

Final Report: *Homelessness in the Upper Valley*
Issued by the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness
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Background

Over the course of the last few months the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness has met biweekly to examine the state of homelessness in the Upper Valley with the goal of exploring possible short, intermediate and longer-term responses for the Town. The charge of this committee was to compile and issue a report in February 2020 that provides a high-level view of the issue and possible solutions/timelines, as well as a possible cost of any proposed projects. The charge also asks the Ad Hoc Committee to propose regional solutions that are addressed to the towns of Hartford, Lebanon, Hanover and Norwich. Committee meetings were open to the public and committee members encouraged members of the public, including people who are homeless, to attend and share their perspectives/experience and any ideas they may have to reduce the incidence of homelessness and to address issues they face as they navigate services in the Upper Valley.

To get a better sense of the scale and magnitude of the issues being explored, the committee created smaller subcommittees to advance our analysis. Those were Data; Resources/Stakeholders/Partners; Issues and Causes; Funding Sources; and Goals/Process. During its period of activity, the committee gave a very brief overview of its charge at the state's forum on homelessness at the LISTEN Center in White River Junction in early November 2019. This forum was organized by the regional Continuum of Care with the goal of increasing community knowledge of the systems and services in place to reduce homelessness and housing insecurity and to inform the four town governments and committees focused on homelessness so that best ideas emerge.

The committee hosted several guest speakers to inform members of actions and plans of other municipalities and agencies. These included Lynne Goodwin, Human Services Director for the City of Lebanon, Sheila Young from Turning Point, and Georgia Hanchett-Dean from the LISTEN Center. Four homeless residents have attended and provided valuable input. Representatives from St. Paul's Episcopal Church also attended a meeting to share information about how it has supported people who are homeless and ideas to mobilize other community churches.

The committee presented a draft version of its report to the Hartford Selectboard in January and proposed inclusion of a \$15,000 expense item to support the needs of people who are homeless and unsheltered, living outside and in cars.

From these presentations and the extensive knowledge of the issues and challenges held by the Ad Hoc Committee members, it is clear that the homeless problem is a truly interregional/interstate issue. Coordination between and among states and regional agencies and providers is critical. The recommendation of this committee is that the town governments consider how to share the cost of providing essential services that complement those already in place funded by the state, the towns and through private charity.

Estimates of the Scope of the Problem of Homelessness

One of the points of investigation of the Ad Hoc Committee was to provide an estimate of the scope of the problem of homelessness in the four-town region. Committee members who work in this program area confirmed that a simple count or single definition of the problem is elusive. Rather, housing insecurity exists along a continuum. These categories include:

- camping outside
- living in cars
- those who are doubled up with friends or couch surfing
- people sheltered at the Upper Valley Haven in one of its emergency shelters
- transient populations living in motels at their own expense or through subsidies provided by government or charities
- those at risk of eviction
- emergencies that occur through incidences of domestic violence that result in homelessness
- individuals and families who are housing insecure because they are paying more than 50% of their income on housing expenses, a commonly used standard of “severe rent burden.”

The Ad Hoc Committee also is aware that solutions for some people who are homeless or housing insecure are complicated by other factors such as having pets that also need shelter, substance use, untreated mental health challenges, poor rental histories, and eviction histories.

One estimate of the number of homeless individuals and families occurs through the annual homeless **Point in Time Count**. Taking place every January, this is a national count of people who are “literally homeless” by the definition of HUD.¹ Not included in this definition are people

¹“Literal homelessness” is defined as Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has

who are doubled up with friends or “couch surfing” among other categories. According to the 2019 Vermont Point in Time (PIT) Count, an unduplicated statewide count of persons experiencing literal homelessness on a single night in January, the overall number of homeless in Windsor County decreased from 2018 to 2019 (125 to 91), but demand for regional homeless and housing services remains high. One reason that is believed to have contributed to this decrease was the opening of the Parkhurst building in Lebanon in August 2018. Tenants in Parkhurst had to meet the HUD definition of chronically homeless. Fifteen of the 18 units were occupied by adults who had been sheltered at the Haven. Regionally, the number of unsheltered and precariously housed individuals increased by 37% between these two years.

Of interest, the City of Lebanon conducted a supplemental PIT count in September 2019 that covered lower Grafton County with a more inclusive definition of homelessness that counted 115 people, both adults and children. (See page 19 of this report for more information about the supplemental 2019 Grafton PIT Count.)

The most recent Point in Time Count that occurred just a few weeks ago in January 2020 provides additional data points. These numbers are unofficial and as noted above do not measure the entire problem of homelessness and housing insecurity but are nonetheless quite useful for the goals of this report. The data cited here was submitted by the Haven and the City of Lebanon. Other organizations in Windsor County also submitted reports for the PIT.

The Haven submits reports to Vermont for the PIT count and informs New Hampshire of the individuals being sheltered at the Haven who are from New Hampshire during its PIT count. This year, the Haven submitted forms for a total of 75 people in the PIT Count. This included **sixteen (16)** households who were **unsheltered**, meaning camping or living in cars or other places “not intended for human habitation”. Of these, fourteen were single adults and two were families. Of the two families, one had two persons and one had three persons. The Haven also submitted forms for **44 people staying in the year-round shelters** (20 in the Hixon Adult Shelter and 24 in the Byrne Family Shelter). Finally, the Haven’s **Seasonal Shelter was full with 15 guests**.

