

Knoxville's Plan to Address Homelessness



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City of Knoxville, Tennessee
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Introduction

This plan is Knoxville's response to the issue of homelessness. It offers a new beginning and builds on what has been learned from past successes and challenges and moves this community forward with a new, comprehensive plan in response to this serious issue.

At its core, this plan is about accountability. The pages that follow will detail goals and strategies that call upon all members of the community to be accountable to one another as we take action to address one of the most challenging and least glamorous issues that any city can face. We will pursue efforts that are designed to create changes for the better that are systemic and long-term. We will reach out to help those in need, while raising expectations that people will also make their own best efforts to help themselves.

We will pursue cost-effective efforts to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place. We will follow strategies that responsively meet immediate, emergency needs, but then offer individuals and families forward momentum by moving out of crisis-mode and shifting the focus to quickly re-establishing housing, services, and employment. Finally, we will pursue strategies that are demonstrated to break repeated cycles of crisis and homelessness, and instead lead to stable housing and the re-establishment of healthy connections to the community as a whole.

This document is in two parts – a Goals section, followed by a Work Plan. A third part, the Implementation Plan, will be developed and continually updated as implementation of this plan gets under way. The Implementation Plan will further flesh out the action steps, who is accountable for them, and progress made in pursuit of this plan's goals. Specific performance measures will be developed, and this information will be used to create regular reporting and updates to stakeholders and the community at large.

Learning from experience

As a mid-sized American city, Knoxville is not unique or alone in struggling with the issue of homelessness. Across the country, every community must face this issue, and every city our size and larger must determine how to meet the difficulties presented by chronic homelessness, visible on our streets; family homelessness, which is less visible but more prevalent under recent economic trends; and homelessness among veterans who have served our country in wars past and present as well as the peacetime in between.

Knoxvillians have always stepped forward to offer assistance to those in need, in both small and significant ways. We have always done so because that is simply what a

great community does. Whatever the problem, when someone is seen to be in need, someone else in this community will step forward to help. This is true here and in towns and cities across the county. Over the past decades as the nationwide problem of homelessness increased and became more visible, individuals and organizations in small towns and big cities in every state have stepped forward to meet the need.

More recently, many cities began to pursue initiatives to bring together all those dedicated individuals and organizations in better coordinated efforts to not only meet the immediate needs of the homeless, but to seek to actually end homelessness, and particularly to address the issue of long-term chronic homelessness.

In 2006, Knoxville joined that nationwide effort and began implementing its own Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. Much was achieved through that effort, but not without continued challenges and considerable controversy. Under that plan, individuals, agencies, ministries and others were brought together to work cooperatively on strategies that would move chronically homeless individuals off of the streets and into permanent housing. There, they could get the help they needed to address the causes of their homelessness, to maintain permanent housing, and to re-connect with the greater community. A lot was accomplished through this effort, but not without significant debate, particularly around the development of new permanent supportive housing. Due to those disagreements, that plan was ultimately suspended, and through a public input process known as Compassion Knoxville, the community at large took the time and effort to step back and review its concerns about homelessness and to consider what to do about it.

In 2010, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted Opening Doors, the federal homelessness plan. In 2012, The US Department of Housing and Urban Development issued regulations governing the Continuum of Care (CoC) program, which is the key federal initiative that offers nationwide funding and support for local efforts to address homelessness. The CoC rules, along with several other related new regulations were issued by HUD to implement the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009, which is the overarching federal law addressing homelessness.

Finally, in 2013, Mayor Madeline Rogero convened The Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness, a group of local agency and ministry leaders, to consider all these things and to work with the city's Office on Homelessness to develop a set of meaningful goals and strategies for a new collaborative effort to address homelessness in Knoxville.

A great deal has been learned from these successes and challenges. It is clear that homelessness will not simply disappear on its own. People in our community want to respond to the issue in a proactive and intelligent way. This community can do more than simply react to the short-term needs of the homeless. Individuals, agencies,

ministries, community members and others can work in concert, bringing different motivations, philosophies, and viewpoints together to pursue common goals. It is clear that listening to different voices helps everyone to better understand and define those common goals.

Moving Forward to a New Community Plan on Homelessness

From this, it is evident that Knoxville must work cooperatively through a community plan that sets strategies focused on achieving common goals to address homelessness, and that doing this will serve our city well. Making such a coordinated effort will achieve far better results than slowly reverting back to the uncoordinated, inconsistent, and unfocused alternative. This document assembles all these moving parts and ties the related threads together to offer a blueprint for a comprehensive, accountable, and workable community plan on homelessness that Knoxville can support as this community seeks to move forward together.

The following core principles will lead us to five broad goals for addressing the issue of homelessness in Knoxville. Each of those goals is described in detail in the following pages. Finally, a Work Plan is at the back of this document, detailing specific actions and initiatives to be undertaken in pursuit of those goals. This plan is meant to be a living document. As goals are met and new challenges arise, the plan will be revised to reflect our accomplishments and address new challenges.

Central Principles

While there has been much discussion over whether it is actually possible to end homelessness, a central principle of this effort is the belief that homelessness is not an acceptable circumstance for anyone in our community. As such, any plan that seeks to significantly address the issue of homelessness must at least aspire to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness.

The philosophical debate will continue as to whether it is ultimately possible to get to a point where we have actually ended homelessness. Perhaps, though, it can be agreed that there are very few imaginable circumstances where homelessness is desirable or even acceptable – not for the individuals or families who would experience homelessness, and not for the community at large.

If we as a community agree that homelessness is not acceptable, then we are called to take action and to be accountable to one another as we work together to improve on

our present circumstances, where there are still families and individuals living on our streets and in temporary shelters, living in untenable situations with no achievable plan to find and obtain a permanent and sustainable place to live.

