These conditions – described in more detail below – call for a balanced and coordinated plan of action that seeks to reduce both the existence and impacts of homelessness over time.

The number of people in the community who are unhoused has increased.

A “Point-in-Time” count (PIT) is administered through the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and local partners every year in January to learn how many people are experiencing homelessness in the community at that particular point in time. The PIT count is far from perfect – it is widely understood that many people are missed generally (some say as much as half the population of people who are unhoused go uncounted), plus people who are “doubled-up” (sleeping in someone else’s home even if not an actual bedroom) are not included in the count because they don’t meet the HUD definition of homeless even though doubling up is not stable housing. Another significant factor impacting the number is that the Summer population of unhoused individuals is believed to be much larger than in Winter due to the ability to camp in the adjacent open spaces surrounding the City of Durango. These data weaknesses are part of the rationale for the recommendation described in more detail later for development of a robust coordination system which can gather and provide easy access to real time data on the unhoused population and drive resources to solutions that work to decrease homelessness. In 12-18 months, the community will have access to much richer data and the PIT count will become a supplemental data point moving forward.

Though imperfect, the PIT is currently the best source for estimating the number of people who are unhoused in the community – sheltered and not – and for understanding potential service needs based on demographics and experiences reported through the PIT count process. It demonstrates that in just two years, 2017-2019, the number of people identified as “homeless” in the community has more than doubled, increasing 111% from 91 to 192. A representative of Housing Solutions for the Southwest, the local lead PIT data partner, reported that some of the increase can be explained by improvements in the counting process, but it is also believed that there are more people in the community who have lost their housing in the last two years.

Elsewhere in the state and country, the overall number of people who are unhoused is actually decreasing. From 2007 to 2018 (available years of comparable data)¹, the total number of people who were counted as homeless decreased by 15%, and the number of people identified as chronically homeless decreased by 19%. Over this period, approximately 320,000 new permanent supportive housing units were created (a 169% increase in this promising strategy for addressing homelessness), and the capacity of rapid rehousing programs tripled between the years of 2013-2016 in a sampling of

¹ HUD Point in Time data files since 2007, found online at <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2018-reports>

major cities² that participated in the U.S. Conference of Mayors Survey on Hunger and Homelessness. However, even with this significant increase in resources, the number of unhoused people decreased by only about 100,000 people³. This indicates that although these housing programs have been a useful strategy in addressing homelessness, the factors that contribute to people losing their housing continues to outpace the solutions to homelessness.

This is a dynamic that was exposed in Utah's efforts since 2005 to "just give people homes." After building hundreds of homes and hiring dozens of social workers to support their residents who were previously identified as chronically homeless, they found a still growing problem of homelessness in their state. Michael Hobbes' article in the *Huffington Post* called, "Why America Can't Solve Homelessness" (May 19, 2019) described the situation:

While Salt Lake City targeted a small subset of the homeless population, the overall problem got worse. Between 2005 and 2015, while the number of drug-addicted and mentally ill homeless people fell dramatically, the number of people sleeping in the city's emergency shelter more than doubled. Since then, unsheltered homelessness has continued to rise. According to 2018 figures, the majority of unhoused families and single adults in Salt Lake City are experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Root Causes of Homelessness

The root cause of the rise in homelessness in this country is difficult to pinpoint due to the complexity of the issue and many contributing public policy decisions over time. The Salt Lake City example makes a compelling case for including strategies that prioritize housing as well as address other direct drivers that are discussed below. A fact sheet produced by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (January 2015) points to a variety of contributing factors that we will discuss here in more detail: 1) cost of living rising at faster rate than income, generally; 2) substantial rise in housing costs; 3) insufficient public support mechanisms for people struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse; 4) substantial rise in cost of health care; and 5) isolation/disconnection from personal support.⁴

Contributing factor 1: General economic context - cost of living outpaces rise in income.

To begin with, changes in the economy since the 1970s/early 1980s, considered by many to be the beginning of contemporary homelessness⁵, have made it more difficult to make ends meet. Referred to as the "Great 'U-turn'," it is during this time period that the United States economy began a significant shift from manufacturing to lower wage service industries.⁶ Coupled with this change in economic drivers has been the steadily increasing cost of living. General goods and services are harder to pay for today, resulting in a significant increase in the number of households who are one paycheck away from homelessness. While the cost of general goods and services increased 547% since the 1970s, all three common income indicators grew at a slower rate:

- Minimum wage increased 353%.
- Average wages increased 400%.
- Median household income increased 511%.

² <https://endhomelessness.atavist.com/mayorsreport2016>

³ HUD Point in Time data files since 2007, found online at <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2018-reports>

⁴ Found online at https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Homeless_Stats_Fact_Sheet.pdf

⁵ http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/The_Age_Structure_of_Contemporary_Homelessness_WEB.pdf

⁶ Plunkett, Lois M. "The 1980s: a decade of job growth and industry shifts," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1990. Found online at: <https://www.bls.gov/mlr/1990/09/art1full.pdf>

While wages have stayed low compared to costs, government subsidies have declined and been more difficult to access. Between 1982 and 1985, \$57 billion was cut from welfare programs and adjustments to eligibility requirements removed over half of working families from the Federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. Less than a decade later, 1991 welfare reform established workfare programs requiring recipients to attend job hunting workshops in order to remain eligible for welfare, many of which ended up at low paying jobs and still living below the poverty line.⁷

Furthermore, given the change in the economy, getting a higher education degree of some kind has become a critical step toward increasing one's income. Unfortunately, fewer people are able to afford higher education since average college tuition rates have increased more than 1500%⁸ since the 1970s – triple the growth of median household income⁹. For many people born into a family with lower incomes, this means a lifetime of lower earnings, what experts refer to as generational poverty.

Contributing factor 2: More and more people can't find housing that they can truly afford.

Nationally, there appears to be a correlation between high rates of homelessness and areas where housing costs are high. Consistently each year 2014-18, four of the five states (with the District of Columbia) with the highest rates of homelessness¹⁰ were also among the top five highest median rental listings¹¹. Throughout the country, housing prices have grown at more than 2.5 times the growth rate of minimum wage earnings¹² and nearly double median household income growth¹³ since the 1970s, which helps to show why more and more people are vulnerable to homelessness, no matter where they live.

⁷ Handler, Joel, UCLA Law School. "The False Promise of Workfare: Another Reason for a Basic Income Guarantee," 2004. Found online at <https://basicincome.org/bien/pdf/2004Handler.pdf>.

⁸ National Center for Education Statistics - get full citation

⁹ National Center for Education Statistics - get full citation

¹⁰ <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2018-reports>

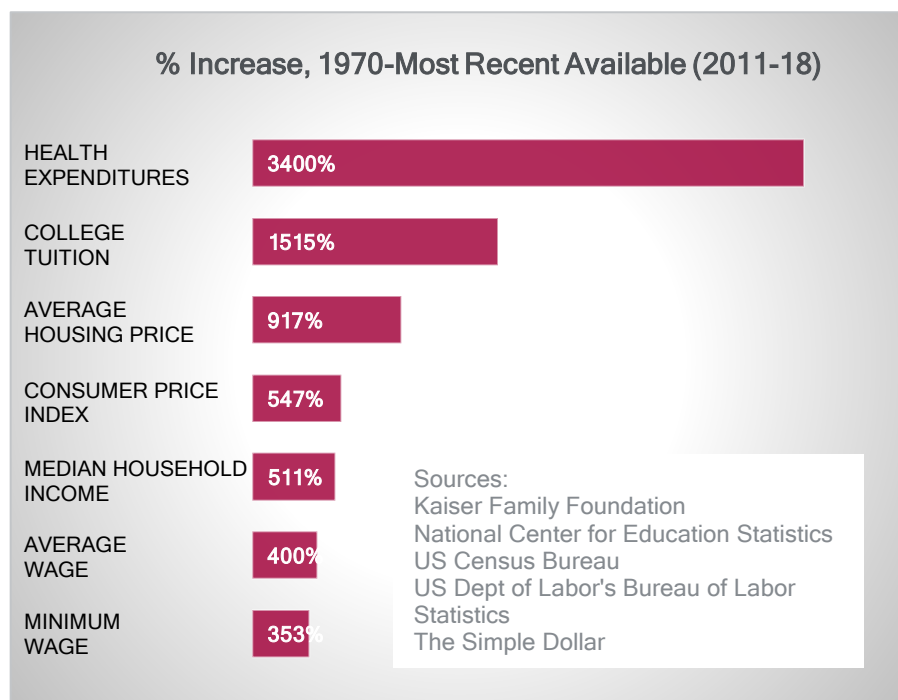
¹¹ <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>

¹² U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau

Durango residents are particularly vulnerable to this condition. In general, housing options are limited here, and the largest industry is retail trade, which typically offers low wage jobs with limited, if any, healthcare benefits. Durango's most recent housing plan (2017) shows that median gross rent in Durango was \$1,090 (2013-17) and at least half of Durango renters spend more than 30% of their earnings on rent, which is the maximum recommended proportion of earnings to spend on housing before the household is said to be "burdened" (a recommendation that evolved from the United States National Housing Act of 1937, according to a

U.S. Census Bureau report¹⁴). People who may be most vulnerable to this situation in Durango are those that are making 50% of Area Median Income (\$62,533, U.S. Census 5-year average 2013-17) or less. This includes police officers, firefighters, teachers, office clerks, childcare workers and all those in retail, restaurants and hospitality that support the tourist industry, which is Durango's economic engine. The goal identified in the plan is to create 1,000 housing units with long-term affordability by 2040, which would be nine percent of the city's total housing stock (2017).



Contributing factor 3: Rise in mental health and substance abuse challenges with decreased support

Among the 192 people counted as unhoused in La Plata County in January 2019, approximately 1 in 4 reported struggling with some kind of mental health or substance abuse issue. People who are unhoused are not alone in this. In his recent book *Them*, Historian and U.S. Senator Ben Sasse asserts, "We're killing ourselves, both on purpose and accidentally... We're literally dying of despair" (2018, p. 4). These statements are based on 2016 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that show increases in deaths from both overdoses and suicides in recent years, with suicides at a 30-year high and the percentage of young people hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or actions doubling over the prior decade.

Isolation and despair for those unable to access critical behavioral health services only gets worse once a person loses stable housing. The relationship between the loss of housing and a lack of access to behavioral health services becomes a vicious cycle for people living on the streets. This dynamic leads to worsening behavioral health for homeless individuals and sometime undesirable behaviors in public places, where they are forced to spend most of their time. A major early influence occurred between 1960 and 1980 when a plan to deinstitutionalize people with mental illness and serve them in community mental health centers was implemented, dropping the number of patients living in state hospitals from 535,000 to 137,000. Many of these individuals ended up homeless due to inadequate

¹⁴ <https://www.census.gov/housing/census/publications/who-can-afford.pdf>

funding for housing and community-based services that could have housed them.¹⁵ Then, the Social Security Act of 1980 compounded the problem by tightening the disability eligibility process, adversely affecting people with mental illness.

Locally, limited resources are available to support people with serious mental illness and addictions, especially when people don't have the resources to pay for the care they need. This leaves people who rely on Medicaid for care only one major care giver option for local mental and behavioral health care, Axis Health System. Furthermore, this health system is primarily funded through federal and state programs that can be changed annually and often these policy decisions can negatively impact the level of services that can be provided in the community. In recent months, the community has begun to supplement support services through volunteer efforts, but volunteers cannot replace the need for professional and comprehensive behavioral health services in the community.

Contributing factor 4: Rise in cost of health care

Kaiser Family Foundation data show a 3400% rise in U.S. spending on health care since the 1970s¹⁶. It is the single most rapidly increasing cost of living in the United States, and though the Athena team has not been able to find research to confirm the influence of illness or injury on the rise in homelessness, most interviewees locally identified the need to address a health care issue as the reason they lost their homes, and once they lost their housing, caring for their health became even more difficult resulting in declining health conditions. As stated in an article in *The Atlantic*¹⁷, "The connection between housing and health is coldly logical. The sick and vulnerable become homeless, and the homeless become sicker and more vulnerable."

Contributing factor 5: Disconnection and isolation

Many people look on community members who are unhoused and think that they have failed somehow. It is true that some people are unhoused because of life decisions that they have made, but many more people have *remained* housed after making poor life decisions. The difference from one person to the next is the level of support they are able to access from others. For instance, as reported in the same article from *The Atlantic*:

Since domestic violence is often accompanied by social isolation and financial reliance on the abuser, those that flee have little resources to find alternative places to stay. A 6-year study in Massachusetts conducted by the National Center on Family Homelessness found that 92 percent of women who are homeless have experienced violence against them at some point in their lives, often before the age of 12.

In addition to people who become isolated as adults due to domestic violence or a traumatic experience like serving in military combat, people who have grown up in violent households or households with heavy substance use may not have family support as adults either. Additionally, people whose families are already struggling financially themselves are unlikely to find the financial help they need from family members.

¹⁵ Amadeo, Kimberly. "Deinstitutionalization, Its Causes, Effects, Pros and Cons," June 25, 2019. Found online at: <https://www.thebalance.com/deinstitutionalization-3306067>.

¹⁶ "Health Care Costs: A Primer," May 1, 2012. Found online at: <https://www.kff.org/report-section/health-care-costs-a-primer-2012-report/>.

¹⁷ Hayashi, "How Health and Homelessness are Connected—Medically," *The Atlantic*, January 25, 2016.

Whether because of financial, mental or emotional reasons, people who are unhoused often lost their homes because they had no one in their lives able and/or willing to help them, and once they become homeless, they become even more disconnected and isolated from social supports.

Together, this set of contributing factors make ending homelessness – as called for in many federal, state and local efforts since the new millennium – one of the most elusive challenges of our time. While local efforts to address homelessness cannot change the existence of some of these factors, solutions can be developed to mitigate their influence.

Local Efforts to Address Homelessness

A lot of outstanding work is happening in the greater Durango area to help people who are unhoused – from food served daily at Manna Soup Kitchen to Axis’ array of health services to Community Compassion Outreach’s programs providing food, support and community. A more expansive, though likely not complete, listing of services offered by area organizations found as part of this planning process is provided in the inventory in Appendix B.

One of the greatest assets in the greater Durango area is the many compassionate individuals and informal groups willing to supplement services provided by formal organizations:

- The Neighbors in Need Alliance (NINA) is an informally organized coalition of churches of various faiths that has stepped up to be an active part of the solution, offering coordinated planning about what faith communities can do to help, fundraising for critical supplies and services and offering companionship to people who are unhoused.
- Individuals volunteer their time at organizations and on their own to help people get their needs met, referring and even driving people to services that may help.
- Some unhoused community members offer leadership and support for others to help stay safe from weather, wildlife and other people (housed and unhoused) and volunteer to help with community services, like serving food at Manna.

These are just a few examples of the dozens of volunteers working in a variety of settings to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the community. Just as critical to these volunteer efforts is the level of compassion and concern expressed by both City and County elected officials; it is their expressed commitment to addressing this issue that has set the stage for action and creation of this strategic plan.

Among all of these outstanding local efforts to help people in need, a set of key limitations are also exposed, from housing and shelter opportunities to state and local funding shifts.

Housing Limitations

A recent article in the *Durango Herald*¹⁸ highlights the need for more *affordable* housing – not just more housing: While approximately 200 new homes are built each year, keeping pace with general population growth, rental rates continue to rise. Subsidized housing is being built to help with this situation, including the recent opening of 36 apartments on 32nd Street at Lumien II, 53 units of senior housing in Three Springs under development and a new 40-unit permanent supportive housing community that will begin construction in late 2020 to serve persons experiencing homelessness. However, this is not enough to cover all of the people who are currently unhoused (estimates ranging from 192 from the 2019 PIT Count to 300 individuals served by Axis in 2018) and far from

¹⁸ Shinn, Mary. “Rental rates stay high in Durango despite building boom,” December 4, 2019.

<https://durangoherald.com/articles/305168-rental-rates-stay-high-in-durango-despite-building-boom>

enough to cover all people who are at risk of losing their current housing or those who will be in need in the future. The City of Durango's 2018 Housing Plan also underscores the need for more affordable housing for people earning 50% AMI and below, showing that the service sector and tourism industry are projected to have the largest number of new jobs over the next 20 years – typically low paying jobs – and people working those jobs will need affordable places to live (p. 15).

Housing Solutions for the Southwest, Volunteers of America and the Homes Fund, a regional CDFI, are all working on creating more affordable housing opportunities for the community, but they need more resources to support their work. Specifically, federal and state agency resources cannot keep up with the growing gap between local wage levels and the local housing market. The City has an inclusionary zoning program in place called the Fair Share program which has funded mortgage assistance and provided land for new rental developments primarily in Three Springs, which may be a resource to consider for the future.

Shelter Limitations

A domestic violence shelter and a community shelter are the primary shelter options in the community, both of which are operated by Volunteers of America. These options offer outstanding services for many people in need – whether in need of shelter for a very brief stay or for longer and with more support to get their lives heading in a more self-sufficient direction. However, these options do not work for many people struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues, and there are no low barrier shelter options available locally. Camping in public areas has also been banned in Durango, though that law was suspended temporarily following an advisement from the ACLU that adequate shelter needs to be provided if camping is to be banned. County land near Purple Cliffs was designated as allowable for camping on a temporary basis starting in late September to allow people to keep their tents up and winterize them in preparation for hazardous winter conditions.