The Haven informed New Hampshire that ten of the guests included in the PIT were from New Hampshire.

The City of Lebanon reported 29 sheltered and 16 unsheltered people in its PIT count. The sheltered group included 12 provided temporary shelter by Lebanon Human Services, four individuals in temporary housing offered by WISE who had experienced domestic violence and thirteen people living in the Headrest recovery programs which are classified as transitional housing.

Measuring the number of homeless people in addition to the single “point in time” count is more challenging. One recent study found that the number of people that use a homeless

resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

program at some point throughout the year is almost three times higher than the number of people counted as homeless on a single night (HUD 2015. **The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress: Part 2. Estimates of Homelessness in the United States.** Washington, DC: US Department of Housing and Urban Development). Of interest, anecdotal evidence from the Hartford Police Department estimating the number of people who are unsheltered during the non-winter months is about three times the number counted in the 2020 Homeless PIT Count (See below).

Not all users of homeless shelters are the same or place the same burdens on society for services and support. An Urban Institute study (**Improving Measures of Housing Insecurity: A Path Forward, 2016**) cites research which revealed three main patterns of service use among homeless individuals: transitional, episodic, and chronic distinct groups. Roughly 80 percent of individuals in the shelter system are transitional users with a single, relatively short stay in a shelter. They typically did not return to the homeless system after exit. Ten percent of individuals used homeless shelters episodically, i.e. having multiple shelter stays spread over a long period of time. Ten percent of individuals were chronic shelter users. These individuals tended to be older and chronically unemployed and used shelters as long-term housing at great expense to local systems. Chronic shelter users accounted for half of all shelter costs. (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998. **“Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data,”** American Journal of Community Psychology 26 (2): 207–32).

The Urban Institute study noted, “Policymakers have used this information to focus resources on helping people experiencing chronic homelessness find and maintain permanent housing with case management and other services. The research has helped spur a major increase in permanent supportive housing targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness and a national adoption of Housing First² principles that have been shown to be effective for serving that population.” These are the principles followed by the Haven and other organizations that focus on helping people move from homelessness to housing security.

The Hartford School District estimates that there approximately 50 youth in school who meet the definition of homeless. More information about this population is included below.

UV Giving Emergency Aid & Resources (UVGear) distributed over 130 tents and sleeping bags to people in need during the summer/fall of 2019 (About 20-30% received multiple supply deliveries) and assists on average about 12-15 unsheltered individuals on an ongoing basis with supplies at campsites during the winter months.

² From the National Alliance to End Homelessness, “Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues. Additionally, Housing First is based on the theory that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.”

According to Hartford PD Sergeant Karl Ebbighausen, there are approximately 12-15 people camping in the greater Hartford area any given day from summer to fall. This number declines in the winter. In addition, the Sergeant Ebbighausen reported at an Ad Hoc Committee meeting that throughout the year, there are 20-30 people in Hartford who are without a fixed residence and not staying in a shelter or transitional housing who are more transient. Some are passing through town but live in their cars for a few days in the community. Others arrive in town from out of state who are in violation of parole or with warrants for arrest. It was reported that they will stay in the area for a period and then return to their home communities. Also included in this number are people who live in their cars or sleep outside.

In addition, there are people who can couch surf for a while in the homes of friends. People also will reside for longer terms in area motels. Some pay their own way; others are subsidized by the State of Vermont Economic Services Department (ESD) or the City of Lebanon Human Services which provide vouchers for a month or longer in some circumstances. During the winter Vermont ESD will provide motel vouchers during Adverse Weather Conditions (below freezing or snowing) when the Haven's seasonal shelter is filled.

The Upper Valley Haven Shelters

Throughout the year, the Haven provides shelter to people in need of a place to stay on an emergency basis. The Haven has provided shelter since it was founded in 1980. The Haven has three shelters. The current Hixon Adult Shelter opened in 2009. It has ten rooms with 20 beds. The average length of stay is about 65 days. It is a "dry" shelter meaning that guests cannot actively be using drugs or alcohol or be unable to maintain sobriety. In the last state fiscal year (July 2018 – June 2019) 88 guests stayed at Hixon. The Byrne Family Shelter opened in 2004. It can house 8 families. It too is a dry shelter. All units have at least one parent and one child in residence. Most two parents and more than one child. Average length of stay has been climbing. In FY2019, it was over 130 days. In this same period 31 families stayed Byrne. Both shelters are typically occupied at 100%. In both shelters, guests are selected from the Master List of people seeking housing assistance. Those with the greatest housing insecurity (homeless or precarious) are given priority for a bed or room in the shelters.

The final shelter is the Haven's Seasonal Shelter opened from late November through mid-April. The shelter, located in the Caruso Café in the Byrne Community Building on the main campus on Hartford Avenue, can accommodate 15 adults. Guests register starting at 5:30 pm each evening. They are provided with dinner (supplied by LISTEN, Inc.), access to a shower and companionship. Guests can also use storage at the Haven for storing some of their possessions. Guests are asked to leave each morning at 7am as the room is needed for other Haven programs. Many will return for breakfast at 8:30. So far this year the shelter has only occasionally been at capacity. Average census has been about 12-13 guests each evening. When the Seasonal Shelter is filled on nights in which "adverse weather conditions are in effect", people who arrive at the Haven can call Vermont 211 to seek a voucher for a motel stay.