Past experience with the issue of homelessness has made it quite clear, however, that agreeing that “we should do something about it” is not enough. As a community, we must work together toward a common set of achievable goals, and we must be accountable to one another as we do it. As we aspire to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness, the Knoxville community will work collaboratively and accountably toward achievable goals that will help more people avoid homelessness and will help others shorten the duration of any experience of homelessness, and finally, will help more people achieve stable, permanent housing, while reconnecting with the broader civic community.

Goals

To work toward our aspiration to prevent, reduce and end homelessness in Knoxville, this plan’s goals generally fall within five categories. Some concepts and initiatives within the plan will address only one of the five, but many will encompass several or all of these primary goals.

Below is a discussion of these goals. A work plan at the back of this document offers detailed action steps to be taken in pursuit of these goals.

This plan on homelessness calls for the Knoxville community to work together to

1. Provide leadership, collaboration and civic engagement,
2. Improve the crisis response system,
3. Create and maintain access to a variety of decent, appropriate, affordable permanent housing,
4. Increase economic opportunities, and
5. Improve health and stability.

These goals are structured to deal with the primary issues our community faces as we work to address homelessness in Knoxville.

I. Provide Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement

Central to the entire effort is leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement. This effort cannot succeed without the political will of our community's leadership, willful collaboration among the providers and stakeholders, and a robust civic engagement that takes into account the interests of those who need assistance, those who provide assistance, and those who live and work in neighborhoods and communities throughout Knoxville. Homelessness is an issue that affects the entire community, and addressing the issue requires a response from the entire community.

- Political Will – This community can prevent, reduce, and end homelessness by carrying out the initiatives outlined in this plan. To successfully implement this plan, our elected political leadership must commit to these goals and strategies and must actively lead the community through the sometimes difficult decisions that will be required, taking into careful account the rights, needs, and wishes of all stakeholders who will be affected.
- Collaboration – One of the key successes of this community's prior plan on homelessness has been improved collaboration among the various service providers, ministries, and agencies that play a role in addressing this issue. Building on that collaboration better serves those in need by creating a more understandable and responsive system from which to seek assistance. A higher level of collaboration is also more accountable to taxpayers, donors and other funders by eliminating unnecessarily duplicative services and reducing opportunities for some to waste limited resources by "gaming the system."
 - o City of Knoxville – At the direction of the Mayor, the City of Knoxville's Community Development Department Office on Homelessness (OOH) will carry out a central role in convening and coordinating the stakeholders who are tasked with implementing this plan. Other city departments will work with Community Development to provide ongoing public information, seek ongoing community input, and to pursue accountability for and from all community stakeholders.
 - o The Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness – The level of collaboration and coordination needed for success will require the full commitment of the executive leadership and boards of directors of all the organizations that work to address this issue. These organizational leaders must collaborate and consult with one another on a level that exceeds what was accomplished under the previous plan. The tendency to compete with one another and to press forward independently based on differing philosophical approaches and other concerns must be tempered by a commitment to pursue the goals in this plan in a way that comprehensively addresses the needs of clients and respects the needs

of the entire Knoxville community. The roundtable will provide an environment for open conversation, where policies are proposed, discussed and agreed upon, and organizations commit to designated functions and the pursuit of specific goals.

- o The Knoxville-Knox County Coalition for the Homeless – The Coalition is a collaborative grouping of agencies, organizations, ministries and individuals that has been in continuous operation since 1986, when it was first appointed by the Knoxville Mayor and the Knox County Executive. The Coalition has served as a networking forum to address the issue of homelessness. It has commissioned and conducted an extensive biennial study of homelessness in this community since the group formed. It has also functioned as the Continuum of Care (CoC) planning organization for this community, in response to the homeless funding programs offered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Coalition also called for the creation of a community homelessness plan and worked with the City and County to create and implement the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

The Coalition must now play a central collaborative role in the implementation of this new community homelessness plan. As part of this plan, the Coalition can provide several important functions:

- As noted above, HUD’s Continuum of Care program requires a collaborative body to govern the CoC grant locally. The Homeless Coalition should continue to serve this function.
 - Second, the Coalition provides the opportunity for front-line and mid-level coordination, plus it can serve a conduit for front-line feedback to the Mayor’s Roundtable.
 - Third, in cooperation with the Mayor’s Roundtable, the Coalition can be empowered to provide working groups to develop detailed community-wide standards, policies and collaborative initiatives.
- o Knoxville Homeless Management Information System (KnoxHMIS) – KnoxHMIS is central to this community’s collaborative efforts to address homelessness. This multi-agency database is operated by the University of Tennessee College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS). It functions as a virtual “no wrong door” entry into this community’s system of services. With KnoxHMIS, client data and demographics are collected once and then shared and updated by participating agencies throughout the service system. HMIS can be used to facilitate referrals and document individual client progress within the system.

HMIS also serves as a repository of demographic and statistical information, allowing individual agencies to track program outcomes and allowing the community as a whole to track its progress in implementing this plan. HMIS will conduct ongoing research of these outcomes, in order to help guide continuous improvement and accountability as this plan is implemented. HMIS will provide regular reporting of this information to service providers, community leaders, funders, and the community at large.

HMIS must continue to be resourced as a key component of this plan. Participating agencies must continue to work with KnoxHMIS to improve and increase the system's use and usability as a tool of practice for serving clients and monitoring outcomes and accountability. Practical means must also be found to connect HMIS with secondary or more mainstream service providers whose primary work is not focused on the homeless, but who interface regularly with those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Civic Engagement – In order to succeed, this initiative must seek out input and participation from the broader community on an ongoing basis. The issue of homelessness affects the entire community, and the solutions to the problem will require the participation and engagement of the entire community.
 - o Community Faith-Based Organizations – This effort must continue and expand partnerships with faith-based organizations. The faith community has always been on the front lines in addressing the issue of homelessness, and that must continue to be recognized, encouraged and embraced. The faith community represents significant time, talent and treasure that can be applied to the strategies in this plan. We will seek increased collaboration and coordination with the faith community in a way that works from common ground while respecting individual beliefs and traditions.