Mobility Limitations

One of the biggest gaps in services is the lack of sufficient transportation to help people reach services and jobs. Transit and transportation studies in the area over recent years have shown that mobility for anyone that isn't able to drive their own vehicle to get where they need to go is seriously limited. The first two sentences on the Regional Transit Coordinating Council's web page state, "Transit services are recognized by the area/regional public as a large gap in Southwest Colorado's transportation infrastructure. The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) cites that 96 percent of Southwest Colorado transit needs are not being met."¹⁹

Single-Provider Limitations

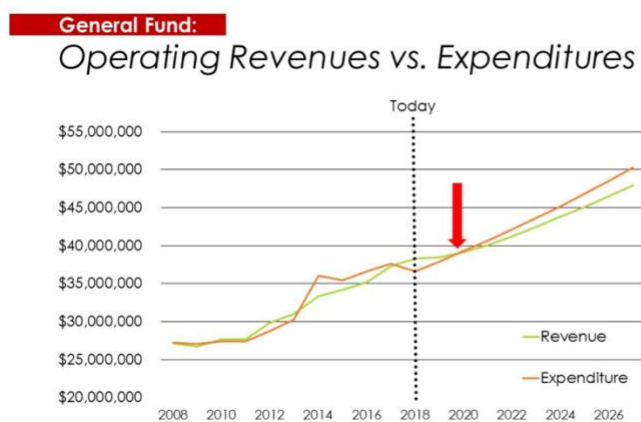
Like in most rural communities, critical support services for extremely low-income community members are limited. In urban areas, there are multiple providers serving lower income families and individuals, so people can find the services that best meet their needs. In Durango and other rural areas, there is typically only one provider offering each kind of service. For instance, Axis Health System is the only behavioral/physical health care provider where people on Medicaid can access professional mental health or addiction treatment and recovery services. If Axis' services don't work for someone, they may instead access health care services when in crisis, going to the emergency room for an acute mental illness symptom or for a serious substance abuse-related incident.

Local Funding Limitations (and Opportunities)

¹⁹ <http://www.swccog.org/projects/transportation/regional-transit-coordinating-council/>

While the number of people in need of housing, shelter and other services has been growing, resources had been decreasing – particularly those from local government, primarily due to the decrease in oil and gas revenues in southwest Colorado and a significant reliance on local sales taxes for revenue. In recent years, La Plata County experienced a decline in property tax revenues, resulting in constrained spending. However, revenues have recently stabilized, with sales tax collections trending ahead of projections in 2019 and a slight uptick in property tax as well. The City of Durango’s situation is less clear. On one hand, Durango relies on a local sales tax; and though this is considered volatile at times, it has remained strong and has actually grown over the last several years. On another, the City of Durango describes its fiscal outlook as a “wicked problem,” asserting that growth in expenditures will outpace revenue, and, “Without an increase to General Fund revenue, the current level of service provided by the City of Durango is not sustainable.”²⁰

As Durango and La Plata County move forward to implement this strategic plan, some local funding investments will be critical for improving the system overall. Ideally, local funding would be used in part to leverage additional outside funding in order to implement the full range of system enhancements that are needed to successfully implement this plan. Such decisions may be a simple matter of leadership priorities.



State Funding Limitations (and Opportunities)

State funding has been a challenge for years due to the limitations of TABOR which restricts the state’s ability to retain tax revenues to fund critical programs including essential safety net programs, behavioral health services and affordable housing. However, over the last four years the state legislature has found creative ways to significantly increase affordable housing funding. The challenge with these new funding resources is that they do not fund staff for program implementation or organizational capacity for local communities. As a result, it will be critical for key housing providers in the community to find new sources of funding to increase capacity and successfully access and deploy new housing resources. Ideally, local funding would be used to leverage these timely housing and homeless program resources in order to maximize and grow the effectiveness of existing programs providing rental assistance and case management to persons experiencing homelessness.

Need for Coordination and Mutual Support

In a series of key informant interviews conducted at the beginning of this process, many participants discussed a history of people stepping up to lead efforts to address homelessness but being left out on a limb without support from others. This has resulted in reluctance by many to step up now or in the future. This must change. A more coordinated effort, potentially with more resources, is needed if the community wants to reduce the number of people in the area who are unhoused.

Impacts of Homelessness on the Local Community and Mitigation Efforts

²⁰ Budget forecast found online at: <https://co-durango.civicplus.com/1044/Budget-Forecast>.

Anyone can find a compelling personal reason to be part of the solution, since homelessness impacts everyone. Community members – businesses and housed and unhoused neighbors alike – are experiencing negative impacts in the community from these conditions:

- People who are unhoused – in Durango and beyond – experience serious impacts on their health with life expectancy shortened by approximately 20 years.²¹
- People living in residential neighborhoods near where unhoused people have been camping prior to the designation of the Purple Cliffs site, especially in the greater Crestview neighborhood (including Ella Vita), have reported serious concerns about safety when hiking through the trails in wooded areas and have even had some threatening and harassing experiences on their property as people traveled between Manna and the woods. Though crime data is not available to explain exactly what is happening in those situations, most anecdotal reports indicate the involvement of intoxication and/or unwanted behaviors related to untreated mental illness in those situations.
- Similar threats to safety for people who are unhoused have been reported, especially by people who are volatile from using methamphetamines or large amounts of alcohol.
- Trash and human waste have been found in woods, along trails, in parks and in neighborhoods. News reports have documented some of the most serious situations.²²
- Theft has been reported by housed neighbors, organizations and unhoused neighbors. Some of these incidents have been clearly shown to be perpetrated by people who are unhoused, and some of it is assumed. Data are not available to show the extent of the problem, and much of the theft among unhoused community members goes unreported.
- People who are unhoused are extremely vulnerable to myriad crimes including theft and acts of violence, as noted above. Exacerbating this dynamic is that many unhoused community members are uncomfortable or unwilling to report crimes when they have happened due to a lack of trust with local law enforcement or previous negative experiences with the local criminal justice system.

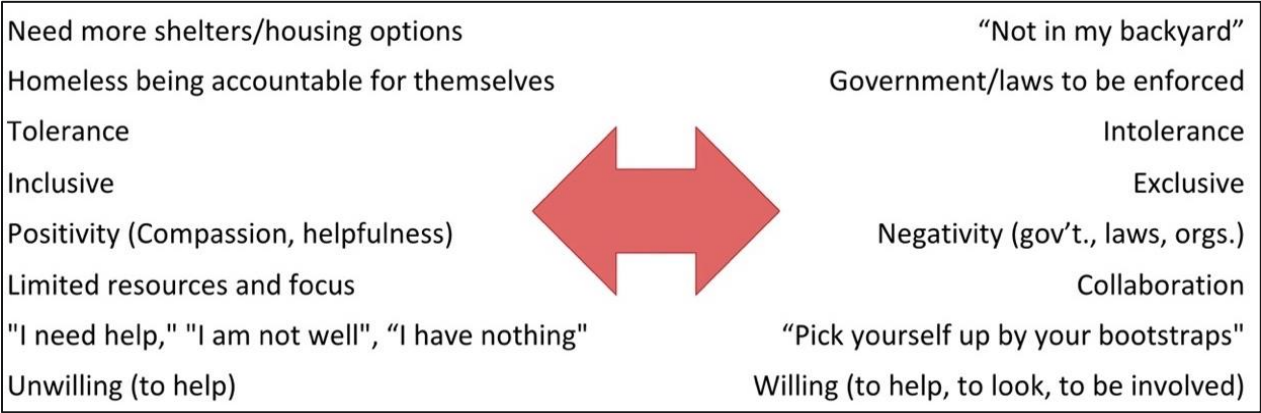


Community tensions and divisions on how to address homelessness have limited action.

²¹ National Coalition for the Homeless, December 21, 2018, “Remembering those Lost to Homelessness.” Found online at: <https://nationalhomeless.org/category/mortality/>.

²² Multiple articles found online, including: <https://durangoherald.com/articles/295797-longstanding-homeless-camp-shut-down-but-trash-abounds> <https://kdvr.com/2019/09/28/la-plata-county-relocates-homeless-camp-over-fire-danger-trash-buildup/> <https://the-journal.com/articles/155339>

A fundamental disagreement on how to address these issues is evident in community and has prevented meaningful progress. Key tensions were identified through early interviews and a survey on the definition of success of the planning effort and potential goals for the strategic plan itself, described as follows in the summary of the July PATH meeting when the interview and survey results were reviewed:



Because of these palpable tensions, the team of consultants led by The Athena Group sought and received additional funds from the Colorado Health Foundation to conduct a set of “listening sessions” with the groups that tend to be on either side of these tensions. These sessions were designed to explore the potential for common ground from which the community might be able to identify a set of goals and strategies to improve community life for all who live, work and play in the greater Durango area.

To be most effective in this process, the team envisioned inviting the broader community to listen to a recruited set of participants that would include unhoused community members and impacted neighborhood groups discussing their personal experienced and views in each session. However, the sessions were kept closed, with only PATH members invited to listen directly, due to concerns about the level of animosity in the community and a need to hold safe spaces to talk. Two sessions were held; one with unhoused neighbors at the VOA community shelter and another was held with local neighborhood members at St. Mark’s Church. Information gathered from these sessions was then shared at an open house event at St. Mark’s, where the broader community learned of details of these conversations, and participants could offer additional information about existing conditions and possible common ground for moving forward.

Community Perspectives on Potential for Common Ground.

Potential common ground on which to develop a plan to address homelessness in the greater Durango area was identified by reviewing comments left by open house participants and in follow-up observations from PATH members that participated and by doing side-by-side comparisons of the graphic recordings of each set of conversations. Following are themes of shared hopes and concerns heard from participants.

Dignity, Respect, Connection. A strong shared message from those that participated in these conversations was: whatever is done, it should be done in a way that supports dignity and respect for all and that promotes on-going connection among community leaders, service providers and housed and unhoused community members.

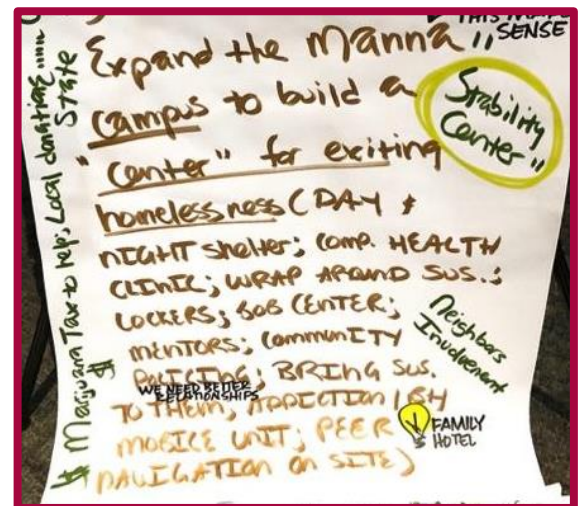


Housing and Shelter: One Size Doesn't Fit All. The strongest agreement about housing and shelter is that one strategy alone won't work. Key thinking includes:

- Some support was indicated for having a low barrier shelter on or near the Manna campus. When asked if this could work for Ella Vita neighbors, one Ella Vita resident and local business owner noted, "It isn't perfect, but I don't think there is a perfect place."
- It was acknowledged that some people will not stay in any kind of shelter, so alternatives are needed (camping, car camping, RV hook-up sites, etc.). The challenge is finding agreed-upon sites; no clear common ground about siting was identified, beyond the social services campus for some kinds of shelter.
- There was clear agreement that something needs to be done, even if not perfect. As one community member said, "We can enforce the no camping and sleeping rules only once there is some designated place for sleeping. So that needs to happen soon."
- More urgently, there is common concern about the upcoming Winter and need for some way to get warm in extreme conditions.
- It was widely agreed that bathrooms, trash facilities and transportation should be provided at any and all new shelter and housing options.
- Longer term housing solutions were not raised directly during these conversations, but the need for affordable housing – supportive and not – was indicated as references were made to the need for "solutions for the long run".
- Many existing services, such as the Durango Community Shelter, expressed a need for more local support to continue to provide existing services. Numerous providers and volunteers expressed concern that new strategies will require resources and could detract from core existing services with proven track records.

Health and Other Support Services: Available, Accessible,

Affordable. Across various conversations, multiple participants entertained visions of some kind of resource center, from a clearinghouse for work and shelter to a one-stop shop for health and other resources, including more robust legal identification services. One participant built a fairly detailed picture of a "stability center" at or near the Manna Soup Kitchen site. While others did not like the name, the concept drew support from the housed and business community conversation and in the open house, and similar suggestions were made by unhoused community members. The centralized resource center fits with an overriding shared vision that physical and mental health services be available, accessible and affordable, especially to the extent that it helps to mitigate mobility challenges in the area by providing access to a full array of services at one accessible location.



Community Environment: Safe and Clean for All. Safety is a critical need for everyone – no matter one’s circumstances in life – according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. This is a concept that came through strongly in the conversations. Housed neighbors wished for “Peace of mind”; unhoused neighbors wished for “Peace for everyone”. Unhoused neighbors envisioned, “[We can] walk down the street,” and housed neighbors envisioned, “We can walk anywhere.” Housed neighbors shared, “We have been threatened,” and unhoused neighbors expressed desire for “no harassment from those privileged”.

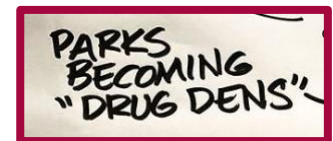


Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

More specifically, all conversations illuminated concerns about:

- Theft
- Alcohol and drug use in parks
- Behaviors associated with public intoxication
- Law enforcement: timeliness, responsiveness/effectiveness, need to build trust
- Safety for most vulnerable, especially women and people with disabilities

Like concerns about safety, most wanted to address trash and human waste in parks and other public spaces. As one PATH member reflected after the session, “...there was an implication that they were here for the same reasons we are all here – open space, beauty.” It is not surprising, then, that housed and unhoused people in the community want to care for what they love about it, and parks and open space issues rank high on the list for everyone.



Purpose: Access to Work that Works. Part of the conversations about community addressed work and other income sources, primarily from the group with lived experience in communities though at least one person in the housed and business community group mentioned day labor opportunities. This may be a lower priority item for housed and business community members because the community has been successful in limiting panhandling. However, there is an underlying interest expressed by all people for long-term solutions, a part of which would need to include some way for people of all abilities to access stable income.

Community: Inclusive and Connected. A shared vision among those who participated is that the greater Durango community looks, feels and acts like “one community”. They would like to see opportunities for housed and unhoused neighbors to meet and to harness each person’s own power to reach out and connect. Through these actions, they see the possibility of building understanding, reducing fear and collaborating more on solutions.

Many participants expressed a kind of hopefulness about the possibilities through these connections and “new energy to fix rather than eliminate the problem”. As one person noted, “[It is exciting] that conversations are happening between many people wanting to understand each other and find multiple solutions to complex problems.” Still another person noted excitement about, “Acknowledgement that it takes a whole community to solve complex social issues... We’re on the right path.”

A full report of the conversation results is available on the project web page on the City of Durango website.²³ In sum, these conversations helped to highlight areas on which to build a strategic plan in

²³ <https://www.durangogov.org/1267/Homelessness-Strategic-Planning>

this community's continued pursuit of a balanced and effective strategy for addressing homelessness in the area.

"WE'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH."

--*Open house participant*

We Live Forward, Part 1: Strategic Implementation Plan

The Strategic Implementation Plan is designed to serve as a framework for guiding and supporting successful implementation of strategic action items in the Actionable Management Plan (*We Live Forward, Part 2*) and allowing for nimble response to challenges with implementation, new emerging issues or timely opportunities.

BEST PRACTICES GROUNDING

To provide the strongest possible framework for the plan, we have sought guidance from best practices in other jurisdictions around the country and from national organizations tasked with providing technical assistance for local governments. Over the last ten years, experts in the field of homelessness have learned a great deal about how to end homelessness and has developed a set of best practices at the local, state and national levels. The leading agencies providing this critical information include the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Community Solutions, and other national and state policy groups (see Appendix G for website links). What these groups share is a set of principles and practices that help connect people experiencing homelessness to housing and services as quickly as possible.

In order to be able to do this, a community must be well-coordinated across the housing and services continuum, be committed to collecting and centralizing data on this population, better leverage existing resources to more quickly connect those experiencing homelessness to services, and measure their work and progress through the use of a dashboard or other metric tool to ensure that limited resources are being deployed in the most effective ways to reduce or end homelessness.

There are several tools that serve as cornerstones to effective coordination at the local level, including: 1) development of a strategic plan; 2) creation of an oversight body and a dedicated staff position to implement the plan; 3) effective use of homeless management information systems (referred to as HMIS), which is managed through a coordinated entry system (CES) and tracks HUD homeless housing resources and their effective deployment; and 4) efforts to coordinate and track services outside of the CES.

1) Best Practices in Developing a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

The United States Interagency on Homelessness (USICH) has been providing guidance for local communities on strategic planning efforts for several years. USICH recommends that communities implement systematic responses to prevent homelessness, and when it is not preventable, to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring. Much like the federal government's plan to address homelessness, local governments need to create lasting, collaborative, service response systems; increase capacity for and strengthen practices to prevent housing crisis and homelessness; identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness; provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter or other temporary accommodations; implement a coordinated entry system (CES) that can move people into permanent housing with support services and ensure services are robust enough to prevent individuals from returning to homelessness. In addition to this guidance, the consulting team added an additional practice to listen to the perspective of those with lived experience and those community members most impacted by the issue of homelessness, crossed with listening to perspectives from others in the community, and used common ground identified through these listening sessions to inform the

strategic plan themes and strategies. More information on Athena’s approach to this planning process is provided in Appendix A.

2A) Creation of An Oversight Body

There are several examples nationally of how to create an oversight body for plan implementation. From reviewing other strategic plans (Fort Collins, San Diego, Hennepin County, MN to name a few), these oversight bodies typically have the following structure:

- They are composed of a small group of community leaders) from a range of backgrounds, government, service providers, faith communities, unhoused community members, law enforcement, etc. Membership is limited to 6-12 members for effective group process and shared leadership
- The oversight body participates in frequent reviews of progress on the strategic plan.
- This group also helps to problem-solve when challenges arise, identifies funding and other resources for implementation, and creates an appropriate level of both accountability to the public and insulation from changes in political leadership over time.

2B) Creation of a Dedicated Staff Position

Because the issue of homelessness is so complex and intersects numerous issues such as housing, access to services, and employment challenges, many communities find that having a committed staff person dedicated to implementing the plan is critical to success. This is especially true in the first few years when a community wants to change “business as usual” and develop more effective ways to address the issue. Staff positions can be as basic as a plan coordinator and can be as elevated as a director-level position.

