

# 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, January 2018 – February 2018.

### Project Updates

**Ten-Year Plan Update & Workgroups:** Pursuant to the December motion to approve the Update to the Ten-Year Plan (titled *Community Strategies to Overcome Homelessness and Barriers to Housing*), I presented the document and a Program Update to the Corvallis City Council on February 20. A link to the materials submitted for the Council packet, as well as audio and video, are available at <https://www.corvallisoregon.gov/mc/page/council-meeting-materials>. For the text of my comments, please see <http://bentonhoac.com/news-noteworthy/20180220-final-comments-to-council/>. Slides are linked at <http://bentonhoac.com/news-noteworthy/20180220-hoac-update-citycouncil-d2/>. Similar materials have been submitted and will be reviewed with the Benton County Board of Commissioners February 27. The slides should be considered as supplemental to this monthly report.

As noted in my comments to Council, the materials shared were not intended to be comprehensive. My apologies to any HOAC organization who may feel overlooked. I welcome feedback on how a more integrated and representative report may be developed in the future. Development of a community dashboard, with inputs/outputs from each organization organized around our approved Community Strategies, would significantly improve transparency and completeness of reporting, and build a more integrated picture for the community to understand and align around.

Summary comments on HOAC Workgroups:

- The Housing Supply and Messaging workgroup is developing a policy framework to support HOAC advocacy. This will involve a set of prioritized policy objectives which, once approved, may be advanced as a position supported by HOAC. Review of the core policy agenda with the Governing Board is proposed annually, but it is recognized that a process to quickly address emerging policy issues needs to be adopted. Several members of the workgroup were able to attend Housing Opportunity Day in Salem, and discussed House Bill 4007 with Senator Sara Gelsler, and Representatives Dan Rayfield and Andy Olson. The workgroup has also drafted a letter to Corvallis City Council, offering perspective on a memo from Chief Sassaman and Director Emery presented to Council in December 2017. This draft will be shared with HOAC for review/approval in February.
- The Care Coordination workgroup meeting was postponed due to conflicts for both co-chairs, and multiple members attendance at Housing Opportunity Day, February 15.
- The Mental and Behavioral Health workgroup continues planning for a Community Mental Health meeting April 9<sup>th</sup>. Additional efforts by members include review of the International Clubhouse Model for mental health supports, and discussion of Sequential Intercept Mapping, both as a component in the current Criminal Justice system review, and a model for mapping pathways and intercept points for mental health services.

**Cold Weather Shelter:** The Men's and Women's Cold Weather Shelter season will end on the morning of April 1, 2018. Both shelters have seen success in moving clients from shelter to housing, through effective case management, and both will end the season without a permanent location. The importance of emergency shelter, especially in the coldest and wettest months of the season, is underscored in part by the challenges faced by shelter providers (including COI) to meet the needs of those with medical needs beyond their capacity. The lack of assisted living services to support some of the most needy, places a burden on staff and volunteers of shelter services, and hinders effective care. Efforts to outline the most significant gaps in service, and understand the cases of those

with the most complex needs for care, are underway, and progress has been made in some instances. However, these efforts take time to develop and make significant impact – and this is made more difficult by the lack of year-round shelter services, or other transitional housing supports.

As the end of Shelter Season approaches, it is important to acknowledge the support of the City and County, community donors, and the efforts of the staff and an army of volunteers that support emergency shelter services in the community. Without this broad community-based effort, many of our most vulnerable would be without basics many of us take for granted – a warm, dry place to sleep, a bite to eat, and a smile at the end of a cold day.

**C.A.R.E: Corvallis Area Resource Event:** Over 20 local service providers are confirmed for the Corvallis Area Resource Event, scheduled for 10am-6pm, March 6<sup>th</sup>, at the Corvallis-Benton Public Library. Flyers have been distributed through shelters, local service agencies, and to local homeless camps. English and Spanish language flyers are available at <http://bentonhoac.com/news-noteworthy/>.

**Homeless Outreach Team:** Efforts are underway to define a schedule, scope of coverage for outreach, tracking of the work, and best practices to be shared. Team members assisted with the 2018 Point in Time Count, dividing the area around Corvallis to survey unsheltered who do not come to service points like the Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center. Sergeant Joel Goodwin of the Corvallis Police Department met with representatives of the group to discuss and coordinate outreach with campers, centered on a planned posting and clean-up of camps in Pioneer Park. A meeting to review opportunities to collaborate more effectively with Parks and Recreation staff, ODOT, and others, is being arranged through Karen Emery, Director of Corvallis Parks and Recreation.

**Youth Homelessness:** Recent discussions at the Corvallis School Board about youth and family homelessness have continued to evolve, and involve more partners in a discussion of barriers to housing for youth and families, and the impact this has for children in area schools. Focus on specific challenges, and options to resolve them with new service approaches, will be a topic of future meetings.