The faith community is a significant and still under-utilized resource. We must meet the challenge of determining how our engaged and giving faith community can best contribute to a coordinated effort. An ongoing menu of options and opportunities should be created, running the gamut from small, one-time activities and interactions, all the way to significant, long-term commitments of the faith community's time, talent and treasure.

- o Neighborhoods, Businesses and Civic Organizations – Implementing the strategies within this plan also relies on collaborative efforts to seek input and support from neighborhoods, the business community and other stakeholders who are affected by the status quo, and who must play a

role in the community's solutions to the problem of homelessness. Common ground must be found that balances the need for appropriate, affordable housing and community services with the need for all communities to be safe and secure, and that respects both property rights and the right to fair housing. We will create a communications plan in order to effectively provide ongoing information for community leaders and the public, and to provide a means for receiving information and listening to concerns and ideas from the public. We will also coordinate with the Neighborhood Advisory Council to seek ongoing input on this plan and its implementation.

To the greatest extent possible, we will seek to coordinate the allocation of resources, prioritizing government funding to encourage interagency collaboration, and to discourage duplication of services. We will also encourage private, independent funders to set the same priorities in order to support the goals of this community plan.

II. Improve the Crisis Response System

Those who face homelessness or who are at risk for homelessness are, by definition, experiencing an immediate crisis. Our community must respond with a system that helps these individuals and families meet the immediate needs presented by that crisis, but the system cannot stop with that. The response must also employ social services, emergency shelter and transitional housing to help people to quickly emerge from their crisis situation and give them the help, hope, and resources to quickly move forward on the path back to a stable and permanent living situation.

- Provide services and resources designed to prevent homelessness – Often, the least traumatic and most cost-effective interventions are those that help to prevent individuals and families from ever becoming homeless. In many cases, strategic but relatively small interventions can help people stop what would be a downward spiral, and instead point them on a trajectory of stable, more independent living. We will pursue initiatives under this plan that identify and address the most critical and most common problems that cause people to lose their housing.
- Seek to rapidly re-house individuals and families who are homeless – Becoming homeless is traumatic enough, but with every day that someone remains homeless, he or she can continue to lose what few remaining resources and connections to the community that he or she may have. Under this plan, we will pursue strategies that seek to make anyone’s experience of homelessness as brief as possible. By helping people establish individual plans that connect them with services and housing as quickly as possible, hope and personal stability can help people reconnect with their community and rebuild their own lives.
- Provide for effective coordination of services – This repeats the same broad theme overarching this entire plan, and it is especially important as it relates to the crisis response system. A lack of coordination in the crisis response system can be extremely damaging to people who are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. This system is the initial safety net that provides outreach, social services, and emergency shelter for people experiencing a crisis in their lives. The system must help them meet their most immediate needs and then must quickly re-direct them toward resources designed to help them re-establish permanent housing and long-term stability.

Because the crisis response system is the starting point for most people facing homelessness, the importance of coordinated services cannot be understated. The crisis response system sets the tone for everything that follows. For each person entering this system, it is important that they not only see that this community cares and wants to help, they must also see that there can be a clear path forward to a better, more stable life. Agencies and ministries fully

cooperating to create this system will not only give people hope through the vision of a clear path forward, they can also raise expectations by showing that the system offers forward movement, not perpetual crisis.

With this plan we will pursue strategies that coordinate services across agencies and ministries, so that people are prevented from falling through the cracks, and so that more people are able to meet their immediate needs and quickly begin on a path to permanent housing and personal stability.

- Provide targeted assistance to address the specialized needs of specific populations – Each person or family seeking emergency assistance comes to the system with different circumstances and a different set of personal challenges. Whether serving families with children, military veterans, the elderly, individuals and families with pets, persons with addictions, or persons with serious and persistent mental illness, shelter, services, and transitional housing is needed to serve very specific needs. Under this plan, we will seek to assess the needs of each individual and family and create individualized plans that make appropriate connections to emergency resources are best able to address the needs as identified.

III. Create and Maintain Access to a Variety of Decent, Appropriate, Affordable Permanent Housing.

By definition, a person or family experiencing homelessness is a person or family that lacks access to permanent housing. For people experiencing homelessness and people who are at risk for homelessness, the critical factor is sustainable access to permanent housing. For many, the affordability of permanent housing represents a primary barrier to sustainable access to housing.

- Maintain and improve the existing stock of affordable housing – Affordable housing is key to both preventing homelessness for people who are at risk of losing their housing, and to ending homelessness for those who are living on the streets and in temporary shelter. No single housing option can meet the requirements of every person or family who needs a permanent place to live. There is currently a limited number of affordable housing units available in this community, and there are a limited number of types and options of affordable housing available. We must maintain the existing stock of affordable housing, and also raise quality standards for affordable and very affordable housing.

The challenges lie not only with affordability of the housing itself, but also with the condition of the housing, how well it meets the specific needs of individuals and families, and whether or not all these factors add up to a situation that is sustainable in the long term for those living in the housing. Factors that affect

the appropriateness and sustainability of affordable housing include the physical condition of the housing unit, whether it is energy efficient enough to make utilities affordable, whether or not transportation is available, and whether or not the individual or family of tenants have sufficient resources to maintain and live normally in an affordable housing unit. This plan will identify actions to address these and other related issues.