3) Better Data Collection: Effective Use of Coordinated Entry System (CES) and Homeless Management Information Systems (referred to as HMIS)

A coordinated entry system (CES), also known as coordinated assessment or coordinated intake, is a process designed to quickly identify, assess, refer and connect people in crisis to housing and assistance, no matter where they show up to ask for help. It can pave the way for more efficient homeless assistance systems by:

- Helping people move through the system faster to housing,
- Reducing new entries into homelessness by consistently offering prevention and diversion resources upfront, and
- Improving data collection and quality and providing accurate information on what kind of assistance consumers need.

4) Better Coordination of and Access to Services in the Community

Much of the best practice research points to maximum coordination of services for greater impact and better outcomes. Coordination often focuses on co-locating multiple services so that clients can access numerous programs with one visit – especially true for complex services such as applying for a form of ID or accessing core government benefit programs. There has been an increase around the country in the use of one-stop centers, solutions centers and resource navigation centers.

PLAN OBJECTIVES AND GUIDELINES

Considering existing conditions, the development of this strategic plan is grounded in one essential principle: balance all interests to produce the best possible outcomes for the community as a whole.

Balancing all interests means that addressing homelessness will include meeting the needs of people who are unhoused or at risk of losing their housing and meeting the needs of all neighbors who wish to enjoy the beauty of this community with clean community spaces and to feel safe living here together. This is essential for developing a plan that can be implemented successfully, and stewards of this plan should keep it as a fundamental factor when reviewing progress and updating the plan.

Also, considering best practices, a major shared interest in the community is to enable a future in which homelessness in greater Durango area is rare, brief and one-time. This is the ultimate objective of this plan. Of course, there are a variety of ways to meet this objective, but when taking into account the foundational principle that all interests should be addressed in the plan in a balanced way, it begins to narrow the field of options.

Additionally, this community is seeking solutions that:

- Support and/or to build on existing community programs before creating new programs or services;
- Are coordinated and/or collaborative in nature to enable better outcomes more quickly and sustainably and to ensure that no one standing up to be part of the solution will be left standing alone;
- Strengthen the community as a whole through the creation of better connections and understanding among housed and unhoused neighbors whenever possible;
- Promote dignity and respect for all involved and affected by them – in both design and implementation of solutions; and
- Prioritizes access to resources for people who intend to make the greater Durango area their home (rather than just visiting for a temporary period) when those resources are scarce and cannot be provided to everyone.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES:

1. BALANCE ALL INTERESTS.
2. ENABLE FUTURE IN WHICH HOMELESSNESS IS RARE, BRIEF AND ONE-TIME.
3. SUPPORT AND/OR BUILD ON EXISTING STRENGTHS.
4. PROMOTE DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ALL.
5. BE COORDINATED.
6. BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING.
7. PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO SCARCE RESOURCES FOR “LOCALS”.

All strategies included in this plan have been developed with the plan objectives and guidelines in mind, and they are sorted into three tiers as follows:

- Tier 1 Strategies are ready for implementation within the next 12 months. Estimated costs, funding source(s), lead/partner agencies and SMART goals are identified for each.
- Tier 2 Strategies have been identified as highly desirable given plan objectives and guidelines but need more work to be viable for implementation. They are included in the plan for consideration after satisfactory progress is made on existing Tier 1 strategies. They will require additional steps to develop cost estimates, funding source(s), lead/partner agencies and/or SMART goals.
- Tier 3 strategies are high-level concepts that need much more development and/or other strategies to be implemented first in order to be viable.

Most Tier 1 strategies and all Tier 2 strategies are described in more detail in the next chapter of this plan, the Actionable Management Plan, which details specific projects to be implemented in the short- and mid-term. Tier 3 strategies are listed for future reference in Appendix F.

Grounded in best practices, the Strategic Implementation Plan is focused on a core set of Tier 1 strategies that build a more coordinated system that will set up the greatest chance of success in this

community's effort to enable a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one-time. It focuses on systems and resources needed to evaluate short-term action items, sustain and scale strategies that work (achieve desired impact), eliminate or adjust strategies that are not working, and maximize efficiencies and impact through coordination.

SYSTEM COORDINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordination was identified as one of eight strategic themes that needs to be addressed in this plan. In fact, it is a best practice; setting up an effective system of coordination is considered a foundational step toward success. To be effective, major objectives in the design of a system for the greater Durango area in La Plata County include:

- **Build and expand on productive collaborations among service providers that are currently in place.** This objective is achieved by a) formally developing coordinated access to services for people in need, which is reflected in the *System Coordination Recommendation (SCR) 1* to develop a formal resource navigation center, and b) creating a structure for coordinated decision-making as the plan is implemented and requires updates, which is reflected in *SCR 2* to organize a Coordinating Council that capitalizes on the collaborative planning efforts of the PATH.
- **Identify an appropriate funding source that supports rapid as well as sustainable implementation.** This is reflected in *SCR 3* to leverage local government funding for up to three years until another long-term source can be sufficiently vetted and allocated for this purpose. Note that additional outside resources may not completely eliminate the need for local funding support but should decrease resources needed for this coordination system over time.
- **Be efficient, effective and accountable in the use of public funds for and management of the coordination system.** This objective is achieved by:
 - *SCR 4*, integrating a coordinated data collection system into the navigation center that is linked to the CES for housing and annual counts of people who are unhoused and for use with center intakes and check-ins;
 - *SCR 5*, establishing a new Systems Navigation and Coordination Director position (Director) to both manage the navigation center and support the Coordinating Council in its responsibilities, including facilitating priority resource acquisition; and
 - *SCR 6*, evaluating and reporting on progress toward reaching desired outcomes for each Tier 1 Strategy, with a focus on how well they individually and collectively help to meet the plan's ultimate objective of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time and how to adapt the plan with this information in hand.

SCR 1: Establish Formal Resource Navigation Center

Several options for establishing a navigation center have been considered such as: contract with a community organization for daily operation at that organization's site, hold monthly community events similar to existing annual event for veterans, and/or develop a mobile navigation center. The first offers the greatest benefit to people in need of services and for people who wish to get involved in volunteer efforts because it is easy to know where to go to get connected with services related to homelessness no matter what any person's needs or offers of help may be. It also creates new infrastructure that increases the opportunity for enhanced programming for partner programs, such as current considerations for creating an Adult Diversion and Restorative Justice program and expressed interest in improving follow-up with some participants through the center. Therefore, this is the priority recommendation for establishing a formal resource navigation center. It would also be

beneficial to consider adding a mobile navigation center after the stationary center is established and operating successfully.

Currently, because of its connection with an estimated 70-80% of people who are unhoused or food insecure and at risk of losing their housing, Manna Soup Kitchen operates a kind of informal resource center. (See Appendix B, Existing Partners and Service Inventory, which includes references to services that are informally co-located at Manna.) This model could be formalized with a well-publicized schedule of services that can be accessed at a single site, either continuing at Manna or moved to another viable host site.

To clearly identify the best host for the center, it is recommended that the City and County jointly administer a Request for Proposals and enter into a contract for services with the organization that best demonstrates that:

- It will be a trusted provider by a majority of the people it is proposing to serve.
- Its neighbors will support its operations at its proposed site.
- It will provide effective oversight for the center's director and support that person's additional role in facilitating the coordinated implementation, evaluation and adaptation of the Durango-La Plata County Strategic Plan on Homelessness.

SCR 2: Establish a Coordinating Council for Broad System Oversight and Support

Establishment of a formal and coordinated oversight body is important for ensuring that this plan will get put into action in the most effective way possible, across all interests. The recommended composition of this body would be similar to but with fewer members than the PATH. Specifically, it would include the following designated seats by member types:

- City of Durango administration staff member (1)
- La Plata County administration staff member (1)
- City and county law enforcement provider (2)
- County human services department representative (1)
- Navigation center provider (1)
- Housing/shelter service provider (1)
- Health services provider (1)
- Community outreach service provider (1)
- Faith community connector (1)
- People with lived experience in or at risk of homelessness (2)
- Neighborhood/business community connectors (2)
- Others as desired for effective plan oversight and support (TBD)

Additionally, key advisors on specific topics, such as the San Juan Basin Public Health on public health matters, should be invited to participate in appropriate subcommittees or selected full Council meetings as needed.

Council members' primary roles would be to meet at least quarterly to provide coordinated support and guidance for plan implementation, to conduct annual reviews of progress to strategic plan goals, to update the plan as needed each year and to approve annual community progress reports prepared by the new system director (see SCR 5). They would also form sub-committees for continuing development and implementation of selected strategies, such as multi-sector interventions on methamphetamine use and community education and awareness activities. An immediate and priority task of the Council would be to support on-going efforts to establish a fully organized camp at a new site that will work for a longer term than the current site near Purple cliffs (see more on this in the Actionable Management Plan in the Housing and Shelter section).

Ideally, this body will be created by the nonprofit partner selected to facilitate the overall implementation of this strategic plan, housing the new director position and staffing the new Council. The selected nonprofit will work closely with an interim strategic plan working committee (IWC), confirmed by Athena and City and County staff in early 2020, to continue conversations about plan implementation in the first two quarters of 2020 or until the position is funded and the new council launched. The IWC will clearly outline the member types as above, the appointment process, terms of service, and member roles and responsibilities. These organizational guidelines as well as a set of operating agreements, including an annual meeting schedule and group process agreements, should also be reflected in a group charter. A template is provided in Appendix D, which should be refined by the IWC and confirmed at the first meeting of the inaugural Coordinating Council and updated and/or affirmed with new membership in ensuing years.

The IWC will have a subset of the current PATH committee membership to help refine details and get the system established. The Athena Group's consultant team that facilitated the development of this plan will recommend IWC membership, with confirmation from City and County staff, in a separate but attached memo with the delivery of this plan.

SCR 3: Coordination System Funding

Investment in this new coordination infrastructure includes salary/ies, benefits, and basic office costs, including some start-up costs. The anticipated salary range for this new director position would be \$80,000-\$95,000 including benefits, though a comparative wage analysis may need to be completed to ensure compatibility with local practices. With that same caveat in mind, annual salary and benefits for support staff are estimated at approximately \$40,000-\$50,000. Approximately \$10,000 would be needed to set up the data system and other development needs. On-going office and administrative expenses would also be incurred, totaling approximately \$15,000 per year. Total local government investment in this coordination system is estimated to not exceed \$170,000 with a 3% increase after year 1, assuming that local governments will make a minimum commitment of three years to develop and implement this new coordination system.

Investment in this coordination infrastructure would leverage the following returns:

- Immediate increased capacity in the community for decision-making, program development, policy development and fundraising.
- Decreased reliance on local government staff through the development of this oversight body that can review requests concerning resources, projects or policies and provide guidance to local government.
- Increased capacity for grant writing. Specifically, this strategic plan includes a resource strategy document for the first year to assist with first year efforts to build capacity in the

community including foundation resources and State of Colorado grants, which can be found in Appendix H.

- Streamlined access to services to reduce barriers and support faster access to housing.
- A clearinghouse for information about homelessness and a place for businesses and private community members to go to learn about the issue, get involved or donate.

Typically, local government covers these types of positions through their general fund, reallocation of existing staff funding, or an existing dedicated funding source. For Durango/La Plata County, dedicated funding may include:

- **General fund resources through a contract for services.** Based on conversations with staff and feedback from elected officials, the preference is for an RFP to be released for the full set of coordination services described in this Strategic Implementation Plan chapter. Through a competitive process, a local nonprofit agency will be selected to provide these services and house the new director position. The nonprofit would receive a contract for services that follows a template used by other agencies contracted for services by local government. This contract for services would commit up to three years of funding if the nonprofit successfully performs the scope of services annually, but funds would be contingent on annual appropriations from local government.
- **Allocation of funds from the joint sales tax.** Based on conversations with local government staff, the Athena team believes that there has been an historical interest or desire to use the joint sales tax for capital purposes only. Athena team members believe that a case can be made that investment in coordination infrastructure is a capital expense, as in federal regulations that allow use of section 5310 and 5311 capital funds (80% federal share) for mobility management programs. A similar model could be used to apply joint city-county sales tax as the primary funding source for managing a coordinated system to address homelessness.

Sometimes, local governments may also partner with the local community foundation or the local United Way for additional support in funding this work. While this is a useful supplementary strategy, it is not a primary funding strategy, especially given the competition for existing resources and the need to continue providing base funding for existing homeless services from these other community funding sources.

Investment in this infrastructure will have significant leverage by increasing the effectiveness of existing programming and tracking outcomes that will help the community to access more outside resources. Below are some examples of sources that could be leveraged:

Grant Sources	Amount	Uses	Number Served
Division of Housing	\$300,000	Vouchers	25 housing placements
Division of Housing ESG for coordination	\$50,000	Systems and data development	400 clients tracked for services
Colorado Health Foundation	\$60,000	Capacity building for systems development	400 clients tracked for improved services
DOH CDBO funding	\$75,000	Capacity building	20 new housing placements
Daniels Fund	\$100,000	Supported employment pilot	10-15 clients served with employment programming
Energy Impact Admin Grant	\$25,000	New affordable housing strategies development	50 new affordable housing opportunities in two years

With local funding for this new coordination system, the community creates an opportunity for a minimum of a 4 to 1 leverage to new resources acquired for program implementation from outside resources.

SCR 4: Coordinated Data Collection System

Integrating a coordinated data collection system into the navigation center is a critical piece of the coordination system. Based on data gathered at intakes and check-ins, it will offer better information over time about who is in need of which services and how much of each service is needed to make progress toward a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one-time and the community is attractive and safe for everyone. Furthermore, data collected from participants to be included in the navigation center's system should include both data needed to support the person in meeting his/her goals as well as data identified as needed for key outcome measures for the annual evaluation and reporting efforts (see SCR 6). Additional key data, like the annual Point-in-Time Count and Youth Registry Week data when available, should be integrated into the system, but testing is needed to identify the best means of integration.

It is possible that the Coordinated Entry System could be used for this purpose, with some relatively small enhancements; if so, it is the recommended approach. Integrating it into the navigation center could significantly enhance the information available through it, while also creating a stronger tie to housing opportunities. According to local service providers interviewed on December 6, 2019, it is believed that a large majority of persons experiencing homelessness are not currently receiving housing services but are receiving services from other agencies like Manna Soup Kitchen, Axis Health System, Mercy Hospital's Link program, faith-based groups, etc. When asked how many unhoused individuals were served by these agencies versus being assessed and served through the CES, the providers were unsure but estimated that the majority of unhoused individuals were not being assessed by the CES, which means most unhoused community members are not getting on critical wait lists for housing resources in the community – and data about their needs are not being recorded.

A detailed examination of the existing system is needed in comparison with the navigation center needs and the systemwide annual evaluation and reporting needs. The new director should work closely with Housing Solutions for the Southwest and the consultant they will hire in the spring of 2020 to review CES and make suggestions for system improvements. This will include a review of how all unhoused community members wanting access to housing resources can be uniformly assessed with the VI-SPDAT and entered into CES. A second analysis is recommended to look at data needs for the navigation center and annual evaluations to determine if the CES can be integrated into the navigation center as its intake and check-in system (with addition of a set of key data points) or if a separate but coordinated system needs to be developed for that purpose.

If a separate system is needed, the Canby Center in Canby, OR, offers a promising option. It is rooted in Salesforce software and uses scannable identification tags to track the needs and goals of center participants (including service providers, recipients and volunteers). For the Canby Center, developing this system with dignity and respect for all has included development of the center as a member-based set of services in which members are able to drive the kinds of services they need and want. As a result, participation in the data system is an asset to them as well, and it is more empowering than intrusive.

Start-up funds may be needed to purchase any new system components and to acquire technical assistance in setting up the system, costing up to \$10,000 (included in cost estimates described in SCR 3). Once this system is operating effectively, exploring ways to integrate data from other sites into the

same core system is recommended. If Salesforce cannot be networked across different sites, it is recommended that Julato or a similar system be explored as an add-on.

SCR 5: Systems Navigation and Coordination Director Position

It is recommended that a new leadership position (Systems Navigation and Coordination Director, referred to as “director” in this document) be created to facilitate plan implementation and effective operation of the overall coordination system. Specifically, this position would:

- 1) Provide staff services to the Coordinating Council described above (10%);
- 2) Develop additional resources through grant-writing and other fundraising efforts (20%);
- 3) Manage the resource navigation center with an improved data collection system (50%); and
- 4) Support local government staff (City/County) to review, analyze or develop policies that support plan implementation (20%).

Together, this position and the Coordinating Council would become community resources that can inform policy makers on decisions related to all aspects of plan implementation as well as inform new initiatives that may arise in the future.

Please see Appendix C for a sample job description for this position. It is offered as a starting place and should be refined by the nonprofit selected to hire and house this position.

SCR 6: Evaluating and Reporting on Progress – Adapting for Impact

There are three important aspects of this recommendation: evaluate, plan to adapt and report. Recommendations for how to approach each of these are described below.

Evaluate. Annual evaluations of progress toward desired outcomes are important to understand how well implementation of the plan is working to make the change the community wants to see. To do this, the new director will gather data from the CES or other selected data collection system used at the navigation center, along with other coordinated sources as specified for each strategy’s desired outcome measures. Summary data can be prepared and shared with the Coordinating Council for review and discussion. Key discussion questions should include: How many people have been able to access or keep stable housing as a result of our work? Are conditions improving (fewer people unhoused for shorter periods of time with fewer people returning to homelessness, accessing services they need, cleaner and safer community)? Which strategies appear to be having a positive impact? Additional guidance is offered in Appendix D, a template charter for the Coordinating Council.

Plan to adapt. Planning to adapt means looking at the existing plans and potential new strategies and committing to formally evaluate them at least annually to be able to determine if any changes need to be made for the coming year. This process ensures that the Coordinating Council and local government funders can identify which strategies could be more impactful with more resources and which strategies should be discontinued because they aren’t demonstrating the desired outcomes. Furthermore, new strategies may emerge due to new resources being available at the state or local level. A strategy board – both electronic and as a wall display – can be helpful in seeing how each individual strategy is working on its own and as part of a coordinated effort to reach the primary, mutual goal of making homelessness in the greater Durango area rare, brief and one-time.