Homelessness in the Context of Youth and Students

Data from the past 10 years (2009-19) shows that Hartford School District averages about 50 homeless students annually. However, homeless numbers are down significantly thus far this year. To date, the district indicates it has about 22 homeless students. Administrators hypothesize this may be due to a lack of low-income housing, forcing families to withdraw their students from our district and go elsewhere to find permanent housing. This lack of affordable housing also impacts transportation costs because when families do obtain stable housing, the *McKinney Vento Act* entitles them to stay at their school of origin for the remainder of the year while districts split the cost of this transportation.

To support homeless students, the district trains all staff in the challenges faced by the homeless and identifies and tracks homeless students in the system. Each school budget funds (often through fundraising and donations) provides families with food access programs on weekends and holidays. Each school also keeps basic clothing and hygiene supplies on hand to distribute to children that need it. The district supplies additional funds to supplement more specific needs (such as clothing and school supplies) as they arise. When families register at one of the schools and self-identify as homeless, the school will provide them with a “Parent Pack” that includes resources, ways to support their student in school, their rights as laid out in Federal homeless legislation, and contact information for the district and state homeless liaisons.

Perhaps the greatest cost burden is in providing transportation to homeless students not living within the district. The *McKinney-Vento Act* stipulates that children that are homeless and staying outside of a district’s catchment area (as in a hotel), may choose to remain at their “school of origin” (the school they attended when becoming homeless). The two districts (the district with the school of origin and the district where the child is staying) must share the cost of transporting the student to the school of origin. Hartford School District has seen these costs skyrocket over the past three years. The district consistently struggles to identify and retain providers able to transport these students.

Noel Bryant, Assistant Superintendent of the Hartford School District and member of the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness, forwarded the committee a statement that homeless children in the school district would benefit from any additional funding supplied to support their needs.

Vermont and NH Government Services

State and local governments in Vermont and New Hampshire provide services directly or through contracts with local providers to meet some of the needs of people who are homeless and insecurely housed. These include the following:

- Vermont Agency for Human Services (AHS) Office of Economic Opportunity provides grant support to the Haven for its shelter programs. Most (86%) of the Haven’s shelter services are funded through charitable contributions from the Upper Valley community.
- VT AHS funds the 211 program which provides telephone and web-based service referrals for the general population. The 211 Program also coordinates the motel voucher program during “adverse weather conditions” during the winter. Vouchers are available once the Haven’s seasonal shelter is filled. There is no similar program in New Hampshire.
- The Vermont Department of Economic Services Emergency Housing program also provides motel vouchers for longer stays to individuals and families on an individual needs-assessment such as for medical needs and domestic violence. Vouchers can be provided to individuals and families for either 28 or 84 days.
- Vermont AHS has stated its intention to end its management of the motel voucher program for adverse weather and other reasons by July 1, 2020. It plans on awarding contracts to local organizations throughout the state, one in each region, to manage this process and to manage the budget for use of motel vouchers for emergency shelter. Over the long term the state hopes to reduce the use of motel vouchers and increase the use of other strategies to reduce homelessness, provide essential services and draw people in the coordinated entry³ process. Details about this transition plan are just emerging at the time this report is being submitted. It is not clear at the time this report is being issued if these changes will be accepted by community organizations.
- There are no shelters in Lebanon, Hanover, or Norwich. Southwestern Community Services, Inc. operates a year-round shelter in Claremont, NH funded in part through the New Hampshire Bureau of Housing Supports.
- New Hampshire town and city governments are required by RSA 165 to fund a town “welfare program” to help people who are poor and who need help including shelter. Lynne Goodwin who directs the Lebanon Human Services program is the welfare officer. She has an annual budget of \$85,000 for housing assistance to people in need.

Town police departments engage with the homeless population through outreach services and coordination with social service providers. The outreach to camps by the Hartford PD has been cited in this report. The Hartford and Lebanon Police Departments work closely with social service agencies including The UV Haven and LISTEN Community Services to promote safety for people living precariously. The Hartford PD also has a grant-paid “Police Social Work” position from Health Care & Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) of Vermont which supports outreach, screening, de-escalation and case management and service coordination with local agencies.

³ From HUD: “Coordinated entry is a process that ensures that all people experiencing a housing crisis in a defined geographic area have fair and equal access, and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and homeless assistance based on their needs and strengths, no matter where or when they present for services. It uses standardized tools and practices, incorporates a system-wide Housing First approach, participant choice, and coordinates housing and homeless assistance such that housing and homeless assistance is prioritized for those with the most severe service needs.”

Private Service Providers

Hartford has many homeless service providers but still has gaps and cannot meet the needs of the homeless population. Some of the service providers only work with certain sub-populations, such as ex-offenders, veterans, and victims of domestic violence. The Haven, Pathways Vermont, HCRS, LISTEN Community Services, SEVCA, the Veteran's Health Administration, Hartford Dismas House, Clara Martin Center, and UVGear meet monthly to coordinate service delivery across the town. The Haven, in conjunction with the Hartford Police Department, conducts periodic outreach to homeless individuals in Hartford to provide information and supportive services. UVGear also provides basic necessities and camping equipment to help meet the needs of homeless individuals who are living outside.

Services to people who are homeless or housing insecure are provided by several agencies. The LISTEN Center provides daily services of referrals, individual service supports such as clothing and vouchers, a food pantry, and a community dinner (Monday to Saturday) throughout the year to people including those who are homeless. In addition to its shelter services, the Haven also provides walk-in and scheduled services of meals (breakfast and lunch, Monday through Friday), service coordination, clothing and living supplies and food to the community including people who are homeless.

