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Gainesville.
Citizen centered
People empowered

Staff Analysis

Comparison of Approaches to Reducing Homelessness

170632

Presented by:

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CITY OF GAINESVILLE STAFF ANALYSIS

Legistar No: 170632

Title: Comparison of Approaches to Reducing Homelessness

Sponsor: Office of the City Manager

City Staff Contact: Fred Murry, Assistant City Manager

Summary of Issue

Homelessness is a continuing problem across the country, including Alachua County. Nationwide, many strategies for addressing homelessness have been researched and developed to determine some of the best approaches to end homelessness. Much of the current research places the different strategies into either the “Managing Homelessness Approach” or the “Housing Focused Approach.” These are the strategies that staff will present to the General Policy Committee to determine the best approach to address homelessness in Gainesville and Alachua County.

The presentation planned for the General Policy Committee will identify the similarities and differences between the two approaches. Where differences are identified, the relative strengths and weaknesses of the approaches will be discussed to determine their applicability to Gainesville and Alachua County.

In practice, the actions of most communities contain elements of both approaches. However, for discussion purposes, comparing and contrasting the two approaches will help determine Gainesville and Alachua County’s best strategies to address homelessness. Identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses of these approaches can help the City and County set an overall homelessness policy and/or framework. That policy or framework can then directly inform specific policy decisions (including, but not limited to, how to develop the Empowerment Center and what services to provide there).

History/Background Information

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

- Officially titled GRACE (Gainesville Region/Alachua County Empowerment) for the Homeless
- Developed in 2005 with input from all stakeholders
- Adopted by the City and County Commissions on December 15, 2005
- Relevant Timeframe was 2005 to 2015
 - Goals targeted to addressing and ending homelessness
 - Some achieved, including establishment of a One-Stop Homeless Assistance Center (OSHAC)

GRACE Marketplace

- Owned by City, Operated by the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry (ACCHH)
- Funded largely by the City and County
- Originally an OSHAC with emergency shelter
- Currently a low-barrier emergency shelter using the housing focused approach
- No children
- Day services for homeless

Dignity Village

- Campsite managed by the City.
- Land is owned by the State and leased by the City.
- Most campers use services offered at GRACE Marketplace.

Service Receivers and Providers

- Homeless
 - Individuals
 - Families
 - Recent (short-term)
 - Chronic (long-term, repetitive)
- Property Owners – City of Gainesville
- Current Operator – ACCHH
- Legal Advocates – Southern Legal

Service Providers

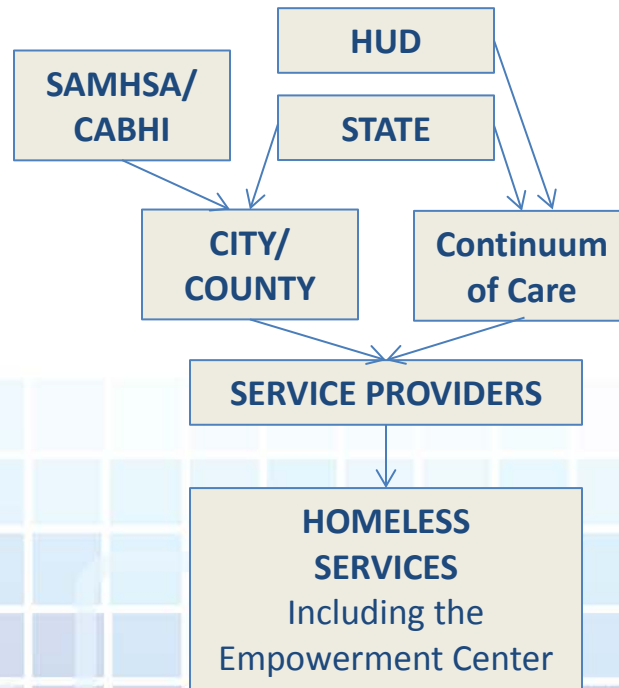
- Continuum of Care (CoC) – a coalition of:
 - Service providers for the homeless
 - Local governments
 - Major employers
 - Business leaders
 - Educational leaders
 - Other community organizations
- Veterans Affairs
- Housing Authorities

Funders & Policy Directors

- Federal Government
 - HUD
 - Veterans Affairs
- State Government
- City Government
- County Government
- Veterans Affairs
- Continuum of Care
 - HUD requires communities to submit a single application for Homeless Assistance Grants to ensure local policies are consistent with national priorities, and to streamline the funding application process. They also encourage coordination of housing and

services provided on a local level and reduce the duplication of services.

Funding Sources for Homeless Services in Alachua County



Note: The CoC developed an action plan in Summer 2016.