Report. It is important to share results of the strategic plan evaluation with those who helped to develop the plan and are directly invested in and impacted by the plan’s success. Reporting on progress

should be done as clearly and simply as possible, offering key information that the public will care about (inputs and outcomes like the amount of public dollars invested and how many people were successfully housed as a result) not the information that program managers will care about (effort and outputs like the number of staff needed to provide a service and the number of outreach events held). Some simple language to explain the data shown and any decisions made as a result of the evaluation should also be included. A basic template is provided in Appendix E and can be made even more user-friendly if visual indicators of progress are added once data has been collected and analyzed. Once ready, this report should be shared with all individuals and organizations that have been involved with one or more parts of the plan implementation as well as on partner websites and with local media.

With all of the above broad system coordination mechanisms in place, all other strategic action items should be set up to produce greater results – and to identify how to shift when they are not. The following Actionable Management Plan – *We Live Forward, Part 2* – details the Tier 1 strategies slated for implementation within the next 12 months, along with Tier 2 strategies to be considered for activation during annual progress evaluations.

We Live Forward, Part 2: Actionable Management Plan

The previous chapter focused on recommendations for developing a more coordinated approach to addressing homelessness. This chapter, the Actionable Management Plan, describes the array of specific strategies identified for viable action during the planning process. They are presented in this chapter by strategic theme: Housing and Shelter, Health and Other Support Services, Safe and Clean Community, Connected Community and Work that Works.

Tier 1 Strategies are described in greatest detail, as they have been developed for implementation within the 12 months of plan adoption. To qualify as a Tier 1 Strategy, a lead agency with potential partners, costs, funding source(s), and desired outcomes with success indicators must've been identified.

Tier 2 strategies are listed at the end of Tier 1 Strategy descriptions in each strategic theme section. These strategies have been identified as highly desirable strategies but either need to wait for other strategies to be implemented first or need more development, such as finding an appropriate funding source or a willing lead agency. They are slated for consideration to be advanced as a Tier 1 Strategy during each annual review or in response to an emerging need.

TIER 1-2 STRATEGIES BY STRATEGIC THEME

Figure 1 is an at-a-glance map of Tier 1 Strategies slated for implementation in 2020. Coordination system strategies shown in the map were described in the previous chapter, the Strategic Implementation Plan. All others are described below.



Figure 1:
Tier 1 Strategy Map

Key: Tier 1 Strategy Leads



Housing and Shelter

These strategies are designed to provide a range of shelter and housing options that account for different needs and circumstances among community members and that prevent sleeping in open spaces that are intended to be shared by all community members for recreational or other community uses. Following are descriptions of each Tier 1 Housing and Shelter strategy (HS1-HS11), followed by a table of Tier 2 strategies in this category to be considered for implementation once satisfactory progress is made on Tier 1 strategies or opportunities/needs arise that make it possible to advance one or more of them.

HS1: Housing Policy Advocacy

This would entail developing a local housing policy committee that would work to change local and state rules around housing programs, funding amounts, and funding priorities with the primary goal of increasing resources for programs and helping existing programs to be more effective. Local providers have identified several policies that would have significant impacts such as: 1) trainings for regional owners and property managers to modify tenant policies and allow more people with minor convictions to access housing; 2) increase fair market rents so that existing vouchers can be used in the community immediately; and 3) prioritize 30% units and voucher holders in new affordable housing projects in the community.



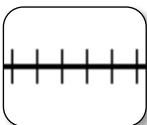
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Coordinating Council
- Coordination: Establish as sub-committee of Coordinating Council with support from new system director



Funding

- Cost: None known at this time
- Funding source: N/A



Timeline

- Form and begin meeting in Summer 2020
- Begin evaluation in first annual strategy review



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Establish housing policy change agenda – effectiveness evaluated by change achieved (or progress made) on each agenda item

HS2: Continue Operating the VOA Family Shelter

The Durango Community Shelter (DCS) began operating in 1991 in direct response to the growing need for homeless services in Durango and has since remained the sole provider of comprehensive residential homeless shelter services in the area for children, women, and men. Services provided by the DCS include safe 24/7/365 shelter, provision of all basic needs, extensive life skills training, intensive case management, resource referral and support. Life skills training and case management focus on areas such as employment, housing, education, health and mental well-being needs so that families and individuals in crisis can regain stability and move out of homelessness.

In 2018, the DCS provided 11,372 nights of shelter to 318 people and is on track to surpass that in 2019. As local resources and affordable housing remain scarce, the urgent need for these essential

services will continue. Of the 318 people served in 2018, 18% of the adults served by the DCS were military veterans, 25% of the adults served identified as survivors of domestic violence, and 48% of the total number of people served (adults and children) reported having a long-term disability. As evident through these statistics alone, the DCS is providing these essential life-saving services to some of the most vulnerable people in the community.



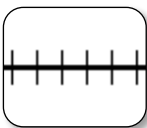
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: VOA Durango Community Shelter
- Coordination: A local VOA Council coordinates local supporters for the shelter



Funding

- Cost: Each year, the DCS relies on the fundraising efforts of the VOA Colorado Branch to provide \$100,000 to ensure the continued operation of the Shelter because grants and local funding alone do not cover the cost.
- Funding source: VOA, local grants and possible future City Block Grants funds from the City of Durango.



Timeline

- On-going service
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. To minimize the duration and impact of homelessness on families and individuals served by providing comprehensive residential shelter services including a safe, clean/sober and stable housing environment, three meals a day, personal/hygiene supplies as well as clothing, task-oriented counseling and resource referrals.
2. To offer ongoing support for the community through responding to telephone and walk-in resource requests concerning homelessness, domestic violence, emergency financial assistance and other human service needs, while also promoting community involvement and awareness of the issues of homelessness and domestic violence.

HS3: Continue Operating the Domestic Violence Shelter

The Volunteers of America Southwest Safehouse (SWSH) began operating in 1985 in response to a study that found La Plata County had the highest incidence of domestic violence per capita in the State of Colorado. The SWSH remains the only completely confidential domestic violence shelter in the five-county region of Southwest Colorado. Admission is prioritized for families and individuals fleeing intimate partner violence and those in immediate danger. The SWSH provides wrap-around services for adult and child survivors of domestic violence with 24/7/365 shelter services, provision of all basic needs, case management, resource referral, and support. SWSH partners with Axis/La Plata Integrated Health, Sexual Assault Survivors Organization, Alternative Horizons, and Southwest Center for Independence, to offer resources and case management from those organizations at the SWSH facility.

In addition, SWSH offers a mobile housing advocate and transitional housing services. The initial stay at the SWSH is six weeks. Guests can apply for an Extended Stay Program (ESP) if they are working 30 hours a week or working on specific goals for up to an additional three months. Volunteers and staff provide trauma-informed groups and services including: pet therapy, life coaching, parenting support,

yoga, meditation, resume development, healing touch, chiropractic wellness adjustments, play groups, tutors and more.

The SWSH strives to be a no turn away shelter. The SWSH has 22 beds (6 family rooms and a “dorm-style” room with an additional 6 beds). With pull-out sofas, cribs and cots, the SWSH can stretch up to 36 beds. In order to prioritize services for individuals and families experiencing intimate partner violence and in immediate danger, the SWSH refers individuals and families “presenting as homeless only” to their partner agency, the Durango Community Shelter.

On average, the SWSH houses over 200 adults and children each year and provides over 5,000 nights of shelter. In 2018, the SWSH served 263 guests (175 adult and 88 children) with 6,129 nights of shelter. The SWSH had 4,632 individual occupancy contacts with guests and answered 2,900 calls on their crisis line. The SWSH provided 200 groups to adults and 104 groups to children. OF those served in 2018, 30% identified as being Native American and 20% identified as Hispanic. 28% of the guests served identified as having a physical, cognitive or mental disability or substance abuse issue.



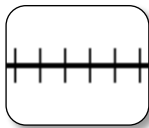
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Volunteers of America Southwest Safehouse (SWSH)
- Coordination: with numerous local human service providers



Funding

- Cost: Each year the SWSH relies on the fundraising efforts of the VOA Colorado Branch to provide \$32,000 to ensure the continued operation of the SWSH because grants and local funding alone do not cover the cost.
- Funding source: State and Federal grants, VOA fundraising efforts and private donors.



Timeline

- On-going service
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Guests report increased strategies for enhancing their safety.
2. Guests report increased knowledge of community resources.
3. Guests do not return to their abusive partner upon exit of SWSH.
4. Guests move towards economic self-sufficiency.

HS4: Increase Housing Rehab Initiatives

Preservation of existing housing stock is quickly rising to the top of the housing priority list, as new development is limited and expensive. A significant fire in 2018 with ongoing floods in the fire area and long-term drought conditions have greatly impacted local residents. As a result, there is a continuing and growing need to rehabilitate the housing stock in Durango and La Plata County.

The Housing Solutions Rehab Program addresses this need, providing deferred or low-interest loans to low-to-moderate income homeowners to repair health and safety problems in their existing homes. Reducing housing expenses for families and individuals through energy efficiency upgrades and health and safety repairs to homes is life-changing. Since 1983, Housing Solutions has successfully completed 500 rehabilitation projects in Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan counties. There is a continuing need to assist low-to-moderate income homeowners as the struggle to pay bills surpasses income for many families and senior citizens. Home maintenance and repair needs are put off by the families because they cannot afford the repair, and if the problem is not addressed, it becomes a costly endeavor, potentially leading to homelessness. Also, for those families fortunate enough to qualify for income eligible loans and down-payment assistance, there is a shortage of units in good condition in the affordable price range. The Homeowner Rehab Program increases the available stock of affordable housing through preservation.



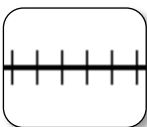
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Housing Solutions for the Southwest
- Coordination: The Housing Solutions Rehab Program works closely with the State of Colorado



Funding

- Cost: The Housing Solutions Rehab Program needs \$15,000- \$25,000 of additional annual support to successfully operate.
- Funding source: State of Colorado CDBG covers 90%, but the program needs to find local gap funding support.



Timeline

- On-going. The 2021 application needs to be in place by fall of 2020.
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. The program rehabs 12-15 units per year

HS5: Preserve Existing Affordable Housing

Intended to prevent displacement of existing low-income renters, this strategy is focused on existing multi-family housing projects that are at risk of flipping to market rate and displacing hundreds of residents. There are private sector efforts currently with GHC Properties work to preserve Tamarin Square and there are additional opportunities with Housing Solutions for the Southwest joining the preservation academy program in 2020 (Colorado Health Foundation effort) and looking to build capacity in this space.



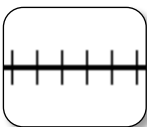
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Private Developers (GHC) and Housing Solutions for the Southwest
- Coordination: Preservation opportunities are not formally tracked locally but are tracked at the state. Coordinate State and Local resources.



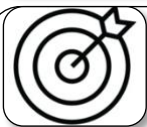
Funding

- Cost: Local funding needed includes Private Activity Bond allocation from La Plata County when available and for staff/consultant capacity at Housing Solutions which is estimated at a minimum of \$25,000 a year for three years.
- Funding source: Housing Solutions would seek grants for added capacity and would like 25% of new capacity to be funded by local government.



Timeline

- 68 units at Tamarin Square are preserved by July 2020. Two more properties identified by December 2023
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Tamarin Square is refinanced and rehabbed by July 2020, and 68 households are not displaced.
2. 1-2 new properties are identified in La Plata County and reviewed for preservation opportunities in 2021-2022.

HS6: Increase Rapid Rehousing Program

Housing Solutions for the Southwest (Housing Solutions) manages a rapid rehousing program for La Plata County. This initiative provides progressive case management for households that score between a 4 and an 8 on the VI-SPDAT, a nationally recognized tool indicating that the household only needs rental assistance and up to 24 months of case management support to be rehoused. Housing Solutions plans to increase the number of rapid rehousing clients served by 10 clients annually starting in 2019 until 2023 (30 additional households experiencing homelessness served during 36-month period).

As Housing Solutions expands rental assistance programs, they would welcome more community assistance in identifying new units and landlord partnerships. There are opportunities for the broader community to help market and increase partner landlords with this strategy.



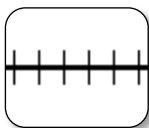
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Housing Solutions for the Southwest
- Coordination: Other partners include landlords, State of Colorado & Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.



Funding

- Cost: \$50,000 for additional staff
- Funding source: Case Management funded through philanthropy and some funds from the state Division of Housing. Housing assistance funded by the Colorado Division of Housing, federal funds and possible funding from the WAGEES program, a grant initiative.



Timeline

- On-going through December 2023
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Maximum number of households served annually with additional case management (1 new FTE, possibly 2 if funds can be identified.)
2. 10 new program slots each year until 2023 (30 total).

HS7: Increase Voucher Deployment in the Community and More Vouchers Long-Term

Increasing existing housing voucher deployment can have a significant impact on homelessness and housing instability in the community. Housing Solutions currently has 50 housing vouchers they cannot deploy due to a lack of staff capacity and local rental market conditions. These vouchers must serve homeless individuals, but these individuals require a higher level of engagement and services, which are not paid for through this housing voucher program. With additional staff, Housing Solutions could assist 50 households in 2020. These vouchers are valued at roughly \$500,000 a year. This is a permanent solution to ending homelessness for 50 households. Although Housing Solutions is seeking significant staff and program support (\$100,000 in 2020), this is considered a Tier 1 strategy because they have \$500,000 available today and can deploy additional vouchers without new funds in hand.



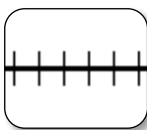
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Housing Solutions for the Southwest
- Coordination: This program is part of the coordinated assessment system that manages several housing resources.



Funding

- Cost: Funding needed for 1-FTE for housing voucher, .5FTE for eviction prevention, and funds for damage deposits (\$100,000 total).
- Funding source: Housing Solutions would like at least 25% of new staffing funds to come from local resources (\$25,000).



Timeline

- On-going now
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Number of vouchers deployed – 50
2. Number of new vouchers brought to the community (40 by 2023)
3. More staff support so people are placed more quickly in homes

HS8: Increase Permanent Supportive Housing in the Community

In the next 12 months, Durango will have nine new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units at Lumien II to better serve unhoused community members in need of wrap-around services in order to stay housed. This project began in 2015 and opened for occupancy in November of this year.



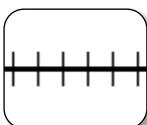
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Lumien 2, Housing Solutions for the Southwest, Axis Health System
- Coordination: PSH units will be filled through coordinated assessment systems



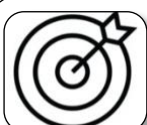
Funding

- Cost: This project is funded and has begun lease-up.
- Funding source: All construction, vouchers, capital and operating budgets are funded by state resources.



Timeline

- Units available and leased by Jan 2020.
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. 9 PSH units available in Lumien 2 by January 1, 2020.
2. All households remain housed.

HS9: Increase Emergency Assistance Programs

The Community Emergency Assistance Coalition (CEAC) is a multi-agency coalition who gathers weekly to fund applications for emergency assistance. The coalition has \$150,000 in one-time emergency assistance grants to fund things like rent/mortgage (60%); car repairs (30%) and other needs like childcare, utilities, etc. CEAC's founding partners include United Way, Salvation Army, LPEA Round Up Foundation, La Plata County Human Services, VOA and Housing Solutions for the Southwest. The group meets weekly on Fridays at 9:30 a.m. to allocate resources to those in need. This project also includes a "Community Fund" that is comprised of many smaller donations. Housing Solutions Housing Counselor meets with 10 households weekly, screens them for other types of emergency assistance programs like ESG homeless prevention, veteran's programs, LEAP or Energy Outreach Colorado. This meeting includes referrals to programs, action planning around the financial emergency and budgeting support.

Those approved receive assistance of up to \$1,000, which is meant to prevent homelessness one time for those with a short-term financial need. At client follow-up, 89% of those funded have reported being stable in housing. In 2018, CEAC served 228 households with \$167,000 in funding. This was about \$40,000 more than 2017 because of increased funds and program capacity for victims of the 416 Fire in the summer of 2018. Local businesses, churches and the Community Foundation helped to fund this additional need.

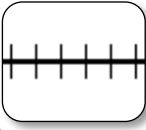
The best way to prevent homelessness is through initiatives like CEAC. This program prevents homelessness for many households in the community and provides those in a financial crisis the resources and planning they need to overcome the difficulty. The coalition has been in existence for over 20 years.

**Leadership and Coordination**

- Lead: Community Emergency Assistance Coalition (CEAC)
- Coordination: Not a program of one agency, but a coalition- each funder can bring their own funding to the table and spend it on the application they choose to support.

**Funding**

- Cost: \$30,000 in new funding (local) on 2020, serve 40 more households.
- Funding source: CEAC needs to bring in new funding partners and new sources of funding both locally and at the state level.

**Timeline**

- Expand funding by \$30,000 in 2020
- Evaluation begins with first annual review

**Desired Outcome(s)**

1. Housing stabilized (# new households annually)
2. Needed resources acquired (# new households annually)
3. Budgeting improved (# new households annually)

HS10: Host Homes for Youth

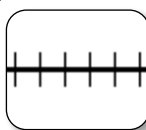
The Host Home model is a best practice that trains community members and faith partners while also providing small stipends to help churches and private households to open their homes to at-risk or homeless youth. The youth stay in the host home for several months until they are able to find an alternative housing option that will keep them stably housed. The La Plata County Collaborative Management Program team is planning to pilot 2-3 host homes in 2020.

**Leadership and Coordination**

- Lead: La Plata County Collaborative Management Program
- Coordination: Share program data with Strategy Director

**Funding**

- Cost: Minimal
- Funding source: State funds are available through rural homeless grant, which has been secured.