- Incentivize the creation of a variety of affordable and very affordable housing options - There currently are not enough units of affordable and very affordable housing available in this community. Housing affordability must take into consideration not only the direct cost of housing, but also other closely related factors such as energy efficiency and the availability of appropriate, affordable transportation. There is also a diverse set of needs for different types of affordable housing, such as larger homes and apartments for families with children, housing that is accessible for people with disabilities, or housing connected to supportive services for the elderly or people with mental illnesses. There is also a lack of availability of very affordable permanent housing coupled with a high level of supportive services for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. These individuals do not qualify for long-term inpatient mental health treatment, but are unable to sustain themselves in more typical permanent supportive housing. This plan will pursue a variety of strategies to encourage the creation of a variety of different types of affordable permanent housing.
- Retain and create affordable housing options for military veterans and their families – As Americans, we owe a special debt of gratitude to people who have served this country in the military services. While homelessness is an unacceptable circumstance for anyone in this community, that is doubly true for military veterans and their families. In this plan, we will work to prevent and end homelessness for veterans and their families using the housing and resources available for all, plus we will pursue specialized housing and resources available specifically for veterans and their families.

IV. Increase Economic Security

The ability to sustain oneself in housing depends on having sufficient resources to pay for housing and basic needs for living. Loss of income and other economic resources is a major contributing cause of homelessness and a significant barrier to ending it. With this plan we seek to help each individual or family gain access to needed financial resources, while helping them move as far as possible along the financial spectrum toward self-sufficiency. It is also important to consider the significant impact of the costs of transportation. Local surveys indicate that low-income households can spend in excess of one-third of income on transportation. With the availability of public transit options, it is important to prioritize not only the availability of housing along transit routes, but also employment and job training services. While acknowledging that each individual and family's ability to fully gain economic independence is different, we recognize both that limited resources and a respect for personal dignity point toward the goal of reaching toward personal self-sufficiency.

Individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness exist in a world where a stumble or a shortfall in almost any facet of life can create a cascading effect where seemingly insurmountable problems arise, one after the other. An illness without access to health care can cause the loss of a job, which can cause a loss of housing, which can precipitate loss of basic possessions and even personal identification and documents. The causes of these problems and the order in which they arise will vary with each person or family, but each creates an inter-relating set of barriers to reversing the trend and regaining stability. Efforts and initiatives in this plan will seek to prevent, stop, and reverse these cascading effects.

- Maximize access to targeted job training and placement programs - First, we will seek to improve the processes of helping homeless individuals and families gain access to employment assistance programs specifically designed to serve the homeless. Homelessness entails and creates circumstances that make access to employment especially challenging. We will work to continue and build upon programs that address those specialized needs.
- Maximize access to mainstream job training and placement programs – While homelessness does create special challenges, it is also important that people experiencing homelessness are able to access the resources available to help anyone gain access to employment. Available income can also be maximized by considering transit routes not only for housing, but for job training and placement. This plan will implement initiatives designed to help connect people to these resources.
- Maximize access to income benefits and social services resources for which homeless and at-risk families and individuals may be eligible - People with disabling conditions and other challenges can be eligible for various programs,

benefits and resources that help with income or offer other sorts of financial stability. For those individuals and families, gaining access to those resources can provide the means to obtain their own permanent housing and can help them establish a more stable living situation, so that they are less likely to need help via emergency homeless shelters and services. We will pursue strategies to help those who are eligible to more quickly and successfully gain access to those stabilizing resources.

V. Improve Health and Stability

Physical and behavioral health problems are a major contributing factor to homelessness and are also a significant barrier to ending homelessness. For those with very little income and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, access to medical care, mental health care, and addiction treatment services can be especially difficult. Under this plan, we will pursue strategies designed to improve access to these services, which will enhance personal health and stability needed to gain and maintain permanent housing.

- Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness - Under this plan we will seek to significantly increase access to both primary and behavioral health care services. By coordinating the efforts of this plan with local, state and national healthcare initiatives, we will significantly improve the long-term outcomes for the individuals and families we help.
- Advance health and housing stability for specific populations, including families; seniors; youth aging out of foster care; military veterans and their families; and individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness - Where specialized healthcare resources are available for specific populations, this plan will offer strategies for connecting and integrating those resources with other specialized and mainstream resources in order to effect the best outcomes for these populations.
- Advance health and housing stability for people experiencing homelessness who have frequent contact with hospitals and the criminal justice system - Far too frequently, repeating cycles of incarceration, hospitalization and homelessness create a perpetual loop of dysfunction. People caught in that loop are unable to break free and improve their situation, and the community pays a significant price as the cycle repeats. Under this plan, we will pursue strategies that break these cycles, and help people gain access to medical and behavioral healthcare that is structured to help them stabilize their health and housing for the long-term.

Conclusion

Knoxville has already made considerable progress in improving our community-wide efforts to address homelessness. The past few years have clearly demonstrated that being proactive yields better results and that cooperation and coordination conserves and maximizes limited resources and increases our effectiveness. Even through the recent challenges and controversies, we have seen that the Knoxville community wants to solve this problem, and expects that it be done cooperatively and with accountability. The goals and strategies in this plan will help us to do just that. Knoxville is a great community, and this is what great communities do.

Work Plan

This work plan addresses each of the goals identified in Knoxville's Community Plan on Homelessness and identifies specific strategies and steps to take in order to achieve those goals.

As the plan is implemented, individuals, agencies and organizations will take responsibility for implementing each of the action steps. The Office on Homelessness will work with these implementers to establish timelines for implementation and will measure and report ongoing progress.