The faith community is another source of services for people who experience homelessness. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, located next to the Haven, provides a breakfast for people who are staying at the Haven's Seasonal Shelter on weekends when the Haven is not open for community meals. Representatives from St. Paul's Church attended one of the Committee meetings and indicated that they intend to conduct outreach to other churches in White River Junction to determine if they would consider providing meals and warming stations on weekends during the 2020-21 winter season.

Homelessness in the Context of Housing Affordability

When examining the challenges of homelessness and estimating the need for ideas to respond to this need and proposing solutions to creating more sustainable housing, it is important to also look at how coordinated entry, client intake, assessments, and referrals work within the larger framework of local, regional, and state agency human service activities and highlight overlaps/gaps in services. Contributing factors in the rate of homelessness in the region/state are the lack of adequate affordable housing, rising housing costs, and evictions. As housing costs are expected to increase over the coming years, it is expected that displacement and affordable housing access problems will increase as well. The addition of more units of permanent affordable housing are critical to reducing the number of people who are homeless and providing long-term stability. As noted above, supportive housing models, in which case management services are focused on helping people remain stably housed, is an evidence-based solution to chronic homelessness.

As noted above, there are many reasons why people are housing insecure and without a place to live. In addition to macro-economic and systemic causes, there are also categories that focus on individual situations and histories-- personal challenges of untreated and chronic health conditions, untreated mental health, substance use, insufficient incomes, incidence of domestic violence and discrimination based on past histories or personal status. While these are all contributing factors, the economic forces that have reduced unit vacancies and increased rents and housing prices need to be understood to place the problem of homelessness and housing insecurity and any proposed solutions in an appropriate context.

The consequences of housing markets with historic low vacancy rates, rising demand and increasing rents far outpacing incomes are key factors in addressing the challenges of homelessness in the Upper Valley. Vital Communities, an organization that focuses on the region's challenges and mobilizes the community to effective actions, estimates that there is a shortage of 4,000 housing units in the 69 towns of its focus area. It has begun an effort to measure the net change in housing units (increases and decreases). An estimate of the most recent reporting period is that the region added 250 units, a miniscule number compared to the need. The local economy centered in the four towns have added many jobs with DHMC and Dartmouth College the main economic drivers. Market rate rental housing vacancy rates for the Lebanon NH/VT Micro-NECTA are at 0% and the Median Gross Rental Cost has increased by 19.4% since 2009.⁴ For reference, a balanced rental market should be at 4%-5%.

As market forces work their way through individual decisions, the challenges for people at the margins increase. Rents become unaffordable as people are required to pay a larger share of their incomes on housing expenses. Commuting times increase as more affordable options are farther removed from job locations. People who lack personal automobile transportation are at a disadvantage as bus routes and schedules in the region are limiting. Landlords can be increasingly selective in choosing tenants. People with eviction histories or spotty records are increasingly at a disadvantage with many options foreclosed to them. Landlords now can elect to reject people with rent support vouchers because they consider them a bureaucratic hassle and an indicator of someone who is more likely to present problems. And the tight housing market is having a negative effect on the labor market as well. Employers are struggling to fill open positions at all levels, with hundreds of job openings.

While we recommend services for people who are homeless and housing insecure in this report, sustainable relief will not occur until the housing market loosens through the addition of many more units (supply) or reduced demand that increases vacancy rates and reduces rent pressures. However, for many people living at the margins, even this market change will be insufficient as most employment for which they can qualify do not pay a "housing wage". This can generally be defined as paying no more than 30% of income on housing expense. For people who are poor, rent supplements such as vouchers, will be required for housing affordability. The supply of housing built for low income-renters through programs such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits needs to increase. However, the number of projects that are funded each year in

⁴From New Hampshire Housing's Annual Residential Rental Cost Survey

Vermont and New Hampshire are limited, and there is competition throughout both states for the funding.

Coordinated Entry

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development has established a process called “coordinated entry” to prevent and end homelessness. From HUD’s Coordinated Entry Policy Brief:

“HUD’s primary goals for coordinated entry processes are that assistance be allocated as effectively as possible and that it be easily accessible no matter where or how people present. Most communities lack the resources needed to meet all of the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This combined with the lack of well-developed coordinated entry processes can result in severe hardships for people experiencing homelessness. They often face long waiting times to receive assistance or are screened out of needed assistance. Coordinated entry processes help communities prioritize assistance based on vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that people who need assistance the most can receive it in a timely manner. Coordinated entry processes also provide information about service needs and gaps to help communities plan their assistance and identify needed resources.”

To be eligible to receive HUD funding for homelessness prevention and services, states are required to establish local “Continuum of Care” (CoC) bodies and follow guidelines and rules for determining how resources, such as rent support vouchers and shelter services, are allocated. One of the main purposes of coordinated entry is to ensure that people with the most severe service needs and levels of vulnerability are prioritized for housing and homeless assistance. HUD’s policy is that people experiencing chronic homelessness should be prioritized for permanent supportive housing.

There are 11 CoCs in Vermont. The regional CoC is the Orange & Windsor North CoC, which is also referred to as the Upper Valley CoC in recognition of its bi-state membership. This is the only CoC in Vermont and New Hampshire which includes this distinction. Representatives from Capstone and the Haven (Renee Weeks) are co-chairs. This CoC also includes representation from NH due to the close interactions by service agencies and ease of access between the two states. Organizations represented on the local CoC include Capstone Community Action, Economic Service Department of VT, the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, the Vermont Agency for Human Services, the Haven, Vermont 211, Twin Pines Housing, Lebanon Human Services, Capstone Community Action, and the Clara Martin Center.