**Timeline**

- Begin programming by December 2020
- Begin evaluation after full year of programming

**Desired Outcome(s)**

1. Increase shelter options for young people (16-26) – 3 host homes established in first year with more added in subsequent years
2. Help young people access stable housing – All hosted youth access stable housing for 12+ months after exiting host home

HS11: Coordinated Entry System (CES)

Housing Solutions for the Southwest (Housing Solutions) currently manages the regional coordinated entry system (CES) as part of a HUD mandate for current grantees that provide programs to address homelessness in the community. This current system is managed by a software program called HMIS, which is a statewide system that matches people in need of housing with available housing resources in the community. All clients that come for housing resources are assessed based on need using the vulnerability index assessment tool. This system and tool are a best practice nationally for understanding the needs of each individual to best match them with a housing and services solution to house them and keep them stably housed. Although this critical coordination feature exists in the community it is in need of additional resources so that it can better collect data, engage partner agencies, identify additional resources and track outcomes for the community.



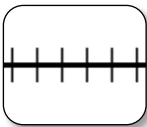
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Housing Solutions & SW Continuum of Care
- Coordination: This is the main coordinating system in the region to match persons at-risk or experiencing homelessness with housing and support programming. Although other providers are engaged in the system there is a need for them to be more engaged around identification and prioritization of existing resources and to make successful client matches through the system.



Funding

- Cost: \$15,000 for consultant support to look at system improvements; grant is committed and will be available in March of 2020. Housing Solutions anticipates needs for additional funding for systems capacity and anticipates this to be a \$30,000 a year contracted position.
- Funding source: Goal of 25% of the funding to be local and find additional funds from state and federal grant programs.



Timeline

- A new grant was received by Housing Solutions that starts in March of 2020, to help evaluate the current system and gather recommendations for improvements that would be completed by December 2021.
- Evaluation begins with first annual review but evolves with system changes.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Improvements to this system so that more people can access resources and increased data can be collected on who is housed and who continues to need housing resources.
2. Increasing involvement in the system from service providers via staff participation and increased data collection and resource identification.
3. Increased number of unhoused community members in the system on waitlists for resources.
1. Better access to HMIS data in the community through the use of a community scorecard that translates HMIS data into outcomes that can be seen by the broader community.

Tier 2 Housing and Shelter Strategies Table

Note on using this table: The following information on each strategy is designed to help the Coordinating Council determine when to move them on deck for implementation as a new Tier 1 strategy (ready to be implemented in 12 months following annual strategy review).

Strategy Descriptions	Lead	Implementation Considerations	Timing
Safe Parking Program – A night-time program for people who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping in their vehicles at night, providing a safe and stable place to park the vehicle, remain compliant with local laws, and have access to restroom facilities. Safe parking programs may be accessible by filling out an application and connecting to services that help identify pathways into housing.	TBD	Need hosts willing to allow overnight parking/car camping in their parking lots, along with access to restroom facilities and security (could be law enforcement agreement for regular patrol).	Can implement as soon as willing host(s) is/are identified
Organized/Hosted Camp – Organized camp at designated site(s) with self-governance features. Partnership with host organization allows for development of the site over time, including warming and safety features.	TBD	Need funding source identified for full-scale annual operations (\$30-80,000). Consider integrating Conestoga Huts or similar structures for people on track for housing or for families or people with disabilities	Consider starting small as pilot at cemetery site or other social services campus site to better link campers to services
Low Barrier Shelter – Variety of approaches under consideration, including making camp as workable as possible if more people can be moved into permanent housing.	TBD	Need to determine if this strategy will be pursued. Could be held as potential future strategy if determined that it would be used and helpful and good use of resources.	After review of impacts from camp enhancements and increased opportunities for housing
Permanent Supportive Housing – Espero Apartments 40 units of new construction to be developed behind Manna Soup Kitchen by Housing Solutions, AHS and Blueline Development. City provided the site.	Housing Solutions and AHS	Building is funded, but Housing Solutions is looking for \$87,000 a year for support services. AHS likely looking for funds for mental health services funding.	Could start looking at funding strategies in 2021
Tiny Home Village CCO has been looking at this model for over a year. It is anticipated that they will continue looking for a site in 2020.	CCO	More models are emerging in the state, more funds will be available. They need tech assistance and a possible development partner.	A small amount of assistance will be available in January 2020 from Interfaith Alliance – additional funds and site need to be identified as well.

Health and Other Support Services

These strategies are designed to help people access the support services they need in order to meeting basic needs and access and/or maintain housing. Descriptions are provided for each Tier 1 Health and Other Support Services strategy (H+1-H+5), followed by a table of Tier 2 strategies in this category to be considered for implementation once satisfactory progress is made on Tier 1 strategies or opportunities/needs arise that make it possible to advance one or more of them.

Please note that the services of Manna Soup Kitchen (Manna) are not described in this section as other Tier 1 strategies are, even though Manna provides significant services to both housed and unhoused populations in the greater Durango community and should continue to do so. This is because Manna is not planning a change in services, unless they propose to house the new coordination system. Manna's existing services should be considered critical and on-going.

H+1: Locker Program

The Solidarity locker concept came from extensive interviews with unhoused persons saying that to help them gain/maintain employment, they need a place to keep their stuff (e.g. clothes, etc.) clean and dry, and is also bear proof. They felt that lockers would be an immediate next step to help them manage their lives as unhoused community members. The model that NINA is adopting is based on a program in Lisbon, Portugal, that provides high quality lockers and engagement by community members that act as mentors and check in on locker users to encourage engagement in local services. It is anticipated that unhoused individuals would use the lockers for approximately six months.

Mentors and other companions have been an effective strategy that would be beneficial to increase. Expansion of these efforts, with or without connection to lockers, should be included as the navigation center develops.



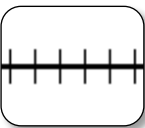
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: NINA is spearheading this effort, with support from the City of Durango.
- Coordination: NINA and the City



Funding

- Cost: \$16,000
- Funding source: local donations and grants (All funds have been secured.)



Timeline

- February 2020
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Acquiring and siting of six (6) lockers to serve at least 12 households/individuals accessing the lockers by February 2020.
2. Increase engagement for unhoused community members and volunteers
3. Increase safety for unhoused community members because of bear issues during summer/fall

H+2: Increase Access to Integrated Healthcare: Axis Health System primary care, mental health, substance use and dental services

Axis Health System (Axis) provides an array of physical, behavioral and oral health services to unhoused persons in the Durango/La Plata County, as well a support services to ensure access to healthcare. In 2020, Axis will continue to work to increase access for unhoused persons to comprehensive healthcare, including the following activities:

- **Support timely access to primary, behavioral and oral healthcare services** for those experiencing homelessness at Axis clinic locations (located in Montezuma, Archuleta and La Plata counties). All Axis healthcare services are and will continue to be available via a sliding fee scale, including a fee waiver for those with zero ability to pay.
- **Support access to additional services** provided as part of Axis' Healthcare for the Homeless program, including assistance for patients in acquiring IDs, transportation vouchers to appointments, food bank referrals, etc.
- **Provide 24/7 access to detoxification and acute treatment services** to address immediate substance use detox needs and mental health crisis situations.
- **Provide access to Fort Lyon Residential Facility**, as the referral partner in Southwest Colorado, for long-term residential substance use treatment services
- **Provide insurance enrollment services**, thereby lowering barriers to healthcare for people long-term.



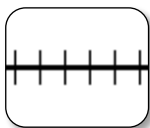
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Axis Health System
- Coordination: On-site outreach at various community locations, including Manna and the VOA Shelter and Safehouse, and street outreach. The new navigation center will be a core location for outreach activities, and Axis will work closely with the new director and all partners to ensure the community is aware of available healthcare services and how to access them.



Funding

- Cost: No new funding sources are required
- Funding source: Axis receives Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funding to provide comprehensive healthcare services and non-traditional outreach strategies to unhoused families and individuals.



Timeline

- By the end of 2020, Axis will serve over 380 unhoused individuals with comprehensive healthcare.
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Provide access to comprehensive healthcare services for over 380 unhoused individuals by the end of 2020.

H+3: LINK Program

The LINK program was established at Mercy Hospital in September 2016. The program serves patients who over-utilize the emergency department. A full time licensed clinical social worker

provides intensive care management to patients with complex medical, behavioral, and social needs. Our philosophy is to meet patients where they are, both physically and mentally, build a trusting relationship and use motivational interviewing to evoke behavior change. The LINK program also provides limited financial assistance to program participants and also connects them to local resources. The LINK social worker collaborates with Axis, San Juan Basin Public Health, law enforcement and other partner agencies to ensure LINK participants receive the care and services they need to stabilize and thrive.

	Leadership and Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: Mercy Hospital • Coordination: with BOS COC and local housing providers, law enforcement etc.
	Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$572,000 for 2 FT employees and program expenses for 3 years (2016 – 2019) • Funding source: Catholic Health Initiative grant
	Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently underway • Evaluation begins with first annual review
	Desired Outcome(s) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve health outcomes 2. Improve the patient experience 3. Improve quality of life 4. Reduce ED visits and costs 5. Reduce total days of incarceration 6. Reduce avoidable hospital utilization 7. Reduce burden of chronic illness 8. Increase patient engagement

H+4: Personal Hygiene Support (Kits and Clinics)

To care for basic health needs and prevent the spread of communicable diseases among people who are unhoused, Manna and San Juan Basin Public Health (SJBPH) will continue partnering to offer vaccination clinics at Manna (or the navigation center when operational). To do this, SJBPH provides training and outreach to Manna/navigation center staff and outreach to Manna’s clients.

SJBPH also will continue to lead the creation and distribution of hygiene kits at Manna/ navigation center, which are considered the first line of defense against the spread of illness and a first step toward good health. SJPBH provides the basic supplies, and Manna/navigation center distributes. Available funds and needs of the community will determine how many kits will be created.



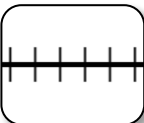
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: San Juan Basin Public Health
- Coordination: SJBPH partners with Manna to reach people with these services. More sites may be added for hygiene kit distribution if needed.



Funding

- No new costs anticipated
- Funding source: Existing SJBPH budget



Timeline

- On-going
- Begin evaluation in first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

- Provide hygiene kits to all who want them - # of people offered kits and # and % of people receiving them
- Provide vaccines to all people who are vulnerable to communicable disease and may not have another way to access needed vaccines - # of people offered vaccines and # and % of people who could benefit from them that receive them

H+5: Emergency Supplies & Weatherization Drive

This is an effort spearheaded by the local faith community, Neighbors in Need Alliance (NINA), and Community Compassion Outreach (CCO) to collect items for unhoused persons with a goal of keeping them warm and safe throughout the winter months. This drive is currently active, and it's anticipated that it would be held annually prior to winter every year. NINA is managing a drive for this coming winter while CCO has an ongoing drive for supplies and resources that they distribute on an as-needed basis.



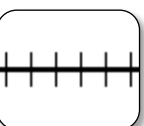
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: NINA volunteers, CCO & new Strategy Director
- Coordination: NINA volunteers are managing a one-time winter drive and CCO's Supply Bank is a year- round program on an as needed basis.



Funding

- Cost: An estimated cost per backpack is \$300 or \$15,000 for 50 backpacks.
- Funding source: Individual donations of materials and funding. This is a purely donation-based strategy and is underway.



Timeline

- Happening November 2019 and ongoing by CCO
- Evaluation: Estimated amount of donations, number of persons receiving supplies.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. No deaths from extreme weather during this winter season.

Tier 2 Health and Other Support Services Strategies Table

Note on using this table: The following information on each strategy is designed to help the Coordinating Council determine when to move them on deck for implementation as a new Tier 1 strategy (ready to be implemented in 12 months following annual strategy review).

Strategy Descriptions	Lead	Implementation Considerations	Timing
Mobile/Pop-up Navigation Center - This strategy has been identified as an option for implementing the navigation center concept. It would be best developed as a future strategy for expanding navigation center reach to those who don't connect with Manna and throughout La Plata County. Consider integrating this in the region's next Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan, led by the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments.	TBD	Small-scale tests could be made after main navigation center is operational. Consider operation by navigation center or by another organization like the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments in partnership with the center.	12-36 months?
Youth Registry Week - This is a weeklong effort to manage volunteers to interview as many homeless youth as possible and then enter data into CES so that youth can begin accessing housing resources.	TBD	This is a best practice for collecting data around youth homelessness in a community. There is growing interest from different community members on the issue of homelessness, but this strategy still needs a lead agency.	12-36 months

Safe and Clean Community

These strategies are designed to support our public spaces in being free from trash/waste and threatening/harassing behaviors, particularly related to drug and alcohol activity. Following are descriptions of each Tier 1 Safe and Clean Community strategy (SCC1-SCC4), followed by a table of Tier 2 strategies in this category to be considered for implementation once satisfactory progress is made on Tier strategies or opportunities/needs arise that make it possible to advance one or more of them.

SCC1: Law Enforcement-Community Relations

Local law enforcement agencies understand that they are able to be most effective in their work when they have good relations with the community, meaning that people trust officers to respond quickly to calls for help, listen to their concerns and help to address them as respectfully and effectively as possible. The Durango Police Department is actively working to improve/build/maintain relations with the community generally, and they are making a focused effort to build trust with people who are experiencing homelessness. Their mission in this work is to assist the homeless population and those in crisis with finding temporary shelter, affordable housing, food, mental health and medical care, transportation and job security through partnerships with non-profit groups, faith-based communities and other available resources within the community.



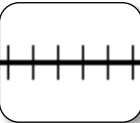
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Durango Police Department Homeless Outreach Coordinator
- Coordination: Coordinate with partners through Systems Navigation and Coordination Director and Community Ambassadors when established.



Funding

- Cost: none identified
- Funding source: none needed



Timeline

- Currently in progress
- Begin full evaluation in first annual review with quarterly check-ins to monitor need for any new partnerships, approaches



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Ultimate goal is to help everyone access housing and to include law enforcement as part of the solution – consider including law enforcement question on navigation center check-ins about helpfulness of interactions

SCC2: Enforce Camping Laws

After adequate camping area is designated for community members who are unhoused and unable to or do not wish to access other shelter/housing options, no camping occurs in undesignated areas. If camping does occur in those areas, local law enforcement redirects campers to other options, including the new organized camp site. Adequate signage and other word-of-mouth awareness efforts are made through trusted liaisons to ensure that campers know where camping is allowed and not.



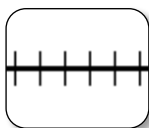
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Durango Police Department and La Plata County Sheriff's Office
- Coordination: When established, navigation center should support building awareness of where camping is and is not allowed.



Funding

- Cost: none identified
- Funding source: none needed



Timeline

- Currently in progress
- Begin full evaluation at first annual review with quarterly check-ins to share challenges and identify additional coordinated support possible



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Enforce camping laws when new managed camp site is up and running – Target: no camping occurs in undesignated areas; track: # of camping violations and # of people involved in camping violations each year).
2. Be clear about rules and regulations for use of open spaces – Confusion about where camping is allowed does not occur, as reported by officers responding to suspected camping violations.

SCC3: Community Ambassadors Program

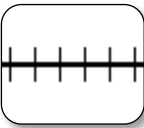
Durango Police Department's Homeless Outreach Coordinator and new navigation center staff will collaborate to develop a pilot Community Ambassadors Program designed to improve safety and cleanliness in Durango public spaces, beginning with Schneider Park and river trails or other identified priority area. The project should start small with 2-3 stipend-funded positions that people can apply for through the navigation center's community service opportunities. Uniforms/equipment would need to be acquired, and guidelines would need to be developed (sample available from The Athena Group and/or the City of Olympia, WA). Training/on-boarding should be jointly provided by Durango PD Homeless Outreach Coordinator (or other law enforcement designee) and navigation center staff.

**Leadership and Coordination**

- Lead: Durango PD Homeless Outreach Coordinator
- Coordination: Training and management coordinated with navigation center staff

**Funding**

- Up to \$5,000 for vests/hats/shirts and other team equipment – Acquire through local fundraising (target businesses and nearby residential areas)
- Up to \$15,000 annually for up to 6 people to receive \$200 monthly stipends for 10-15 hours per person per month – Acquire through local fundraising – prioritize seeking local business sponsors

**Timeline**

- Begin program development in June 2020; launch pilot in Fall 2020
- Begin evaluation with first pilot; include consideration of areas of focus in quarterly check-ins

**Desired Outcome(s)**

1. Improve community safety – # of complaints of obnoxious/intimidating behavior in Schneider Park/specified area (Target: decrease over time)
2. Improve community cleanliness – # of complaints of trash and other waste in Schneider Park/specified area (Target: decrease over time)
3. Establish Team as reliable and trusted resource in community – # of requests for Community Ambassador support for intervention on low risk but undesirable activity in Schneider Park (Target: increase over time while decreasing law enforcement or parks department requests)

SCC4: Community Improvement Projects

This strategy involves organizing a mixed group of housed and unhoused community members to hold community clean-up and other improvement events for areas in need of attention. People who are accessing services through the navigation center can sign up to participate during check-ins, as they would for other community service opportunities offered to them. A special recruitment effort to include other community members could be done through the Neighbors in Need Alliance, Community Compassion Outreach and/or the event sponsor.

For major clean-ups like in the fall 2019 pilot, there is a risk to people regarding needles and human waste, so plans should include a safety talk and to flag anything that city/county staff can/should get later. An appropriate partner may need to be engaged for this, such as a city/county staff person.

As problem spots go away and major clean-up efforts aren't needed, this program could evolve to include other improvement efforts, like landscaping or community art projects.

Food and refreshments and other features, like music and a small token of gratitude, should be included in all projects to make them joyful opportunities for fellowship as well as community service. Develop the effort so people will be excited for the next one.



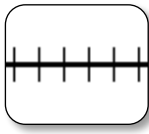
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Navigation center staff
- Coordination: Partners include navigation center members and neighbors in the area where the project is occurring.



Funding

- Cost: up to \$500 for refreshments and supplies initially (depending on project needs and if any tools need to be purchased or requested as donations/loaned items. Costs could increase as the program evolves, potentially including thank you gifts, branded vests for participants, etc.
- Funding source: Identify sponsor for each project. Additional local fundraising as program demonstrates success and evolves.