Goal 1:

Provide leadership, collaboration and civic engagement

1. The Mayor's Office commits to lead the development, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of this plan.
 - 1.1. The Mayor provides funding and staff for the Office on Homelessness (OOH) to support the Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness and to implement the community plan on homelessness.
 - 1.2. The Mayor appoints and convenes the Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness (The Roundtable).
 - 1.3. The Mayor meets with Roundtable member agency Boards of Directors as needed to sustain collaboration.
 - 1.4. OOH staff coordinates community education efforts and serves as the central point of contact for the community.
 - 1.5. OOH issues regular reports on progress toward plan implementation.
 - 1.5.1. OOH issues quarterly reports, with metrics, making them available to neighborhood, business, and civic organizations.
 - 1.5.2. OOH issues an annual report to City Council to review progress toward plan implementation and recommendations updates, additions and modifications to the plan for future implementation.
 - 1.5.3. OOH staff provides the quarterly and annual reports to the Neighborhood Advisory Council and meets periodically with the Council to seek input on plan implementation.

- 1.6.OOH provides staff support for the Homeless Coalition’s annual Continuum of Care application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.
2. City Council provides oversight and assistance to this plan’s implementation.
 - 2.1.City Council reviews, provides input and adopts this plan as the City of Knoxville’s response to homelessness.
 - 2.2.City Council receives and reviews the quarterly and annual reports on progress toward the plan’s implementation.
 - 2.3.City Council uses this plan’s goals and strategies to inform decisions regarding budgets and other related issues that comes before Council for consideration.
3. The Mayor’s Roundtable on Homelessness (the Roundtable) convenes provider executives to coordinate implementation of this plan.
 - 3.1.The Roundtable meets at least quarterly, with additional meetings as needed.
 - 3.2.The Roundtable coordinates agency collaboration and cooperation in support of this plan’s goals and strategies.
 - 3.3.The Roundtable forms ad hoc teams as necessary to address specific issues and objectives.
 - 3.4.The Roundtable requests that the Homeless Coalition form ad hoc working groups to address specific tasks as needed, such as the development of community-wide standards of care and accountability.
 - 3.5.The Roundtable adopts standards of care and accountability developed by the Homeless Coalition and promulgates the implementation of those standards throughout Roundtable member agencies.
 - 3.6.The Roundtable contributes to the annual report on implementation of this plan.
4. The Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition (the Coalition) brings together agency and ministry leadership and staff, currently and formerly homeless persons, and others for ongoing networking, sharing of information, and inter-agency work on specific tasks and issues in support of this plan.
 - 4.1.At the request of the Roundtable, the Coalition forms ad hoc task groups to address specific objectives, such as the development of detailed community-wide standards of care and accountability.
 - 4.2.The Coalition takes responsibility for the annual Continuum of Care (CoC) collaborative process and grant application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and coordinates with OOH staff to carry out CoC-related tasks.

- 4.3. The Coalition coordinates and cooperates with OOH staff to further the implementation of this plan.
- 4.4. The Coalition provides ongoing data and input toward the implementation and outcomes of this plan.
- 4.5. The Coalition provides ongoing front-line feedback to the Roundtable via the Coalition President's participation in the Roundtable.
- 4.6. The Coalition provides interagency coordination with KnoxHMIS, for the purposes of collaboration, and the development of interagency research and reporting to stakeholders and the community at large.
- 4.7. The Coalition coordinates and provides community wide education and training for member organization staff.
5. KnoxHMIS serves as a central resource for collaboration and coordination of efforts, and for measuring outcomes related to the implementation of this plan.
 - 5.1. KnoxHMIS provides a community-wide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), in accordance with contemporary US Department of Housing and Urban Development HMIS standards, in support of implementation of this plan and the annual Continuum of Care process and application.
 - 5.2. KnoxHMIS provides a coordinated intake and assessment system, in order to provide a uniform "no wrong door" starting point for individuals and families seeking assistance from this community's homeless prevention and assistance resources.
 - 5.3. KnoxHMIS facilitates the coordination of local services through robust online collaboration, including resources such as online client case notes and a bi-directional client-service referral system.
 - 5.4. KnoxHMIS provides data to the OOH and the Roundtable for ongoing assessment of this plan's implementation, and for reports to City Council and the community.
6. Community Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) engage in initiatives that support, contribute to and coordinate with this plan's goals and objectives.
 - 6.1. FBOs coordinate with the OOH to create opportunities for community dialogue and education on homelessness.
 - 6.2. FBOs develop and promote effective collaborations among congregations and existing service providers, in order to foster a full spectrum of congregational activities that support the objectives of this plan.

- 6.2.1.FBOs promote participation in HMIS at appropriate, practical levels, in order to maximize coordination and accountability for services and assistance provided.
 - 6.2.2.FBOs create and provide housing on their own property or in their own neighborhoods, consistent with this plan’s objectives and with adopted community standards of care and accountability.
 - 6.2.3.FBOs participate in activities that help individuals and families who are at-risk of homelessness, experiencing homelessness or who are formerly homeless to build and strengthen interpersonal connections with the broader community.
7. Neighborhood, business, and civic organizations participate in and provide ongoing input towards this plan’s implementation.
- 7.1.1.The Neighborhood Advisory Council receives regular progress reports, and works with the OOH to provide ongoing input on this plan’s implementation.
 - 7.1.2.Neighborhood, business and civic groups work with the OOH to provide input and feedback on general plan implementation and on specific issues and activities as they arise.
 - 7.1.3.Neighborhood, business and civic groups work with the OOH to offer community information and education on this plan’s objectives and on other issues related to homelessness.

Goal 2:

Improve the crisis response system

1. Provide services and resources designed to prevent homelessness

1.1. Provide case management services for families and individuals who are identified as at-risk of homelessness.

1.1.1. Provide homelessness prevention case management services in KCDC high-rise apartments.

1.1.2. Create system for referring other at-risk public housing residents to homelessness prevention services and resources.