## Perspective

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In lieu of further comment, I would refer the reader to comments made to City Council, cited above. Specific project efforts aligned to the Keystone Strategies are outlined in the slides, which include additional material not discussed in the Council presentation.

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).

To: Housing Opportunity Action Council Governing Board  
From: Brigetta Olson and Sara Ingle, co-chairs of the Housing Supply and Messaging Workgroup  
Date: February 22, 2018  
Re: Policy Framework

The Housing Supply and Messaging Workgroup is in the process of developing a policy framework for Housing Opportunities Action Council (HOAC) Governing Board consideration and approval at the March 28, 2018 meeting. Workgroup participants will identify top policy priorities and, once finalized, submit the recommendations to the HOAC Governing Board for review.

The goal is to have specific policies pre-approved in order to maximize the HOAC Governing Board's responsiveness to public testimony opportunities. We believe that the HOAC provides an opportunity to have a stronger voice together, and an approved policy framework and message will strengthen our collective advocacy efforts.

We recommend the review of policies annually. Once the policies are pre-approved by the HOAC, designated HOAC representatives and HOAC Staff will have the authority to publicly state that the HOAC is in support of the approved policy recommendations.

Finally, the Workgroup is also in the process of identifying ways to address policies that emerge after the annual policy framework is approved by the HOAC Governing Board. There will be times that the Governing Board will need to be responsive to emerging policy opportunities, and will not have time to wait an entire month to get approval from the entire HOAC Governing Board.

## Housing Opportunities Action Council

### United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties

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DATE: February 28, 2018

TO: Corvallis City Council

RE: HOAC Outreach and Engagement with Corvallis Police Department, Parks and Recreation

The members of the Housing Opportunities Action Council offer the following comments on the memo from Chief Sassaman and Director Emery, presented to Council on December 18, 2017, regarding problem behaviors downtown and in the parks. HOAC would like to suggest alternative approaches to positively address these problems, and to advise Council on developing collaborations with the Corvallis Police Department, and Corvallis Parks and Recreation.

Agencies and individuals working with people experiencing homelessness, who are camping and are on the street, see a need for a harm-reduction, trauma-informed, proactive approach to addressing safety, health, and behavior issues occurring in Corvallis. Our philosophy is that prevention and better outreach are best in working with this population. Strategies focused on punitive measures don't address the root of the issues, as many violations happen as a result of individuals being homeless. Fines, criminal charges, and jail time may be appropriate in specific cases, but these approaches have limits, due to an individual's inability to pay or engage effectively in the court system, and the limited availability of jail space in our community.

Included in the goals of the Corvallis 2040 Vision is that **Corvallis supports and engages a changing population in a welcoming community that accommodates all income and cultural groups and advances the wellbeing of all residents**. Designing and implementing a collaborative, appropriate system of outreach and care for those experiencing homelessness aligns with this goal, as well as with other goals in the vision. Conducting outreach to those who are homeless, and not engaged in shelter services, is a best practice recommended by the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, and is a key component of strategies outlined in the update to the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness. Humane, trauma-informed, harm-reduction approaches are key to ensuring that we are fulfilling our community goals, and following accepted best-practices.

Other communities small and large have addressed issues similar to those in Corvallis by forming outreach teams and programs. Examples include the Cahoots team in Eugene and the HOST program model that has been successfully implemented in Salt Lake City, Wichita Kansas, and other locations. Specific situational examples of preventative/trauma informed approaches include police coordination with agencies to assist individuals who are camping to locate needed resources as well as shelter/housing, or working on the street to de-escalate situations with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Agencies and organizations who currently serve people experiencing homelessness are willing and ready to engage in similar collaborative efforts in our community. Outreach efforts in Corvallis

historically have been uneven, with the most consistent recent efforts being done through the Benton County Health Department. Developing a more systematic and coordinated effort requires sustained partnership and collaboration with police and parks staff, as well as agencies and individuals across the community.

To this end, members of HOAC have been meeting with the Corvallis Police Department Livability Team and have plans to meet with Parks and Recreation staff in the near future, and are meeting regularly as an ad-hoc group to determine best paths forward in conducting outreach and prevention activities. We would like to commend the efforts of both the Police Department and Parks and Recreation to explore stronger partnerships with community service providers, and alternative approaches to engaging those who are homeless and camping in the community. We encourage you to support these collaborations, and would be happy to speak more about this at a later date.

HOAC acknowledges that some behaviors require a police response, and that outreach won't solve all problems related to the behavior/camping issues we have seen in the community. However, more policing and jail time is costly, and is unlikely to bring about needed change. Proactive outreach efforts, coordinated across agencies, and in collaboration with police and parks staff, can be part of a more cost-effective approach, offering better results for community health, safety and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please don't hesitate to contact Shawn Collins, HOAC Program Manager, for more information.

**[ Signatures and agency affiliation ]**