Timeline

- Pilot project occurred in October 2019. Begin soliciting project ideas in Winter/Spring 2020 and begin event services (quarterly, three times per year excluding Winter or biannually) in Spring/Summer 2020.
- Evaluate each event and share results at quarterly check-ins.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Grow community engagement and investment – Number of housed and unhoused participants increases over time
2. Produce benefits of coordinated system for whole community – List sites impacted by program with comments/stories from participants and project neighbors about the experience and results.

Tier 2 Safe and Clean Community Strategies Table

Note on using this table: The following information on each strategy is designed to help the Coordinating Council determine when to move them on deck for implementation as a new Tier 1 strategy (ready to be implemented in 12 months following annual strategy review).

Strategy Descriptions	Lead	Implementation Considerations	Timing
Coordinating Council Sub-committee on Safety/Meth Use – Organize sub-committee of Council members (or their designees) from SJBPH, law enforcement, Axis, Mercy Hospital, organized camp, people who are unhoused and in (or interested in) recovery to develop small-scale experimental and coordinated approaches to addressing the growing meth problem in Durango.	TBD	Addressing substance abuse is a difficult challenge on an individual level and at a systems level. Need to identify someone to champion this strategy and move it forward. Grants are available through COPS and other sources to support efforts like this.	Could be moved to Tier 1 if sub-committee formed and begins meeting in 2020

Work that Works

These strategies are designed to help people maximize potential for long-term, sustainable income sources while struggling with mental/behavioral health challenges. Although numerous community members expressed interest in employment options, only one agency/team committed to managing a Tier 1 strategy for employment. The following is a description of the only Tier 1 Work that Works strategy, followed by a table of Tier 2 strategies in this category to be considered for implementation once satisfactory progress is made on this strategy or opportunities/needs that arise that make it possible to advance one or more of them.

WW1: Solutions' ADay's Work Program

Solutions™ is a Public Benefit Corporation established for the purpose of offering handmade home goods, body goods, food, and care items for the stylish, discerning, and socially conscious consumer while supporting the lives of those in need through the ADay'sWork low-barrier work program. The corporation is owned and operated by Joslin I. Roderick and works in partnership with Community Compassion Outreach (CCO) to recruit employees, promote the program, and establish a positive work experience. Its first products are candles, but the team will work its way forward to grow the company with new home goods, food, and care products in the future.

The ADay'sWork™ program is a low-barrier day labor work program for those wishing to exit homelessness and other critical need situations. The company has formulated a way for the community to come together and to support the building of real and sustainable solutions to social problems - a solution that is not a hand-out, but a hand-up - a solution that saves lives. The program provides a daily meal, job skills development, professional job reference, free life skills training via the FitforPeace™ program, and a sense of community, connection, and care.



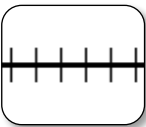
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Solutions
- Coordination: Currently partnering with Donna Mae Baukat at CCO to recruit employees and Adventure Christian Church for production in church basement.



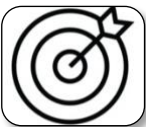
Funding

- Cost: Minimal
- Funding source: The organization does not have a specific funding request at this time.



Timeline

- The ADay'sWork™ program began in November 2019 and is currently operating on a per project basis.
- Evaluation begins with first annual review.



Desired Outcome(s)

1. To hire 1-2 full-time employees and 5-10 people a day in the day labor program each workday.
2. To scale the program and be able to offer day labor work opportunities 5 days per week for 4-8 hours per day depending on the product production needs.

Tier 2 Work that Works Strategies Table

Note on using this table: The following information on each strategy is designed to help the Coordinating Council determine when to move them on deck for implementation as a new Tier 1 strategy (ready to be implemented in 12 months following annual strategy review).

Strategy Descriptions	Lead	Implementation Considerations	Timing
Online Work Access – This is an effort to enhance work options that are more flexible for people struggling with mental/behavioral health challenges. A variety of options are available online but are not available for people without access to computers, wifi, legal identification, a way to receive payment (bank account or a mailing address). This idea should be coordinated with the Volunteer Professional Services Corps and ID clinic through Axis. Ideally, workstations would be integrated into the navigation center if implemented at Manna.	TBD	This could be an offering by the Professional Services Corps and navigation center for people who would benefit from it. It needs more development after other strategies led by these partners are in place and working well.	Develop and implement pilot offering in 2021

Connected Community

These strategies are designed to create opportunities for positive interactions between housed and unhoused community members. Following are descriptions of each Tier 1 Connected Community strategy (CC1-CC2), followed by a table of Tier 2 strategies in this category to be considered for implementation once satisfactory progress is made on Tier strategies or opportunities/needs arise that make it possible to advance one or more of them.

CC1: Community Compassion Outreach (CCO) Annual Conference

This is an annual conference sponsored by Community Compassion Outreach (CCO) to increase understanding and dialogue in the community around the issue of homelessness. This event builds on the first conference in 2018 and will continue to grow the types of programming offered at this event in 2020. The goal is to better serve those experiencing homelessness and the wider community of volunteers and providers working collaboratively to address the issue. In 2020 CCO anticipates adding conversations between housed and unhoused members, adding information from local law enforcement, and looking at ways to provide continuing education credits for professionals in the field. CCO anticipates that this event would happen every two years to increase awareness and connection throughout the community with regards to the issue of homelessness. This is the only communitywide gathering of its kind on homelessness. CCO is also considering inviting experts both at the state and national level to bring their expertise to the community.



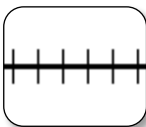
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: Donna Mae Baukat & CCO event committee
- Coordination: CCO event committee will work with support from new Strategy Director



Funding

- Cost: \$8,000
- Funding source: Grants, sponsorships and entrance fees



Timeline

- Planning is underway for event to be held April 20, 2020
- Evaluation of attendance numbers, types of participants in attendance and through qualitative surveys will be provided during the conference.



Desired Outcome(s)

2. Increase awareness of this issue
3. Increase community collaboration
4. Highlight new initiatives to address the issue

CC2: Coffee & Conversations

The Coffee and Conversations with Homeless and Food Insecure program aims to provide food for those in need, create a space for the unhoused to share their stories, and help build bridges of understanding in the community. Community Compassion Outreach (CCO) hosted its first picnic at Schneider Park on December 1, 2018. Although fees are not required by the City's Parks and Recreation Department for picnics in the park, to avoid paying the 30-day deposit fee of \$100, plus \$50 for the day to use Schneider Park, the picnic format of sharing food is proposed.



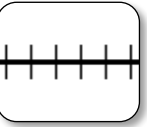
Leadership and Coordination

- Lead: CCO
- Coordination: CCO will build upon their existing ministry and volunteer base. Manna Soup Kitchen provides 25 packed lunches for CCO to pick up on Wednesday mornings to deliver to the Purple Cliffs. Health care providers could also provide services during the food sharing event once in a while.



Funding

- Cost: Minimum of \$500 per Saturday meal
- Funding source: CCO has connected with a food truck service and is starting to apply for grants to support food preparation and delivery. Additional resources could also include more partners and food donations.



Timeline

- Ongoing
- Evaluation begins with first annual review



Desired Outcome(s)

1. Build community while feeding people in need for increasing number of people in need and involving increasing number of community volunteers and other housed participants (Track change in number of persons served, and number of volunteers engaged)

CC3: Coordinating Council Subcommittee on Public Education and Awareness

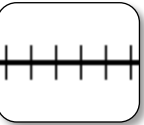
At the initial meeting of the Coordinating Council, a subcommittee on public education and awareness will be formed. This subcommittee will work with the greater Council to gather stories in the interim between Council meetings, share those stories during meetings and select stories to share in various forums (including the annual progress report) and through various media in the upcoming quarters. The group's primary objective will be to build shared understanding of homelessness and related community conditions in order to help the community improve how they work together to address homelessness and realize better outcomes for everyone. The group may consider starting small with some simple ways for partners to gather and share stories with the Coordinating Council and build toward larger efforts, like working with the *Herald* to develop a regular column or with arts groups to collect stories with photos, video, etc. or with Fort Lewis College, Leadership La Plata and/or local professionals to hold a skill-building clinic for video production (or relevant project skill) for producing the stories. Community member Richard Dilworth has volunteered to lead this effort in collaboration with other subcommittee members and will work with the group to develop a specific work plan for enhancing community education and awareness regarding homelessness.

**Leadership and Coordination**

- Lead: Richard Dilworth, with Coordinating Council Subcommittee on Education and Awareness
- Coordination: Via Coordinating Council

**Funding**

- Cost: No start-up funds needed
- Funding source: Support and resources for future efforts in need of funding may be found through local service clubs and non-profit organizations

**Timeline**

- Begin with subcommittee appointment at first Coordinating Council meeting, with regular committee meeting schedule established
- Begin evaluation with first annual review

**Desired Outcome(s)**

1. Reach increasing proportion of county population over time with stories of the experience of homelessness and how well (or not) strategies to address homelessness are working in order to achieve greater shared understanding (Track counts of populations reached over time by venue/media type)
2. Increase public awareness about Durango homelessness and potential real solutions (Establish baseline with simple survey; conduct annual updates to track progress)

Tier 2 Connected Community Strategies Table

No Tier 2 strategies have been identified within this strategic theme.

Conclusion and Final Recommendations for Making the Plan Reality

The foundational principle of this plan is to balance all interests to produce the best possible outcomes for the community as a whole, and in support of that principle and in light of best practices, the major objective of the plan is to enable future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one-time, which can be done when the local prevention and response system is well-coordinated and oriented toward accessing or securing housing. These aspects of the plan should remain in focus throughout implementation and evaluation of progress.

Other principles should also be kept in mind whenever considering adjustments to any aspect of this plan:

- Support and/or build on existing strengths.
- Build community connections and understanding.
- Promote dignity and respect for all.
- Prioritize access to scarce resources for “locals”.

With these principles in mind, The Athena Group recommends taking the following steps towards turning this plan into reality and managing it for continuously improving outcomes over time.

City and County Form and Support Interim Working Group

A subset of the Planning and Action Team on Homelessness (PATH) should be organized immediately and should include a city and/or county staff person, a representative of NINA, a social/human services provider that will not be submitting a proposal to manage the coordinated system, and a housing and/or shelter provider, if not submitting a proposal to manage the coordinated system. The Athena Group will recommend individuals to appoint to this group in a cover memo submitted with the final plan.

This group should be charged with two major tasks: 1) guide process to secure organization that will develop and manage the coordinated system on homelessness and 2) continue developing the managed camp strategy.

Task 1: Guide process to secure organization that will develop and manage the coordinated system on homelessness. This group should work with the City of Durango and/or La Plata County to create an RFP for development and management of the coordinated system on homelessness. Items to consider including in the RFP are:

- Where and how the navigation center will operate;
- The data management system that will be used, how it will be developed, how it will connect with the Coordinated Entry System managed by Housing Solutions for the Southwest, and how it will be used to support evaluations of the system and its outcomes;
- Titles and job descriptions of the new manager position and support staff (if applicable);
- How Coordinating Council will be formed and managed; and
- Suggestions for on-going coordination with the City of Durango and La Plata County, if any beyond the Coordinating Council.

Task 2: Continue developing the organized camp strategy. Efforts to establish a permanent, organized camp are on-going and require continuous, focused attention and support in order to move this strategy to Tier 1 for implementation as soon as possible. An organization willing to manage the camp and a funding source to support management are fundamental to moving this camp strategy forward. Siting is another major consideration and one that could be analyzed in partnership with a lead agency selected to work with the camp. The Athena Group has shared information on best practices in other communities (Las Cruces) and hosted an informal site visit to Camp Hope (Las Cruces) in November with interested community members. The Athena Group recommends that city and county staff and the IWC continue to meet and discuss next steps for actions in the first quarter of 2020.

Establish Coordinating Council – Coordinate Data System, Navigation Center Set-up

Once a contract is secured with an organization to manage the coordinated system, the first order of business should be to establish the Coordinating Council, as described in the Strategic Implementation Plan. Once Council members have been appointed, the manager and Council should work closely to set up the navigation center. Setting it up includes reaching out to all providers that may wish to co-locate services on a regular basis (for only an hour a week or multiple days per week, whatever is possible and useful) and establishing written agreements with partners, setting up the space and public information about the center accordingly, and developing the data management system through the Coordinated Entry System or alternate system as described in the Strategic Implementation Plan.

Quarterly Coordination

Quarterly meetings of the Coordinating Council can begin and continue on schedule as soon as it is established, even if the navigation center takes longer than three months to officially launch. Its inaugural meeting should focus on establishing its charter to ensure that everyone is clear on the Council's charge and how they will work together. See template for charter in Appendix D, which includes some content suggestions directly related to recommendations in this plan.

After the first meeting, Council members should continue actively monitoring development of the managed camp strategy and consider forming additional sub-committees, including the safety/methamphetamine challenges team, an education and community-building team and a work access team. They should also plan to include the following regular agenda items to support them in becoming a high-functioning shared leadership group:

- Success stories – what's going well?
- Emerging challenges – what's happening, and how can we address it?
- Need for support – who needs support, and who will lend a hand?

Annual System and Outcomes Assessment

Annual review meetings should begin 12 months after the coordination system is in place and should include reviews of all strategies that have been underway for at least six months, as specified for each applicable strategy in the Strategic Management Plan. The annual review process should include a recap of success stories and challenges that emerged in the prior year and how the group can improve how they work together as they go forward. It should also include an assessment of how well the system is doing at preventing homelessness, getting people access to housing when prevention has not been possible and caring for the broader community, making it safer and cleaner and building stronger and more connected sense of community among housed and unhoused neighbors alike.

Data to be reviewed should've been identified in the development of the data collection system – aligned with the report that the Council would like to share with the broader community. A draft report can be produced by new system director and shared with the Council for discussion at the annual review meeting. Key questions for the evaluation process are suggested in the Council charter template in Appendix D, and specific data to gather are listed in the community report card template in Appendix E.

Onward, Successful Together

If successful in implementation, this coordinated approach over the next five years should help to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time in the greater Durango area, with limited unintended consequences and a stronger community of which everyone can be proud.

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Appendix A: Planning Approach and Participation Details

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES

- Interviewed 15 people, including elected officials, social and human service providers, interested but unaffiliated community members (including an unhoused community member), a community member doing outreach in the downtown Durango area.
- Prepared inventory of existing programs and organizations working on issues related to homelessness.
- Reviewed variety of news articles, report from former Community Collaborative on Homelessness, and relevant municipal code.
- Prepared timeline of local challenges and efforts to address homelessness, 1980s-present, using local team member knowledge.
- Prepared timeline of federal policies that influence modern homelessness, starting in 1970s.

PLANNING AND ACTION TEAM ON HOMELESSNESS (PATH) ACTIVITIES

The Athena Group invited a cross-sector and multi-perspective group of people in the community with a strong interest in homelessness and how it is impacting people with lived experience in it and the broader community to participate on the PATH. They all signed onto a group charter that clarified the scope of work and secured agreements for participating in the process. The graphic shown to the right describes the steps in the process.

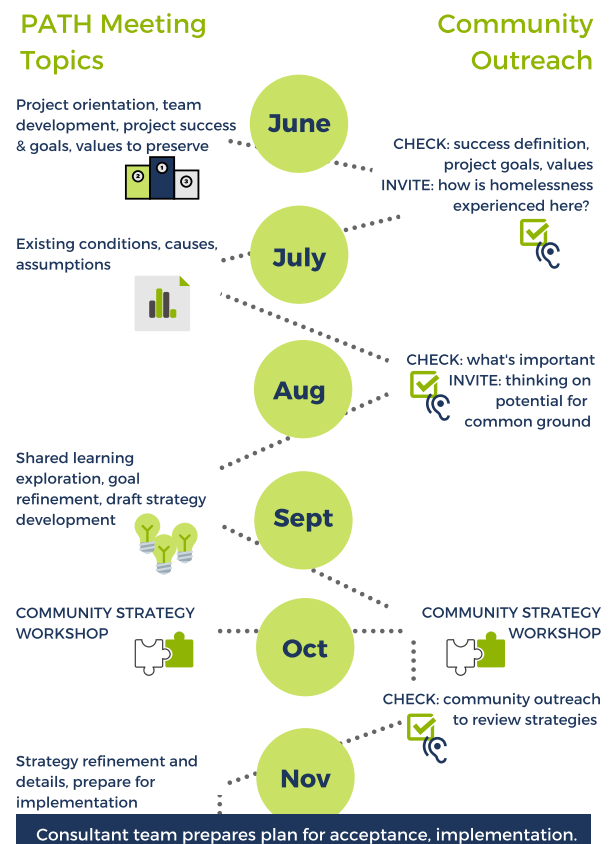
COMMUNITY OUTREACH, INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Project Web Page

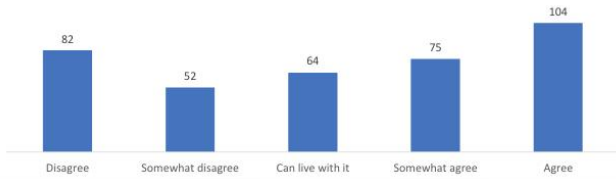
Information was posted to a project web page (<https://www.durangogov.org/1267/Homelessness-Strategic-Planning>) on the City of Durango's website to keep the public informed of upcoming events and results of each milestone in the process.

Questionnaire on Planning Goals

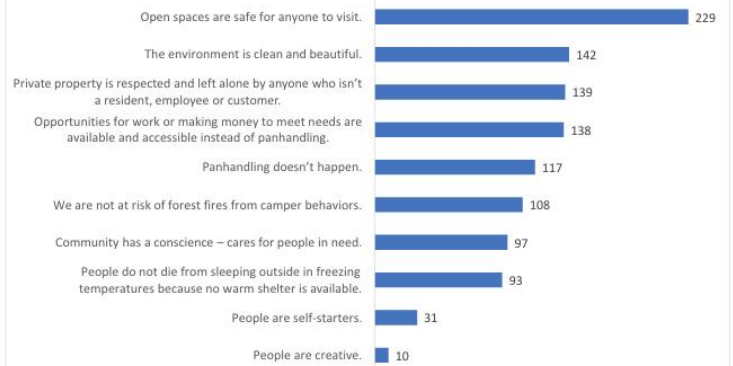
After the first PATH meeting, a questionnaire was created to check thinking on a potential definition of success for the planning process and goals for the strategic plan itself. PATH members used it to talk with others in the community, they shared it through their email lists, and the Durango Herald ran an article on it with a link for interested community members to respond to it. 407 people participated in the survey. Results revealed significant divides in the community about what the community should aim to do about homelessness. Themes from narrative responses are described in the existing conditions section of this report. Data from Likert scale responses follow.