1.1.3. Create information and resources to encourage private landlords to refer tenants for homelessness prevention services.

1.2. Provide financial assistance and other resources targeted to address short-term issues that are likely to cause loss of housing.

1.2.1. Coordinate with IBM Smarter Cities strategies to address utilities assistance challenges through weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades to affordable housing.

1.2.2. Provide for better coordination of emergency assistance resources commonly provided to prevent individuals and families from losing housing.

1.3. Provide specialized assistance for individuals and families making a transition out of institutionalized settings.

1.3.1. Coordinate with the State of Tennessee Inpatient Targeted Transitional Support (ITTS) program to prevent homelessness for persons being discharged from in-patient mental health treatment.

1.3.2. Provide emergency and transitional services for individuals and families leaving domestic violence situations.

1.3.3. Provide emergency and transitional resources to prevent homelessness among persons exiting the criminal justice system.

1.3.3.1. Coordinate with the criminal justice system to prevent the discharge of persons from the system to the streets.

- 1.3.3.2. Coordinate with the criminal justice system to connect those who are being discharged to services, resources and housing in order to prevent homelessness as well as recidivism.
- 1.3.4. Coordinate with area hospitals to prevent patient discharge to the streets.
 - 1.3.4.1. Provide outreach and assistance for seniors discharged from inpatient hospitalization.
 - 1.3.4.2. Provide homelessness prevention outreach and information for patients who seek primary care services in emergency rooms and may be at risk of homelessness.
- 1.3.5. Coordinate services, resources and housing for youth aging out of foster care in order to prevent homelessness.
- 1.3.6. Coordinate with local active military organizations to identify interventions prior to military discharge that could prevent future homelessness among veterans.
- 2. Seek to rapidly re-house individuals and families who are homeless.
 - 2.1. Provide case management services for families and individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness.
 - 2.1.1. Provide outreach services to persons living in places unfit for human habitation in order to connect them with emergency and transitional services, and to set a path toward stable, appropriate, permanent housing.
 - 2.1.2. Provide outreach services to persons in shelter and transitional housing to engage, inform, and encourage development of an individualized plan for obtaining stable, appropriate, permanent housing.
 - 2.1.3. Provide case management services to persons in shelter and transitional housing to develop and implement an individualized plan for obtaining appropriate access to income, physical and behavioral healthcare, and other mainstream resources.
 - 2.1.4. Coordinate family services with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services homeless liaison.
 - 2.2. Provide decent, safe, and appropriate emergency and transitional housing in an environment that encourages personal responsibility and forward momentum toward appropriate, stable, permanent housing.
 - 2.2.1. Provide assertive outreach and engagement, and seek out individuals and families who might otherwise 'fall through the cracks.'

- 2.2.2. Discourage use of emergency shelter and services as a long-term housing option.
- 2.3. Provide food, clothing, financial assistance and other emergency resources as a component of coordinated efforts to assist families and individuals to rapidly end their homelessness.
 - 2.3.1. Encourage food and clothing assistance that is coordinated with other resources designed to end homelessness or otherwise yield better long-term outcomes for those who are being helped.
 - 2.3.2. Coordinate housing placements with resources and items such as basic household furnishings in order to increase the stability and long-term prospects for individuals and families who are rapidly re-housed.
 - 2.3.3. Prioritize the availability of public transit and other appropriate transportation options when making housing placements.
- 3. Provide for effective coordination of services.
 - 3.1. KnoxHMIS provides a community-wide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), in accordance with contemporary US Department of Housing and Urban Development HMIS standards, in support of implementation of this plan.
 - 3.1.1. KnoxHMIS provides a coordinated intake and assessment system, in order to provide a uniform “no wrong door” starting point for individuals and families seeking assistance from this community’s homeless prevention and assistance resources.
 - 3.1.2. KnoxHMIS facilitates the coordination of local services through robust online collaboration, including resources such as online client case notes and a bi-directional client-service referral system.
 - 3.2. Establish consistent and accountable community-wide standards of service and care for families and individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.
 - 3.2.1. Create standards of care for outreach services, assuring that outreach is properly connected to other resources designed to end homelessness.
 - 3.2.2. Create standards for case management services.
 - 3.2.3. Create standards for housing placements, to assure that sufficient resources are made available to establish and maintain sustainable, permanent living conditions.

3.3. Create and make broadly available concise, easy-to-understand information to empower individuals and families to understand and access the appropriate resources that will most effectively help them to prevent or end their own homelessness, including:

3.3.1. Intake and assessment process

3.3.2. Housing resources

3.3.3. Healthcare resources

3.3.4. Mainstream benefits resources

3.3.5. Employment resources

3.3.6. How to get ID/birth certificates, etc.

3.3.7. Energy efficiency and utilities.

3.3.8. Public transportation and other alternative transportation options.

3.4. Coordinate services and resources with law enforcement in order to enhance the safety and well-being of those who need assistance as well as the community at large.

3.4.1. Train and employ Crisis Intervention Teams.

3.4.2. Provide law enforcement officers with training and education resources to equip them for interactions with homeless individuals and families, and to maximize their ability to coordinate with social services resource providers.

3.4.3. Continue social services coordination with City police and service department for camp clean-ups, in order to proactively offer social services and housing resources to homeless campers, and to encourage proper use of public spaces and greenways.

3.4.4. Provide information and public education on panhandling in order to dispel public perception that panhandling is primarily an activity carried out by the homeless.

3.4.5. Coordinate the Office on Homelessness staff and resources with law enforcement neighborhood and community outreach activities.

3.4.6. To the greatest extent possible, provide emergency and transitional services to the homeless in an environment that helps separate individuals and families who are seeking assistance from 'predators' who seek to victimize people in vulnerable situations.