One of the primary activities of the CoC is to maintain the Master List of people who are seeking supportive services to address or prevent their homelessness status. As part of the coordinated entry people are more likely to need some form of assistance to end their homelessness or who are more vulnerable to the effects of homelessness are prioritized through a scoring process.

At present, there are about 100 individuals and families on the coordinated entry Master List in the Upper Valley CoC. About 60 are single adults and about 40 include two or more individuals. The Haven completed the CE process for about 80 percent of these cases. Capstone completed the CE for about 15 percent of these cases.

City of Lebanon Housing First Working Group

In July 2016, the Lebanon City Council formed a Task Force to address the issue of homelessness in Lebanon. The group named itself the “Housing First Working Group” based on the objective to address the issue of homelessness from a “housing first” perspective. The group aims to improve resources for the homeless; ranging from more shelter beds on one end of the continuum to more permanent, supportive housing on the other end of the continuum. The Housing First group has met monthly since January 2017.

The Housing First Working Group issued a final report in February 2020. The report recommends the addition of more affordable housing as the needed solution to the problem of homelessness and housing insecurity. The efforts of Twin Pines Housing to add more units of affordable housing is applauded in the report because “housing ends homelessness.” Twin Pines’ provision of supportive housing services is also cited as critical to helping people maintain affordable housing.

The report also notes that there is no emergency shelter in Grafton County other than a location in Plymouth, NH which is quite distant. The Housing First Group set a goal that lower Grafton County, where Lebanon is located, will have a year-round, low barrier shelter to offer safe and accessible temporary housing to those who are homeless. The shelter will be located near a bus route, food services, and social services. The shelter will have sufficient parking for guests and social service providers. The shelter should also be able to accommodate people with pets.

In this report the Housing First Working Group stated its intent to partner with the Haven to develop a year-round, low barrier shelter. Further, the report endorsed efforts to request municipal funds and private funds to support the expenses of this new shelter. This recommendation is consistent with recommendations made by the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness described in the section below.

Proposed Goals and Strategies

The Ad Hoc Committee proposes multiple strategies and interventions for the Hartford Select Board to consider. Where possible, we have made estimates of the costs of these strategies. For ease of consideration, the goals are divided into short, medium and long-term timeframes. Though these recommendations are directed to the Hartford Select Board, they can be shared and considered with the governing bodies of the other three towns of Norwich, VT, Hanover, NH and Lebanon, NH. Meeting some of the long-term goals of additional housing will require resources outside the capacity and scope of the town governments, though the towns can

facilitate housing development through goal setting and consideration of changes to regulations and practices.

Note: FY2021 budget request amounts recommended by the Committee that correlate to goals are in italics.

Short Term Goals

1 - Goal: The Town of Hartford should provide access to basic necessities such as camping supplies, personal hygiene products, motel vouchers, and essential survival supplies for homeless individuals. *Budget Request – FY2021: \$15,000 (see Attachment A for line item expense estimates).*

Strategies:

- a. Provide funding to local agencies for basic necessities to survive outside. These include camping supplies such as tents, sleeping bags, fuel, backpacks, cook kits, mats, first aid kits, batteries, gas cards, food gift cards, laundry supplies, and personal hygiene items.
- b. Coordinate with local service providers to purchase and provide these basic necessities.
- c. Provide selected agencies that work with homeless populations with grant support for vouchers for laundry, small household items, and motel vouchers.
- d. Coordinate with other core towns to budget for basic necessities to be provided for in their town budgets.

2 - Goal: Address gaps in cold weather shelter access. *Budget: \$15,000.*

Strategies:

- a. While the Haven's seasonal shelter, supplemented by 211 Adverse Weather motel vouchers, is able to accommodate most needs for shelter services during the winter, there are a few gaps in services that have been identified. The Town should work with local religious communities, businesses, and property owners to determine if they can provide temporary shelter during the daytime and on weekends in the cold months to help ensure that no one remains outside in extreme temperatures. At present, St. Paul's Episcopal Church is providing breakfast and a warming shelter on weekend mornings. As noted in the report, it plans on outreach to area churches next year to expand the days and times of this service. We would encourage other towns in the region to follow this model.
- b. Explore options for a shelter that can provides services to people with pets.
- c. Ensure there is a rapid response for families in need of shelter during cold weather. The State of Vermont through Economic Services currently provides motel vouchers for shelter for families and individuals in emergency need after review of eligibility. This support is not guaranteed and is time limited. Vermont is proposing to have local community agencies assume responsibility for this program with funding provided through contracts. As this transition occurs and as needed to meet community needs,

Hartford should fund local agencies such as the Haven, LISTEN and WISE with emergency funds to address any gaps or delays in services and vouchers.

3 - Goal: Identify the members of the homeless community through outreach, utilization of a By-Name-List (BNL) through coordinated entry and other means. Budget: No additional expense

Strategies:

- a. Coordinate with the four core towns (Hartford, Lebanon, Norwich, and Hanover) to identify members of the homeless community and prevent duplication in identification. Working with the Haven, the Hartford PD should continue regular outreach to camping sites to address safety needs, provide some emergency supplies and encourage campers to access existing service supports.
- b. Lebanon PD should be encouraged to follow the Hartford PD model in partnership with a local social service agency familiar with the target population.
- c. The Haven, LISTEN and other agencies that have contact with the homeless populations should continue to share information to see who has moved out of homelessness and who is newly identified.
- d. The goal of an outreach and assessment process should be to encourage people to complete coordinated entry within the Continuum of Care process.