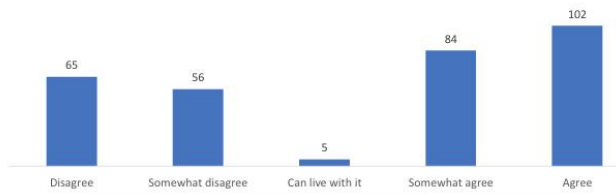
Success definition: The PATH will have succeeded in its work when, with support from the broader community, the group agrees to an actionable strategic plan that makes room for all people who live in the greater Durango area – housed and unhoused – to thrive.



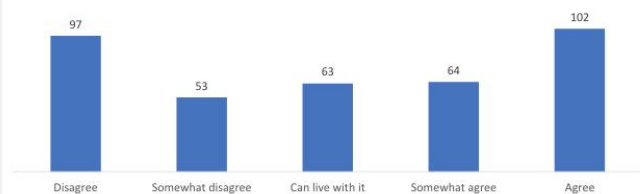
What Matters Most to Survey Respondents



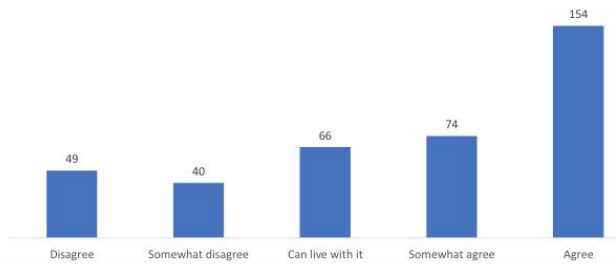
Goal 1: What is most important to each of us is understood and will not be negatively affected by the strategic plan on homelessness.



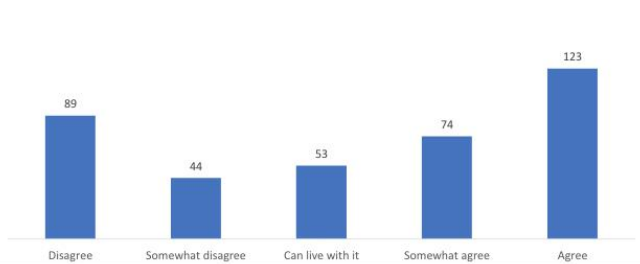
Goal 2: The community has a deeper and shared understanding of homelessness, generally and in the greater Durango area.



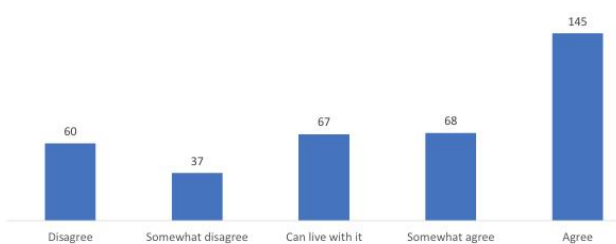
Goal 3: The quality and quantity of services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness has increased.



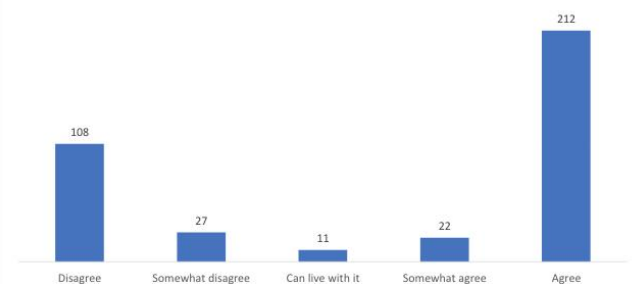
Goal 4: More housing is available and attainable across a range of needs for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



Goal 5: Services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as well as services for addressing related community concerns, are better coordinated.



Goal 6: All community members are safe when visiting open spaces.



Listening Sessions and Open House

Two listening sessions were held on August 20, 2019. People with lived experience and at risk of homelessness gathered at the Volunteers of America Community Shelter from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Housed neighbors and local businesses gathered at St. Mark's Episcopal Church from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

In addition to posting information on the project web page and circulating a media release, the Athena Group worked with PATH members to recruit participants through direct outreach, aiming for a total of approximately 15 participants in each session to support the opportunity for full and rich conversation. Richard Dilworth, PATH member and Homeless Outreach Coordinator for the Durango Downtown Business Improvement District, was also employed to help with outreach to people who are unhoused and to coordinate efforts with other PATH members. Food and beverages were provided to encourage participation in each event, and \$20 Walmart gift cards were provided as participation incentives for the group of people with lived experience. Gift cards were not offered to the housed group because they were determined to be ineffective incentives for that group.

More than 30 community members who are not involved in the PATH participated in these two sessions combined, most (22) of whom were in the group with lived experienced. Of those willing to share a little about themselves:

- 14 were housed (some housed only recently, over the 3 previous months, and some for a lifetime), 5 of whom indicated fear that they won't be able to pay for their housing in the future.
- 8 had been unhoused for 2 months to 10 years.
- 3 said they own, manage or work in a Durango business.
- 8 identified as male, 11 as female and 2 as other.
- 15 identified their race/ethnicity as White, and other individuals respectively identified their race/ethnicity as Black, Native American, Hispanic, and multiple races.
- 7 said they are military veterans, and 13 said they are not.
- 9 said they have some kind of disabling condition, 10 said they do not, and 2 were unsure.



A World Café-style conversation was held across four different tables with a different theme at each table. Three key questions were explored in these conversations, with the latter two condensed into a single round of conversation in both sessions: 1) What does Durango/La Plata County look like when the community is addressing this topic in a way that is most meaningful to you? 2) How can we expand that vision to include all the things people in this community care about...where is common ground possible? 3) What power do we have to make this possible...what can we do for each other?

Meagan Picard, principal consultant with The Athena Group from the Denver area, and Heather Martinez, local independent visual practitioner, co-facilitated the conversations. Heather also graphically recorded major themes on flip charts. PATH members joined each of these sessions as active listeners, sometimes adding more questions and comments for the group to consider. At the end of each session, participants were invited to reflect on their experience and learning, and some shared their reflections in writing on notecards or large sticky notes.

Graphic recordings of the conversations, participant information and reflections, existing conditions data, and a timeline of historical events that impact current conditions were displayed throughout the space made available at St. Mark's Church for the open house event the following day, and visitors were invited to reflect on common ground they could see, opportunities that seemed promising or exciting to them and actions they could take to support better results for everyone.

Outreach to encourage participation in the open house was similar to outreach for the listening sessions; a media release was circulated, the website was updated, and PATH members helped to spread the word and invite participation through their networks. Participation was heavier in the first two hours of the event (3:30-5:30) and low in the last two. It is impossible to quantify, since most people walked right past the sign-in sheet at the entrance to the room, and there was not a designated team member to encourage signing in.



Community Strategy Workshop

A Community Strategy Workshop was held on October 29, 2019. The workshop was widely advertised. In addition to PATH members spreading the word through their networks using the flyer to the right, information about the event was posted on the project web page, Mary Shinn wrote an article that was published in the *Durango Herald*, and a paid advertisement (a quarter-page version of the flyer) was run in the weekend edition of the *Herald*.

Approximately 60 people participated in the event, which included opening remarks by Commissioner Julie Westendorff and Mayor Melissa Youssef, a presentation of background information for participants to consider, and open exploration of stations around the room. Each station focused on a different aspect of the strategic framework. Participants could explore plan objectives and principles at the first station, and they could explore strategy ideas across seven different themes across the remaining seven stations. Participants could give feedback on comment sheets and/or on station posters that highlighted key questions within each theme area.



Major feedback at each station included:

- Station 0: Plan Guidelines - Participants had limited comments but seemed to be in support of the plan principles.
- Station 1: Coordination - Participants seemed to like all of these strategies and particularly interested in the new position to manage the coordinated system.
- Station 2: Shelter - Participants said a range of accessible options are needed for different circumstances.
- Station 3: Housing - Participants support increasing housing options for people with lower incomes and helping people to stay in housing.
- Station 4: Clean Community - Participants support shared clean-up efforts – with reward system – and more city resources for trash, restrooms.
- Station 5: Safe Community - Relationship-building, trust, organized camp, respect...all considered important for improving sense of safety.
- Station 6: Connected Community - Most supported efforts to share stories and to connect, and more effort to advertise is needed.
- Station 7: Health and Other Support Services - Limited comments made here – one comment seemed to sum up thinking: “Covers a lot of topics...Keep up the good work.”
- Station 8: Work that Works - There is support for identifying non- traditional work opportunities. Barriers - like time, timeliness, mobility, storage for belongings - must be addressed.

Additional details are available on the project web page at <https://www.durangogov.org/1267/Homelessness-Strategic-Planning>.

Earned Media

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Appendix B: Existing Services and Partners Inventory

Organization	Services	Existing Partnerships	Strategic Themes
Durango-La Plata Senior Center	Senior services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In summer, Manna provides food boxes and produce market at center 	Connected community, Health+
United Way	City of Durango Community Support Funding, Community Emergency Assistance Coalition (CEAC)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides funding to changing array of recipients through local grant/emergency assistance programs 	Coordination
Aid for Pets	Veterinary pet care assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna gives veterinary referrals 	Health+
Community Connections, Inc.	24/7 comprehensive services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Southwest Colorado	None known	Health+
Cooking Matters	Programming in culinary kitchen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna	Health+
Dogster's Spay and Neuter Program	Pet vaccinations	None known	Health+
Durango School District 9-R, McKinney-Vento Services & Supports	Transportation, free lunch, school fees waiver, backpack program, resource and referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Axis health System Housing Solutions for the Southwest Manna Soup Kitchen La Plata Family Center Volunteers of America 	Health+
Good Food Collective	Clean food and vegetables	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna	Health+
La Plata County Humane Society	Pet food	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna distributes pet food, and Manna helps with licenses. 	Health+
La Plata Family Center	Education, school readiness, health insurance enrollment, utility/housing assistance, other support to build community, reduce family isolation, and strengthen families	None known	Health+
Lion's Club	Eyeglass vouchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna refers to them 	Health+
Rocky Mountain Health Plans	Medicaid, medical referrals	None known	Health+
Salvation Army	Bus passes and gas vouchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna refers to them. CEAC 	Health+

Organization	Services	Existing Partnerships	Strategic Themes
San Juan Basin Public Health	Hygiene supplies, immunizations, SNAP enrollment assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna (hygiene and immunizations, wellness outreach) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH) 	Health+
Sexual Assault Services Organization	Outreach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna	Health+
Young People in Recovery	Peer recovery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna (workshops)	Health+
Community Compassion Outreach	Street outreach, food, companionship, employment assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH) Coordinated entry system via Housing Solutions for the Southwest 	Health+, Connected Community
Neighbors in Need Alliance (NINA)	Coordination within faith community, gear and other supplies, companionship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH) 	Health+, Connected Community, Coordination
Manna Soup Kitchen	Meals, food pantry, Repair Café, bus tokens/tickets, legal ID assistance, laundry, mail, showers, phone use/long distance calling, culinary program, life skills workshops, hosts other agencies for ease of service access	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH, previous advisory committee, NINA) 	Health+, Coordination, Work that Works
Axis Health Systems	Physical, mental, and behavioral health services, Medicaid provider, Medicaid enrollment assistance, medical/dental referrals, supported work program, legal ID assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna (4 times per week) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH, previous advisory committee) 	Health+, Work that Works
Southwest Center for Independence	Disability case management and advocacy, independent living services, supported work program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna (2 times per month) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH) 	Health+, Work that Works
Community Emergency Assistance Coalition (CEAC), administered by Housing Solutions for the Southwest	Rent and other emergency assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funders: Colorado Department of Human Services, Salvation Army La Plata County Service Extension Unit, United Way of Southwest Colorado, La Plata Electric Association–Roundup Foundation Referral: Methodist Thrift Store, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, St. Columba, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Manna Soup Kitchen 	Housing

Organization	Services	Existing Partnerships	Strategic Themes
Housing Solutions for the Southwest	Coordinated Entry System, housing search and application assistance, Section 8 vouchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH, previous advisory committee) 	Housing, Coordination
Volunteers of America	Domestic violence shelter, community shelter, veteran services, housing search assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services co-located at Manna (at least monthly for veteran services) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership coordination (PATH, previous advisory committee) 	Shelter
Colorado Legal Services, Durango Office	Legal advice and representation to low-income eligible persons in civil matters, including assistance with obtaining legal identification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Axis Health System Manna refers 	Work that Works
Methodist Thrift Store	Career clothing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna distributes vouchers 	Work that Works

Appendix C: Sample Systems Navigation and Coordination Director Job Description

The Systems Navigation and Coordinator Director oversees the implementation of the Strategic Plan on Homelessness for the City of Durango and La Plata County. The Director reports to the [Navigation Center lead agency under contract with the City and County] for daily Navigation Center operations and to the Coordinating Council on a quarterly basis for systemwide effectiveness. The Coordinating Council is an oversight body for Strategic Plan implementation that is comprised of staff from the City and County, members from the faith, service provider and business communities and unhoused community members.

This position will:

- monitor implementation of all Tier 1 strategies,
- oversee the resource/navigation center,
- provide assistance with grant identification and grant writing in partnership with lead agencies,
- coordinate educational opportunities in the community,
- coordinate special events like community improvement events,
- serve as the point person for requests for funding or resources to the local governments,
- provide staff support to subcommittees identified by the oversight body,
- develop annual budgets to support implementation of the plan for local governments,
- work with the oversight body to identify policy initiatives to support plan implementation,
- support local government staff with analyzing requests and developing policies to support plan implementation,
- and other duties connected to the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

The first year will be heavily focused on developing the coordinating council, setting up the resource navigation center, identifying new resources and finalizing a scorecard to track success of the plan annually. In addition to these functions, this new position will serve as the point person on homelessness for the local community with regards to the plan, provide public information regarding plan milestones, represent the City and County in public forums on homelessness, analyze data and recommend modifications to the plan, in coordination with lead agencies and the oversight body.

The ideal Systems Navigation and Coordinator Director candidate will have proven experience:

- Analyzing data to improve program/project performance
- Recommending and developing policies related to homeless services, programs and projects
- Administering homeless programs
- Accessing funding for homeless programs, especially from state and federal sources
- Monitoring program expenditures for program compliance and assisting in the preparation of annual budget reports
- Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with various community partners

APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS REQUIRE THE SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE BE COMPLETED.

Minimum Qualifications

Education and Experience: Any combination of education and work experience which can clearly demonstrate possession of the knowledge and abilities listed.

License: Possession of a valid driver's license at the appropriate level including special endorsements, as required by the State of Colorado, may be required depending upon assignment to perform the essential job functions of the position.

Thorough knowledge of: Homeless programs, funding sources for homeless initiatives, local government processes, community engagement and coalition-building strategies and program management.

Appendix D: Coordinating Council Initiating Charter Template

Following is a template that may be used to develop a charter for the Coordinating Council. The template is tailored for council use, but many details will need to be determined by council members. Placeholders for these details are included in this template, identified by gray highlights over bracketed text. A separate, editable version of this template is available upon request from Meagan Picard at The Athena Group.

Organizing Charter for the Durango-La Plata County Coordinating Council on Homelessness

Introduction

A charter is an agreement made by members of a group in the early stages of developing a team. This charter, specifically, is created to:

- Clarify project expectations, including the basic process, team roles and responsibilities, and who is invited to the Durango-La Plata County Coordinating Council on Homelessness.
- Highlight agreements made by each Council member to the rest of the team to make sure the experience is productive and rewarding for everyone.

Background – Coordinating Council Creation

The Durango-La Plata County Coordinating Council on Homelessness was created in [MONTH] 2020 jointly by the City of Durango and La Plata County. This is a high priority strategy of the Durango-La Plata County Strategic Plan on Homelessness, created to provide oversight and guidance for implementation and performance assessments of the coordinated system on homelessness.

Membership

Membership shall include the following seats on the Council:

- City of Durango administration staff member (1)
- La Plata County administration staff member (1)
- City or county law enforcement provider (1)
- Navigation center provider (1)
- Housing/shelter service provider (1)
- Health services provider (1)
- Community outreach service provider (1)
- Faith community connector (1)
- People with lived experience in or at risk of homelessness (2)
- Neighborhood/business community connectors (2)

[When agreed upon by the interim working group and new system director (see SCR 5), describe how appointed and where to find current list of members – in appendix and/or on website and/or via request of specific organization(s)]

[When agreed upon by the interim working group and new system director, describe staggered terms of service. It is recommended that agreement be reached with about 1/3 of members willing to serve shorter initial terms and about 1/3 willing to serve longer initial terms.]

Roles and Responsibilities

Council members' primary roles would be to meet quarterly to provide coordinated support and guidance for plan implementation, to conduct annual reviews of progress to strategic plan goals, to update the plan as needed each year and to approve annual community progress reports prepared by the system director. They should pay special attention to ensuring a balanced approach to addressing homelessness in the community and to evaluating progress toward achieving primary objective of making homelessness rare, brief and one-time whenever it can't be prevented (see below for checklist of evaluation questions to focus data summaries and Council discussion).

They would also form sub-committees for continuing development and implementation of selected strategies, such as multi-sector interventions on methamphetamine use and community education and awareness activities.

Meeting Schedule and Location

The Coordinating Council will meet on a quarterly basis, including an annual review meeting to occur each [identify which quarter when annual reviews will occur, starting one year from establishment of Coordinating Council/initiation of coordinated system].

In [current year], meetings will be held on the following dates and times:

- Q1: [date and time]
- Q2: [date and time]
- Q3: [date and time]
- Q4: [date and time]

Unless otherwise planned, all meetings will be held at the [NAVIGATION CENTER SITE].