4. Provide targeted assistance to address the specialized needs of specific populations.
 - 4.1. Provide emergency assistance for unaccompanied youth, including runaways and young people who are aging out of foster care.
 - 4.2. Provide emergency assistance for families with children.
 - 4.2.1. Coordinate services and resources with Knox County Schools personnel, including
 - 4.2.1.1. Homeless Liaison
 - 4.2.1.2. School social workers and counselors.
 - 4.2.2. Provide specialized emergency shelter and transitional housing for families in special circumstances, including
 - 4.2.2.1. Families with no marriage certificate
 - 4.2.2.2. Families with adolescent children
 - 4.2.2.3. Large families
 - 4.2.2.4. Non-traditional families
 - 4.2.2.5. Single-father households
 - 4.2.2.6. Families who need child care resources.
 - 4.3. Provide emergency assistance for special populations, including
 - 4.3.1. Families and individuals who are victims of domestic violence
 - 4.3.2. Military veterans and their families
 - 4.3.3. The elderly
 - 4.3.4. Individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness
 - 4.3.5. Persons who are mentally ill
 - 4.3.6. Persons who are physically ill
 - 4.3.7. Persons with addictions
 - 4.3.8. LGBT youth
 - 4.3.9. Persons with a criminal record
 - 4.3.10. Persons with disabilities

4.3.11. Persons or families with pets.

Goal 3:

Create and maintain access to a variety of decent, appropriate, affordable permanent housing.

1. Maintain and improve the existing stock of affordable housing.

1.1. Establish and maintain minimum livability standards in unsubsidized, privately-owned units of very affordable housing.

1.1.1. Engage with associations representing the interests of landlords to create and support voluntary initiatives to improve livability standards in affordable rental housing.

1.1.2. Develop local policies that will encourage or incentivize an increase in livability standards in affordable rental housing.

1.1.3. Promote adherence to housing standards in the Landlord-Tenant Act through education of landlords and tenants of requirements under the Act, and through improved enforcement of the existing standards in the Act.

1.1.4. Coordinate with implementation of the IBM Smarter Cities recommendations for increasing energy efficiency in affordable housing.

1.1.5. Establish or enhance minimum livability standards required for units of very affordable housing to be eligible for housing choice vouchers.

1.2. Use the inspections criteria available through KCDC's Section 8 program to encourage and incentivize improved livability standards in subsidized affordable housing.

1.2.1. Coordinate KCDC Section 8 energy efficiency incentive program with other resources for rehabilitation and weatherization of rental housing.

1.2.2. Coordinate with implementation of the IBM Smarter Cities recommendations for increasing energy efficiency in affordable housing.

1.3. Establish minimum livability standards required for units of very affordable housing to be eligible for housing placement assistance from local social service providers.

1.3.1. Include minimum livability requirements in case management standards to be adopted by provider agencies.

- 1.3.2. Formalize and coordinate the ad hoc network of landlords with very affordable housing who have good working relationships with local social service providers.
- 1.3.3. Work with local landlord associations and affordable rental housing networks to publicize minimum livability standards, and communicate the benefits of receiving more case-managed placements as a result of meeting minimum housing standards.
- 1.3.4. Empower prospective affordable housing tenants by providing easy to understand information on what they can expect from their landlords.
- 1.3.5. Measure housing placement outcomes, especially noting how standards affect availability of housing, and how standards affect permanency of housing placement.
- 1.3.6. Coordinate with implementation of the IBM Smarter Cities recommendations for increasing energy efficiency in affordable housing.
- 1.3.7. Work to find affordable housing that includes transportation alternatives that are less expensive than car ownership.
- 1.4. Establish priorities in the City's housing programs to focus resources on maintaining and preserving existing units of very affordable housing.
 - 1.4.1. Coordinate the City's Rental Rehab program with KCDC's section 8 program, in order to recruit rehab program applicants, and to direct voucher tenants to rehabbed properties.
 - 1.4.2. Emphasize rental rehab program for use with properties suitable for very low income tenants.
- 2. Incentivize the creation of a variety of affordable and very affordable housing options.
 - 2.1. Influence THDA to increase the set-aside in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program for permanent supportive housing.
 - 2.1.1. Set local goals for LIHTC set-aside requirements.
 - 2.1.2. Coordinate with other Tennessee cities to generate support for desired LIHTC set-aside goals and to advocate for them with THDA.
 - 2.2. Use the local LIHTC support letter process to encourage or require developers to include resources for case management services in their proposals.
 - 2.2.1. Establish requirements and include in City of Knoxville Consolidated Plan.

- 2.3.Remove local barriers to affordable housing development.
 - 2.3.1.Conduct a review of local ordinances, zoning, and building codes to identify barriers to affordable housing development.
 - 2.3.2.Work with applicable local staff (e.g., MPC, Building Inspections, Building Codes) to develop and propose recommended changes to the appropriate legislative body.
 - 2.3.3.Work with local banks to encourage use of Community Reinvestment Act resources to incentivize creation of mixed-income housing developments.
- 2.4.Create local incentives for development of affordable housing, in particular along transit routes.
- 2.5.In order to meet demonstrated needs support the creation of a spectrum of permanent supportive housing, combining appropriate affordable housing units with appropriate levels of supportive services to meet the needs of tenants. Appropriately resourced housing is needed to serve the gamut of needs, from individuals with addictions or serious and persistent mental illness, all the way to individuals and families who are able to ‘transition in place’ and require minimal assistance or support once they have established themselves in permanent housing.
- 2.6.Establish fair housing standards of practice for the development of new units of affordable housing.
 - 2.6.1.Review and report on best practices in other jurisdictions.
 - 2.6.2.Work with the City of Knoxville Law Department to create publicly available information to more clearly define, under fair housing law, the legal parameters for public processes that relate to the development of housing for homeless and related special needs populations.
- 2.7.Increase affordable housing options for large families.
- 2.8.Build a system using TennCare funding for mental health and case management services in support of additional scattered-unit permanent supportive housing provided in new and existing affordable housing
3. Retain and create affordable housing options for military veterans and their families.
 - 3.1.Continue and increase local implementation of the HUD-VASH program.
 - 3.1.1.Use HMIS coordinated intake and assessment tool to quickly direct eligible military veterans to specialized housing resources, including HUD-VASH.

