

# Housing Opportunities Action Council

## Lead Administrator: Summary Report

Benton County and the City of Corvallis have contracted with United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties to serve as the backbone organization, and host the position of Lead Administrator (aka, Program Manager) for HOAC from November 1, 2016 through June 30, 2018. Shawn Collins began serving in this role November 1, 2016.

Following is a summary report of the activities of the Program Manager July 2017-August 2017.

### Project Updates

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**Cold Weather Shelter:** As of August 23, we have 69 days until the cold weather shelter season opens November 1. Fortunately, in the past month we have had some breakthroughs, securing a location and agreements on the management and staffing model.

Thanks to the generosity of DEVCO Engineering, the Cold Weather Shelter will be located at 211 SE Chapman Place for the 2017-2018 season. While this location is temporary, it provides a much needed solution for this year, and an opportunity to revisit the approach to shelter and housing for a vulnerable population as we look ahead to future seasons. The management model being developed is centered on the leadership of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis, who stepped forward to serve as the fiscal agent, and will have a strong role in a steering committee for the shelter which will have representation from across the community. Many have helped along the way, as the shelter workgroup searched for an appropriate location and willing landlord for the shelter. While there is still much work to be done, on behalf of the HOAC and the shelter workgroup, I want to express heartfelt appreciation to all who have taken part in this process, and provided support as we worked to overcome obstacles.

**Ten-Year Plan Update:** After a review of the workgroup model and charge in July's Governing Board meeting, invitations went out to HOAC members and the broader community for volunteers to serve on three workgroups. 47 people have stepped forward so far to serve, and meetings should begin in September. This is an important step, as we begin to take the planning work done so far, and turn plans into action.

### Perspective

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In a recent editorial in the Gazette Times, Mike McNally rightly described the news about a shelter site as good news, but a stop gap. We have an opportunity to host the shelter in this location for only one season, and the search for a long term location must begin again soon. Housing is clearly the real goal here – while shelter is very necessary, we have to look for innovation and partnerships across the community to make the need for shelter as minimal as possible, and seek ways to move people forward on the path to housing. News from Benton Community Foundation about the creation of a Homeless to Housing fund is part of the innovation that's needed, but we will need more than dollars to make needed changes in our community. We need creativity and innovation, and we need genuine efforts to understand root causes, and the compassion and will to address them. A quick look at the 2017 results of the "point in time" count of homeless families and individuals in Benton County makes the point clear – access to affordable housing and the supports that enable people to avoid homelessness or quickly exit that condition is growing problem. We can and should celebrate the securing of a key service for this year, but we can't take our eye off the real targets: affordable housing, living wage jobs and economic development, and services to help get people housed, and keep them housed. The health and well-being of our community depends on it.

For anyone interested in discussing affordable housing and homelessness, and approaches we might take going forward, I can be reached at [shawn@unitedwayblc.org](mailto:shawn@unitedwayblc.org), 541-757-7717, or through [contact@bentonhoac.com](mailto:contact@bentonhoac.com).