Sub-committees and Quarterly Review Process

At the first meeting of the Council, focused on development of this charter and establishment of sub-committees, which should be ratified in the initiating charter and future updates as needed. Council members will integrate the group working on development of the managed camp strategy as an official sub-committee and consider forming additional sub-committees, including the safety/methamphetamine response team, an education and community-building team and a work access team.

The following items will be included as regular agenda items for future quarterly meetings, fulfilled by reports from sub-committees and others as appropriate:

- Success stories – what's going well?
- Emerging challenges – what's happening, and how can we address it?
- Need for support – who needs support, and who will lend a hand?

Annual Review Process

Data to be reviewed should've been identified in the development of the data collection system and in alignment with the report that the Council will share with the broader community. A draft report should be produced by the system director and shared with the Council at least one week in advance of the annual review meeting.

Data Review and Discussion Questions Checklist

The set of questions to be addressed in this review may include:

- ☐ Who has been unhoused over the previous year?
 - a. How many people total?

- b. For how long?
- c. What are demographics and other characteristics of people who have been unhoused?
 - i. Gender
 - ii. Race/ethnicity
 - iii. Veteran status
 - iv. Native American tribal membership
 - v. Community where housing was originally lost
 - vi. How long unhoused to date/until housed?
 - vii. Where/how sheltering?
 - viii. How long in La Plata County?
 - ix. Interested in getting into housing?
 - x. Physical, mental and behavioral health challenges?
- ☐ How many people were we able to help stay in their existing housing or relocate to more sustainable housing for them?
 - a. Has the number and/or percent of people served who were in need of prevention services increased?
 - b. Which organizations/programs were part of these efforts?
 - c. How could we improve these results?
- ☐ How many unhoused community members were we able to help access housing?
 - a. Has the number and/or percent of people who wanted housing and getting into housing increased (locally and/or returning to home communities for housing)?
 - b. Which organizations/programs were part of these efforts?
 - c. How could we improve these results?
 - i. Are there other programs that people are accessing a lot that could help reach more people?
 - ii. Are there other programs that people are accessing that appear to be helping get people ready to access available housing and that could use additional support to increase impact?
 - iii. How can we increase housing availability and accessibility?
- ☐ How are we doing in our efforts to deliver services with dignity and respect for all?
 - a. What do people who are unhoused say?
 - b. What about housed neighbors and businesses that have been involved and/or impacted say?
 - c. Which programs are leading in this?
 - d. How can we improve?
 - e. Is there anything else we need to know that will help us with this?
- ☐ How are we doing in terms of community connectedness and our sense of community?
 - a. Consider sub-committee/quarterly reports on this.
- ☐ How are we doing on other community impacts?
 - a. Have we improved cleanliness?
 - i. Any trouble spots for trash/human waste that should be added to focus of community ambassadors and/or quarterly community improvement projects?
 - ii. Which businesses, neighborhood groups or other organizations may be could partners to seek for next steps?
 - b. Have we improved community safety related to homelessness?
 - i. Any crimes (theft, assault, threats) involving people who are unhoused, against or by them?
 - ii. Does it appear to be a pattern (trends/patterns start at five consecutive occurrences)?

1. If no, consider it an individual instance for now and watch for future trend potential.
2. If yes, consider causes and programs that may help. Check on possible relationship to methamphetamine and other substance use and request attention and reports by sub-committee on this topic.

Group Process Agreements

Recognizing that the Council is charged with ensuring a balanced approach to addressing homelessness in the community and evaluating progress toward achieving primary objective of making homelessness rare, brief and one-time whenever it can't be prevented, we understand that we must be able to work together well even when we disagree. In support of that understanding, we, members of the Coordinating Council, agree that we will:

- Engage in community-oriented decision-making, meaning that we will make decisions that are mutually satisfying and/or that all members can live with across differing priorities and perspectives.
- Listen, listen, listen!
- Avoid judgment – seek understanding instead.
- Practice curiosity.
- Give and expect respect.
- Share concerns openly – not keep hidden agendas.
- Bring agreements forward into the broader community – “act as a body.”
- Other, as agreed upon by the Council

Signatures of agreement will be collected by [METHOD agreed upon by Council and system director]. All members must sign the agreements in order to participate on the Coordinating Council. Failure to sign the agreement within 30 days of appointment will prompt search for a new appointment to that seat.

Appendix E: Community Report Card Template

The following template for creating a community report card is provided without formatting. Once data has been gathered for each section, an overall design should be applied that allows the reader to quickly scan and understand the story that is unfolding from the data.

Durango-La Plata County Coordinated Community Action on Homelessness

Toward a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one-time and all in the community are proud to call this place home.

COMMUNITY REPORT CARD

This report card is intended to offer local community leaders and other interested members of the community a review of who has been experiencing homelessness in this community over the previous year and progress toward realizing a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and one-time in the greater Durango area. It has been developed by the [organization and title of system director] in coordination with the Durango-La Plata County Coordinating Council on Homelessness.

Who is Unhoused in La Plata County?

[Insert summary language on count and demographics of people who are unhoused from Point-in-Time Count, navigation center/CES data system and other coordinated sources]

Insert table and/or charts of key data (*ensure that these data are/can be included in data system, whether CES or alternate*):

- ☐ Total number
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Race/ethnicity
- ☐ Veteran status
- ☐ Native American tribal membership
- ☐ Community where housing was originally lost
- ☐ How long unhoused to date/until housed? What percent chronically unhoused?
- ☐ Where/how sheltering?
- ☐ How long in La Plata County?
- ☐ Interested in getting into housing?
- ☐ Physical, mental and behavioral health challenges?

Changes Over Time?

Insert annualized data beginning in second year for select data:

- ☐ Total number
- ☐ Unhoused for 30+ days
- ☐ Unhoused for 1st time
- ☐ Chronically homeless

Access to Housing and Shelter

[Insert summary language on outcomes from prevention services and efforts to access housing and shelter]

Prevention

[Describe prevention strategies (Increase emergency assistance programs, Increase housing rehab initiatives) and progress toward goals.]

Key performance indicators to report:

- ☐ # of people seeking prevention services through each of the following programs/organizations:
 - Housing Solutions
 - CEAC
 - Southwest Center for Independence
 - [Other – specify]
- ☐ % able to retain housing or finding more sustainable housing option:

Housing Access

[Describe housing strategies (increase rapid rehousing program, increase permanent supportive housing, increase housing vouchers, establish host homes for youth) and progress toward goals for each.]

Key performance indicators to report:

- ☐ Total # of people seeking housing – and % able to access housing
- ☐ # accessing housing, by type (rapid re-housing, supportive housing, housing vouchers, Host Homes for Youth, [other – specify])

Table of additional coordinated entry data to include:

- ☐ # and % of families or individuals on a by-name list for longer than 30 days
- ☐ # and % of referrals that are accepted by receiving programs (RRH, TH and PSH)
- ☐ # and % of persons declined by more than one provider
- ☐ Average number of days households spend in emergency shelter
- ☐ # of persons who have returned to homelessness within 6-12 months

List organizations involved in referring to and/or supporting access to housing (with # of people served)

- ☐ Housing Solutions
- ☐ CEAC
- ☐ Southwest Center for Independence
- ☐ Volunteers of America
- ☐ NINA/CCO Professional Service Corps members
- ☐ [Other – specify]

Shelter Access

[Describe shelter strategies (organized camp) and progress toward goals for each.]

Key performance indicators to report:

- ☐ # of people seeking shelter services through each of the following programs/organizations –
 - Volunteers of America Durango Community Shelter
 - Volunteers of America Veteran Transitional Housing Program

- Volunteers of America Southwest Safehouse
 - Organized camp
 - Car
 - Friend/family
 - Faith-based organization
 - [Other – specify]
- ☐ # and % able to access shelter

Health Services and Other Strategies to Help People While Unhoused and/or to Support Readiness for Desired Housing/Shelter Option

[Give brief overview of Health+ and Work that Works strategies (vaccine clinics, hygiene kits, solidarity lockers, Axis services, Link program, CCO social enterprises) and progress toward goals for each.]

Key information and performance indicators to report for each:

- ☐ # people identified for referral
- ☐ # and % accessed, declined, unavailable
- ☐ Progress toward target with visual indicator

Strategies for Improving Community Conditions

[Give brief overview of Safe and Clean Community and Connected Community strategies (community ambassador program, law enforcement-community relations, enforce camping laws, quarterly community improvement projects, CCO annual conference) and progress toward goals for each.]

Key information and performance indicators to report for each:

- ☐ # and % engaged and declined participation (applicable strategies only)
- ☐ Progress toward target(s) with visual indicator

System/Infrastructure Improvement Strategies

[Give brief overview of Coordination strategies (housing advocacy,) and progress toward goals for each. Also describe: Which strategies/investments staying course? Which eliminated and why? Which enhanced/added – how and why? How investments will be adjusted/prioritized?]

Key progress indicators to report:

- ☐ Housing advocacy efforts and impacts
- ☐ Grants written and amounts awarded, pending, not awarded
- ☐ Local fundraising types, amounts and uses
- ☐ City/county funding amounts and uses
- ☐ # of overall system volunteers with most common program/service types
- ☐ Other in-kind donations

[Close section with statement of gratitude to supporters.]

Stories from the Field

[Add a page or more to highlight stories of success and/or need for more investment.]

Appendix F: Future Horizons (Tier 3 Strategies)

This section of the plan is an opportunity to identify key trends in the larger environment that should be tracked because of their potential impacts on how this plan is implemented and its ultimate success. This is not exhaustive, but rather an attempt to cover some core issues that are likely to impact funding, resources, approaches and opportunities over the next five years.

State of Colorado Significantly Increased Resources for Affordable Housing

2019 was an excellent year for affordable housing in Colorado. The state legislature approved a historic number of legislative bills aimed to significantly increase funding for affordable housing in Colorado. For the last ten years the state of Colorado has had less than 10 million allocated from the general fund for affordable housing. As a result of this year's advocacy at the capitol, the state will dramatically increase state resources for housing annually until it reaches approximately 100 million by 2022. Each bill that was passed has different regulations and limitations but all of them provide new funding for all aspects of affordable housing and for all populations in need in Colorado, including persons experiencing homelessness. There has never been a better time to develop new housing initiatives in Colorado. Communities should be preparing for these new resources by developing new projects and looking for ways to increase capacity at existing housing agencies. Although these funds will make a significant impact; they do not provide specific funding for capacity building or program administration.

The Athena Group wanted to ensure that Durango and La Plata County were aware of these significant funding opportunities coming in the next five years from the two state affordable housing agencies. Below is a summary of each bill:

HB 19-1228 doubles the cap on the total 2020-2024 state tax credits allowed under the state's Affordable Housing Tax Credit (AHTC) from \$5 million to \$10 million.

HB 19-1245 creates a minor change in the way the state's vendor fee allowance is administered, it is expected to generate roughly \$8 million in the first two years for investments in affordable housing across Colorado and \$45-50 million per year after that. One-third of the funds will be dedicated to housing for extremely low-income households living at 30% of area median incomes (AMIs) or below.

HB 19-1322 sets out to expand the supply of affordable housing in Colorado by appropriating \$30 million of unused funds in the state's Unclaimed Property Trust Fund for three years. Eligible uses of these funds include grants and loans for mobile home repair, covering land and infrastructure costs to support affordable rental housing development, and the development, acquisition, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing. Rental assistance programs will also be made available for low-income households including persons experiencing homelessness.

Federal Housing Policy--the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

The Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act of 2019 has had strong support in Congress since it was introduced in June of this year. The Act would create improvements to the existing low-income housing tax credit program while expanding and strengthening the low-income housing tax credit itself. In summary, the key proposals in the 2019 legislation would:

- Establish a minimum 4% credit rate for tax-exempt bond financed transactions;
- Increase the housing credit volume cap by 50% over five years;

If passed, the proposed legislation would increase the number of affordable units produced over the next decade by an estimated 550,000 units and would benefit several underserved populations. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program has been a key source of funding for affordable rental housing in Durango and has funded over 300 units in the last ten years. If this legislation passes it will be a significant opportunity for the local community to develop more rental projects with specific set-asides for persons experiencing homelessness.

Hospital Transformation in Colorado

Medicaid expansion has had a significant impact on Colorado by increasing the number of low-income individuals who can access both physical and behavioral health services, and specifically by creating access to critical services for persons experiencing homelessness. How Medicaid expansion is operationalized is dictated at the state level through the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Financing (HCPF). Over the last few years HCPF has implemented major state policy mandates and have reorganized the way care is provided throughout the state. This is a complex topic, but the main message for this strategic plan is there are changes in the near future that will require hospitals to deliver and report on how they care for some of the community's most vulnerable populations. This hospital system overhaul is being referred to as the Hospital Transformation Initiative. The best local contact about this process is Elsa Inman at Mercy Hospital. The assumption is that the hospital will be spending more funding and redirecting resources internally to better provide care for vulnerable populations. It is believed that the hospital will also increase its partnerships with local service providers to decrease the number of hospital clients being discharged into homelessness. The Coordinating Council should stay in frequent contact with Mercy hospital to leverage these changes and possible new resources to improve coordination between this major healthcare system and larger homeless coordination system.

State of Colorado Substance Abuse and Recovery Initiatives

In 2019 the State of Colorado created a strategic plan to reorient systems, clinical care, and communities to promote recovery. According to the plan; "Recovery is a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. The plan makes clear that recovery happens in communities. Clinical treatment can provide a bridge to recovery, but an individual's recovery is supported by safe and stable housing, having a meaningful work or another daily activity, and good mental health and physical well-being." The state will begin directing resources to recovery and building out systems of care across the state. In fact, just this month the Colorado Division of Housing released the first Request for Applications for Recovery Housing in Colorado. Recovery is a key element to help unhoused individuals improve their lives and these new resources could be critical to the local communities' success in connecting unhoused persons and those living on the edge, with programming and support to undertake the recovery process. The best contact for the community to track this work and new initiatives is to connect with the Colorado Health Institute; a private think tank that provides educational materials on various health initiatives.

Medicaid Demonstration Project

The State of Colorado through HCPF has applied for a Medicaid Waiver to do a demonstration project to increase substance abuse treatment options under Medicaid in Colorado. According to HCPF, "The State of Colorado has been working to address the growing prevalence of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) among its residents for a number of years. Medicaid members have access to early intervention, outpatient treatment, and recovery services at this time, but to complete the full continuum of SUD

treatment services, the state proposes to add residential and inpatient SUD treatment services as covered services.

The goal of this demonstration is to complete the Colorado SUD continuum of care in order to improve health outcomes, promote long-term recovery, and reduce overdose deaths.

In order to achieve this goal, the state proposes the following objectives:

- Increase access to necessary levels of care by adding Medicaid coverage for inpatient and residential SUD treatment, including withdrawal management (WM) services;
- Ensure that members receive a comprehensive assessment and are placed in an appropriate level of care;
- Further align the state's SUD treatment system with a nationally recognized SUD-specific standard;
- Increase provider capacity where needed; and
- Improve the availability of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) to promote long-term recovery.

Like the Hospital Transformation Initiative, this is a complex systems project but, if successful, could significantly increase access to substance abuse services statewide. The best local contacts to track this initiative are Mercy Hospital and Axis Health System.

A Dedicated Local Funding Source

Some local elected officials, during conversations as part of this strategic planning process, mentioned interest in looking at potential new dedicated public funding revenues to provide long-term resources to address homelessness in the community. Some examples of public funding from other communities include the following:

- Mental Health or Behavioral Health Sales Tax Models (Washington state communities and Bernalillo, New Mexico).
- Sales Tax for Housing and Homelessness: (Washington state communities)
- Document Recording fees: (Washington state communities)
- Housing Levies: (Washington state communities)
- Marijuana Taxes for Housing and Homelessness: (State of Colorado and Aurora, Colorado).

This is not exhaustive but shows some examples of possible public funding models. If the City or County want to further pursue this conversation, there are resources available through a nonprofit group called Healthier Colorado. This organization provides technical assistance to local communities regarding public campaigns.

Appendix G: Website Links

National Resources

<https://www.usich.gov>

<https://endhomelessness.org>

<https://www.community.solutions>

<https://www.csh.org>

<http://mrsc.org/getmedia/4785af3e-35c7-42ef-8e8e-a44c8d0786c4/Homelessness-And-Housing-Toolkit-For-Cities.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf>

Colorado Resources

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/homeless-programs>

<http://www.homeward2020.org>

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/homelessness/homelessness-resources>

Appendix H: Funding Opportunities for Plan Implementation in 2020

Below are a series of potential funding availabilities to assist with implementation efforts in year one.

Developing and launching a formal community coordination system

Although the city and county are providing core funding to launch the new coordination system for the community, there are additional opportunities to raise funding and further leverage these existing investments. Specifically, funds may be available for consultant support and capital investments in data systems and to build capacity with local provider partners in charge of implementing strategies in this plan. Below is a chart of some common funding sources to be explored by the new director and Coordinating Council.

Funder	Amount	Uses	Contact	E-Mail and Website	Due date	Notes
DOH-CDBG CBDO Capacity Building	\$30,000-\$75,000	Staff and consultant support in increase program capacity for housing groups	Andrew Atchley	Andrew.atchley@state.co.us	Rolling applications and can be submitted at the beginning of the month	This application must be sponsored by local government.
DOLA Energy Impact Fund Planning Grants	\$25,000, but requires a 50% match	Planning grants with local government, can support project feasibility	Patrick Rondinelli	Patrick.rondinelli@state.co.us	Rolling applications and can be submitted at the beginning of the month	This application must be sponsored by local government
Colorado Health Foundation	Various \$15,000-\$250,000	Advocacy, policy development, community initiatives	Sara Overby	soverby@coloradohealth.org	Feb 15, June 15 2020	Their priorities change but several align currently
DOH ESG Funds	\$10-\$50,000	Capacity, program support, data collection, shelter	Zac Schaffner	Zac.schaffner@state.co.us	Fall 2020	Competitive funding but resources have increased.