- 3.1.2. Coordinate with the local VA office to assure that appropriate housing units are identified and made available for veterans in the HUD-VASH program.
 - 3.1.3. Work with and support KCDC and VA applications to bring additional HUD-VASH vouchers to Knoxville.
 - 3.1.4. Continue and increase local implementation of the Supportive Services for Veterans' Families program.
4. Work with the faith community to establish and maintain a variety of affordable and very affordable housing options.
- 4.1. Maintain and expand faith-based programs that offer human connections and support for the formerly homeless in permanent housing.
 - 4.2. Work with congregations to create, assist and incentivize the creation of affordable housing opportunities in their own neighborhoods and communities.

Goal 4:

Increase economic opportunities

1. Maximize access to targeted job training and placement programs.
 - 1.1. Continue and build on existing job training programs, such as KARM's Abundant Life Kitchen and Clean Start programs, and the Salvation Army's Operation Bootstrap and Career Center programs.
 - 1.2. Build on and strengthen programs for military veterans, including the Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, etc.
 - 1.3. Coordinate with the Tennessee Department of Workforce Development to use state resources to enhance employment programs for homeless individuals.
 - 1.4. Provide training and resources for case managers to better equip them to help clients navigate job training and placement programs.
2. Maximize access to mainstream job training and placement programs.
 - 2.1. Coordinate with the Tennessee Department of Workforce Development to assure access to Career Center resources.
 - 2.2. Promote incentives for prospective employers, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Empowerment Zone Employment Tax Credit.
 - 2.3. Provide training and resources for case managers to better equip them to help clients navigate job training and placement programs.
3. Maximize access to income benefits and social services resources for which families and individuals may be eligible.
 - 3.1. Maximize use of SSI/SSDI Outreach Advocacy and Recovery (SOAR) by increasing the number of SOAR-Trained case managers at different agencies, and by establishing dedicated SOAR providers who can take referrals to provide this service to clients of multiple agencies.
 - 3.2. Increase access to transportation and child care services in order to enhance educational and employment opportunities for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 - 3.3. Use HMIS to implement a coordinated intake and assessment system to effectively and rapidly identify need and eligibility for available benefits and employment resources.

Goal 5:

Improve health and stability

1. Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness.
 - 1.1. Maintain and build upon the delivery of health services that are accessible by individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
 - 1.2. Coordinate actions and resources of this plan with the Knoxville-Knox County Community Health Council's three-year action plan.
 - 1.3. Coordinate with Community Health Council efforts to develop an assessment of levels of access to community health resources.
 - 1.4. Work with state and community partners to assure that the delivery of community behavioral health services offers an efficient use of resources yielding effective treatment of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
 - 1.5. Coordinate with healthcare and other services providers to increase the availability of substance abuse treatment services.
 - 1.6. Provide education, resources and assistance to assure that eligible individuals and families gain access to healthcare coverage under the Affordable Care Act.
2. Advance health and housing stability for specific populations, including families; seniors; youth aging out of foster care; LBGT youth; military veterans and their families; and individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness.
 - 2.1. Coordinate healthcare resources with specialized programs that provide housing and supportive services to target populations.
 - 2.2. Provide targeted outreach and supportive services in order to rapidly connect target populations with specialized and mainstream resources.

Advance health and housing stability for people experiencing homelessness who have frequent contact with hospitals and the criminal justice system.

 - 2.1. Maintain and build upon resources and services designed to assist persons making a transition from hospitalization or institutional settings, in order to maximize the effectiveness of healthcare treatment and increase long-term health, success, and stability in the community.

- 2.2. Develop effective services and resources that can successfully divert nonviolent individuals away from the criminal justice system, through emergency and transitional behavioral health treatment services, and into living arrangements that offer housing stability and sustainable, stable behavioral health.
- 2.3. Develop and implement outreach services that assertively engage homeless persons with behavioral health issues to provide supportive services and treatment in order to rapidly connect them with appropriate services, shelter and permanent housing.

Appendix A:

The Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness, 2013

City of Knoxville – Mayor Madeline Rogero
Catholic Charities – Sister Mary Christine Cremin
City of Knoxville Chief Policy Officer – Bill Lyons
City of Knoxville Community Development – Becky Wade
City of Knoxville Community Development Office on Homelessness – Michael Dunthorn
City of Knoxville Police Department – Chief David Rausch
Compassion Coalition – Grant Standefer
Compassion Knoxville – Stephany Matheny
Community Law Office – Roger Nooe
Family Promise – Mary LaMense
Helen Ross McNabb Center – Andy Black
Knox Area Rescue Ministries – Burt Rosen
KCDC – Alvin Nance
KnoxHMIS – David Patterson
Knoxville City Council – Finbarr Saunders
Knoxville Leadership Foundation – Chris Martin
Knoxville Redevelopment Department – Bob Whetsel
Knoxville-Knox County CAC – Barbara Kelly
Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition – Bruce Spangler
Positively Living – Steve Jenkins
Redeeming Hope Ministries – Eddie Young
The Salvation Army – Major Albert Villafuerte
Volunteer Ministry Center – Ginny Weatherstone
YWCA – Marigail Mullin