Medium Term Goals

4 - Goal: With the other towns work with community agencies, advocates, and others to ensure there is year-round shelter to offer safe and decent alternatives to living outside.

Strategies:

- a. With the other three region towns Hartford should support the development of a year-round low barrier shelter. This shelter will replace the seasonal shelter now operated by the Haven. The new shelter will be able to accommodate pets and their owners. We are aware there are times when people are fearful of leaving dangerous domestic situations because of threats to harm remaining pets. The existing shelters at the Haven are unable to accommodate pets. Services provided in the shelter will include a day program community resource center with the goal of encouraging guests to access existing services, enrollment in state and federal support services and participation in the coordinated entry process. The Haven will take the lead in developing this new program working with other community agencies and the four towns. This lead role includes raising capital dollars needed for a new building starting with a feasibility study for raising the funds needed for a capital project. Service provided in the shelter and day resource center will include showers, laundry, telephones, mail delivery, case management services/referrals to service providers throughout the Upper Valley. Depending on available funding and other determinants, the new shelter could also include units of affordable housing. The four core towns should provide annual financial

support of the low barrier shelter and community resource center. *Budget: \$200,000 per year (est.). Individual town support to be determined.*

5 - Goal: Provide a municipal camping area and a car camping parking lot with sanitary resources for individuals who are homeless. To be used by both car and tent campers. Budget: \$20,000.

Strategies:

- a. Identify a property in the core towns that would allow for homeless individuals to camp without fear of reprisal.
- b. Identify a parking lot or an equally suitable piece of land to accommodate car camping.
- c. Determine the cost to provide bathroom, shower and personal belonging storage capabilities at the identified municipal camping area. Costs need to include the initial cost of installation and the cost of regular cleaning/waste pick-up.

NB: This initiative did not have the support of the entire Ad Hoc Committee. It was proposed and strongly supported by Mike Chamness, UV Gear, former chair of the Committee.

6 - Goal: Create accessible storage facilities to hold personal belongings that would prevent theft, loss, confiscation, and weather damage. This would allow people to attend appointments, job interviews, work, etc. more conveniently. Budget: \$5,000.

Strategies:

- a. Identify town space, or donated space, ideally on the bus service line, that can hold 55-gallon containers for homeless individuals to store their belongings in a safe location.
- b. Initially purchase 50 55-gallon storage containers.
- c. Coordinate with volunteers the hours that the storage containers can be accessed by the users, ideally in the morning and evening hours.
- d. Make storage available to homeless individuals.
- e. After three months assess the need for additional containers and purchase if necessary.

This function would be absorbed into the low-barrier shelter described in Goal #4.

7 - Goal: Existing programs including the Haven, LISTEN, HCRS and WISE should continue to assess the needs of each member of the homeless community and offer them appropriate referrals, resources and services. The goal of these services is to draw applicants into the existing coordinated entry process for those who are housing unstable or experiencing homelessness. Budget: No additional expense.

Strategies:

- a. Focus on Housing First strategies.
- b. Continue utilizing state client assessment tools that is part of coordinated entry to determine housing needs and prioritize people for resources.

- c. Continue assessments to determine needs for health care, employment, supportive services, activities of daily living (ADLs), etc. (bio-psychosocial)
- d. Continue to utilize the common assessment tool and bio-psychosocial to triage access to care and services.

8 - Goal: Provide funding to rapidly move homeless individuals and families into permanent housing who have the ability to pay rent on their own but the cost of moving into housing (moving expenses, security deposit, etc.) is prohibitive. A second need is financial support for eviction prevention funds. Both these types of expenses are often available through existing agencies including SEVCA, Tri-County CAP, LISTEN and the Haven. However, limited total funding, caps on available grants, specific geographic bounds or other eligibility requirements can leave gaps. This budget can be limited to people from Hartford though ideally all region towns will support this initiative. Budget: \$15,000.

Strategies

- a. Provide supplemental funding to agencies providing these grants to cover gaps in amounts or increase the number of people supported with security deposits.
- b. Provide supplemental funding for eviction prevention. Early identification of tenants falling behind on rent can prevent eviction and help avoid expense of eviction process and preparing property for new tenants.

Long Term Goals

9 - Goal: Increase case management services for permanent supportive housing units.

Supportive housing is a proven, research-based method of supporting individuals and families who have been homeless to achieve long-term housing stability. The success of permanent supportive housing is in large part due to the supportive services and case management that is provided. It is critical for case management to be funded as part of the development of these units. *Budget: \$75,000 annual grant for supportive housing case management.*

Strategies:

- a. Work with Twin Pines Housing to identify locations close to services and public transportation for additional supportive housing. Twin Pines Housing can then pursue funding to develop additional housing units which include long-term rental vouchers in both NH and VT.
- b. With funding from the four towns, provide case management services for individuals and families who were chronically homeless who have rent support vouchers.
- c. Advocate for additional rent support vouchers for the Upper Valley community in NH and VT.

10 - Goal: Increase the availability of affordable housing to populations up to 120% Area Median Income (AMI) and below.

Strategies:

- a. The four core towns will set goals of adding affordable housing units in each town over the next 10 years.
- b. Each town will determine if it has any barriers to development of affordable housing such as duplicative regulations, exclusionary zoning, modification of existing housing units such as allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units, restrictive zoning, housing unit or lot size or excessive fees and take actions to address these barriers.
- c. Each town will work with local nonprofit and for-profit housing developers to encourage the development of affordable housing. Towns will also evaluate potential incentives to creating affordable housing such as density bonuses, tax abatements, inclusionary zoning, and use of TIFF funds as well as making gifts of municipally-owned property for such purpose (see examples from Hanover, below).
- d. The Regional Planning organizations are valuable resources to provide assistance on implementation of strategies that encourage additions to total housing and affordable housing units in these communities.

Other Town Approaches

Lebanon, New Hampshire

Director of Human Services, Lynne Goodwin (lynne.goodwin@lebanonnh.gov) has an annual Budget of \$85,000 for housing assistance. Expenses average \$60,000-70,000. Lebanon partners with Tri-County CAP to conduct monthly homeless outreach in Lebanon. A count of the homeless in lower Grafton County was conducted. One hundred and ten homeless people were counted on September 18, 2019. Homeless people were referred to appropriate services and leaflets were distributed listing local service providers. Supportive services for people with substance use disorders or other chronic, housing related issues are not currently supported by state or federal funds. Lebanon provides \$5,000 a year to the Haven to support services at the Parkhurst housing project, and \$9,900 a year to Twin Pines Housing to provide supportive services to residents of the 198 units in Lebanon. Portfolio wide, approximately 26% of Twin Pines Housing's residents were homeless or at risk of homelessness when they applied for housing. New Hampshire's proposed 2020 budget would make Medicaid funding available for supportive services to homeless individuals.

Hanover, New Hampshire

General Welfare Assistance Coordinator, Jen Gantrish (jen.gantrish@hanovernh.org) has an annual budget of \$8,500 for direct client support. There is also the Tenney Fund which is limited restricted funds for scholarship and general assistance for Hanover children in need. Summer Park in Hanover offers affordable housing for seniors and disabled adults. Currently there are 24 units owned and managed by Twin Pines Housing. Twin Pines is currently re-developing the property by constructing an energy efficient, fully accessible building, and will break ground on 18 additional units in the fall of 2020. Hanover partnered with Twin Pines to

develop the Gile Hill Community, which has 61 units that are considered affordable housing based on income-eligibility. One of the ways that Hanover has worked with Twin Pines to make affordable housing available in town is by donating land for affordable housing projects. The Gile land and Summer Park were both donated to Twin Pines.

Norwich, Vermont

The town manager has not yet responded to a request for information. We will be pleased to add information at a later date.

Possibilities for a Regional Approach

Regional service providers collaborate at three levels:

1. The *Upper Valley Continuum of Care (CoC)*, also known as the Upper Valley, represents Orange and North Windsor Counties, including Hartford, in requesting federal funds through the state's process with HUD. Participating agencies meet monthly to discuss homelessness at the strategic and programmatic levels.
2. Regional service providers hold monthly meetings in Lebanon called *Housing First Work Group* to address homelessness at the community level. These meetings raise awareness, develop support, and engage potential partners such as organizations, faith-based groups, and landlords. These meetings are held in the Lebanon Town Hall and are open to the public.
3. Service providers in Hartford and Lebanon often hold working meetings to share information, plan new programs, and address the specific housing needs of individual households.

Mental Health and Supported Employment

Many people in the homeless community suffer from mental illness. Lack of employment can be an important factor in both mental illness and homelessness.

Researchers at Dartmouth College are studying new ways to deliver mental health services that could significantly impact Hartford's homeless population. Elizabeth Carpenter-Song has shown that cell phones can be an effective way to deliver treatment. Perhaps this could be tested in Hartford.

In another study, Carpenter-Song and Robert Drake, also of Dartmouth College, co-authored a paper showing that employment support can also be a cost-effective way of dealing with mental illness. Hartford's business community could be called on to offer jobs with living wages for people with criminal records, mental health needs, or physical disabilities.

Nancy Berkmeier of Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center has studied "communities of

opportunities” as a way of delivering supportive services to promote permanent housing. Her work in urban settings might be applied here in Hartford.

West Central Behavioral Health has Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams that have proven effective in delivering mental health services to homeless people in public places. Perhaps that model could be used in Hartford.

State of Homelessness/Data

The Annual Point in Time (PIT) Count is an unduplicated statewide count of persons experiencing literal homelessness on a single night in January. The PIT captures the most vulnerable population, those literally homeless and does not include those at risk of homelessness, doubled up or couch surfing. The 2019 PIT showed Windsor County, Vermont had 91 persons (51 male and 40 female) and 60 households counted. Eighty-seven individuals identified as white, one as black or African American, and three as other and/or multiple races. Twenty-two of those counted were determined to be chronically homeless. The majority (52) of those identified in the PIT were between the ages of 25 and 54. Chronically homeless are those that have been homeless for 12 months or more continuously or have had four episodes of homelessness in three years equaling at least 12 months. This was the third highest amount of chronically homeless in any county in the state. There were forty-four households without children and 13 with children. Thirty-one of the individuals identified were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Windsor County Sub-Populations 2017 – 2019

	Households	Persons	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Domestic Violence	Severe Mental Health	Substance Use Disorder	Veterans
2017	82	118	5	113	32	43	31	3
2018	73	125	12	113	4	48	21	3
2019	60	91	5	86	7	41	26	6

**Please note that the PIT count is limited to a single night of the year. As stated earlier, there are 40-50 unsheltered people camping on any given day of the summer or fall in Hartford.*

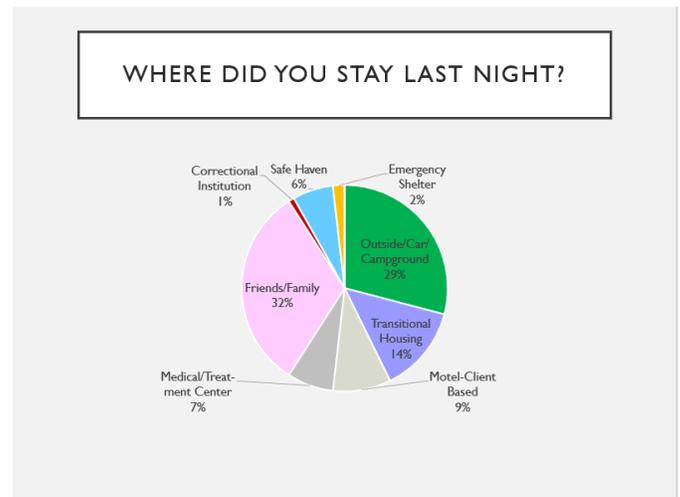
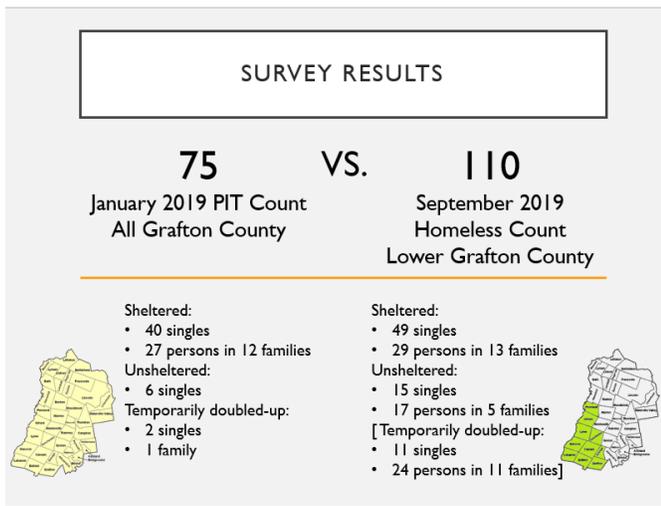
The individuals identified in the Windsor County PIT count also were dealing with chronic health conditions:

- Physical Disability (Long-Term): 23
- Mental Health (Severe and Persistent): 8
- Other Chronic Health Conditions (Long-Term): 37
- Developmental Disability: 26
- Chronic Substance Abuse (Alcohol and/or Drug): 7

Additionally, there were 40 precariously housed individuals identified in the PIT. This includes individuals who are staying with friends, living in motels, or are in danger of eviction.

Grafton County

Grafton County in New Hampshire participates in the annual Point in Time Count of Homeless Individuals also. In January 2019, seventy-five (75) people were counted. Sixty-seven people were sheltered, six were unsheltered and a few were temporarily doubled up. The City of Lebanon Social Services Department decided to undertake a second PIT in September 2019 that would be less restrictive in its definition of who should be included in the count. The “sheltered” definition would include people who were “couch surfing” or otherwise temporarily staying with friends and families. Also included were families who were lost their homes elsewhere and were now living in motels or other locations (many continued to send their children to their home school districts), people in transitional housing including drug & alcohol rehabilitation programs, people living in motels through their own payment and people receiving medical treatment. The geographic area of this second PIT was limited to lower Grafton County including Lebanon, Hanover, Enfield, Grafton, Lyme, Orford and a few other towns (see map). This PIT counted 110 people. Lebanon worked with many social service organizations to collect this information including West Central Behavioral Health, LISTEN, Tri-County Cap, the Haven, WISE, A Sacred Place, Headrest, the HIV/HCV Resource Center and the SAU 62. The charts below provide more detail.



WHERE DID YOU STAY LAST NIGHT	
Outside/Car/Campground	32
Friends/Family	35
Transitional Housing	15
Motel	10
Medical Treatment	8
Other	10
TOTAL	110

Attachment A – FY2021 Budget Request (\$15,000 – Miscellaneous Supplies/Services)

Item	Unit Cost	Volume/Number	Total Cost	Vendor/Source
Motel vouchers	\$70.00	40	\$2,800.00	Various hotels
Laundry vouchers	\$10.00	200	\$2,000.00	Various
Food vouchers	\$25.00	100	\$2,500.00	Co-op gift card
Gas cards	\$20.00	60	\$1,200.00	Gift card outlets
Sleeping bags	\$20.00	65	\$1,300.00	Walmart
First aid kits	\$3.00	100	\$300.00	Dollar stores
Laundry supplies	\$10.00	60	\$600.00	Co-op gift card
Tents	\$30.00	55	\$1,650.00	Online
Toiletries	\$5.00	200	\$1,000.00	Dollar stores
Propane tanks	\$3.00	200	\$600.00	BJ's Wholesale
Batteries/lights	\$5.00	200	\$1,000.00	Dollar stores
Total			\$14,950.00	