HUD's Definition of Homelessness

Determines eligibility for HUD-funded homeless assistance programs

Four categories:

- People living in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or an institution where they temporarily reside
 - People likely to become homeless within 14 days
- Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state
- People fleeing domestic violence

Policy Direction – Managing Homelessness Approach versus Housing Focused Approach

- **Similarities:** Outreach, emergency shelters
- **Differences:** Measures of effectiveness, places of service, resource allocation, and costs

Managing Homelessness Approach:

- Services provided at the shelter
- Emergency shelter

- Day Services
 - Keeps people homeless
- Effectiveness of the Managing Homelessness Approach is measured by number of services provided

Housing Focused Approach

- Provides services at a home
- Permanent housing costs less than emergency shelter
- Housing focused means putting more funds into housing subsidies and fewer funds into services at the shelter
- Effectiveness of Housing Focused Approach is measured by number of persons permanently housed, how quickly, and recidivism

Can Housing-Focused and Managing Homelessness services exist on the same campus?

- Yes, if a diverse variety of services makes it more attractive and cost efficient
 - Requires:
 - Spatial separation between day services, and community and residential services
 - State, local and non-profit satellite offices provided
 - Not all agencies must be represented everyday
 - Some non-homeless people may not go there for services
 - Can assist rent burdened by offering low/no cost services, i.e., meals, laundry, etc.
- Yes, but not as efficiently as when they are separated
 - More difficult when a low barrier emergency shelter and tent encampment are present
 - Separate 20+ acre campus
 - Should the Empowerment Center be exclusive for Permanent Housing (SRO, Tiny Houses)?
 - Should the City/County relocate the low barrier emergency shelter?

Options

Policy Direction – Managing Homelessness Approach: PROS

- Efficiently provides many services to the homeless
 - Provides low-barrier emergency shelter services or transitional services to the homeless day services
 - Laundry, meals, showers, mail
- Encourages and facilitates contact between the homeless and the social service system
- One-stop center for a variety of services
 - Mainly supported by the local community
 - Gainesville has the only emergency shelter center
 - Equally funded by the City of Gainesville and Alachua County in the amount \$1,086,000 (\$543,000 each).

Managing Homelessness Approach: CONS

- Not effective at housing people (keeps people homeless).
- Individuals who are in emergency shelters and transitional housing are still counted as homeless.
- Not supported by Federal or State governments.

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) no longer supports emergency housing services.
- Not supported by CoC.
 - The Coc lost money in the past due to its support and submission of emergency and transitional housing applications to HUD.
 - CoC would be impacted by local agencies that continue to implement a Managing Homelessness Approach, because the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) measures the total reduction of homelessness within the community.
 - CoC has changed its approach to homelessness by supporting the Housing Focused Approach to homelessness, and the CoC received an increase in funding in 2017.
- More expensive to operate.

Housing Focused Approach: PROS

- Reduces incidences of homelessness.
- Reduces amount of time spent being homeless.
- Provide services where the homeless client resides: This is less stressful and more successful.
- Permanent housing is less expensive than emergency shelter.
- Housing focus means putting more funds into housing subsidies and fewer funds in services at the shelter.
- The effectiveness of the housing focused approach is measured by:
 - The number of persons placed in permanent housing;
 - How quickly they're placed; and
 - Rates of recidivism.
- The City and the County currently provide \$240,000 to support a rental assistance program that emphasizes housing or providing financial assistance to prevent homelessness.
- A Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) grant in the amount of \$800,000 is currently being implemented through a partnership with Alachua County, Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, and the Alachua County Housing Authority to provide supportive services to homeless individuals who have mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Case management services for the Housing Focused Approach are provided by supportive service agencies.
- The Housing Focused Approach is the best practice model that is supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the local CoC.
- This approach is less expensive than the Managing Homelessness Approach.

Housing Focused Approach: CONS

- There may not be enough landlords willing to rent apartment units to homeless clients.
- There may be resistance from some homeless persons who do not want to sign a lease.
- It is necessary to develop a pool of risk funds to cover damages or loss of rental income if homeless residents move out.
- Rental subsidies may be needed for those homeless clients who don't have sufficient income or wages to support essential needs.
- Affordable housing options may not be located in preferred areas.
- Are there other housing options available for the homeless (SRO, tiny housing, small housing, or permanent supportive housing, etc.)?
- Additional funds will be needed to support a housing focused option for the community.

**Policy Direction – Exclusively Homeless Services versus Services for the Entire Community:
GRACE Marketplace and Dignity Village**

Question: Can they exist on the same campus?

- YES, if a variety of services makes it more attractive and cost-efficient.
 - Requires separation of day services from community and residential services.
 - Would assist low-income residents by offering low-cost services.
 - Some non-homeless people may not use the services.
 - We can assist those who are rent-burdened by offering low-cost services.

**Policy Direction – Emergency and Permanent Housing on Same or Separate Campus or Other
Areas: GRACE Marketplace and Dignity Village**

Question: Can they exist on the same campus?

- Yes, but not as efficiently as when they are separated.
 - It's more difficult when a low-barrier emergency shelter is present.
- Should the Empowerment Center be exclusively used for permanent housing (SRO, tiny housing)?
- Should we consider relocating the low-barrier shelter to another location (maybe training facility/smaller facility)?

Staff Recommended Option

The General Policy Committee: 1) hear a presentation from staff; 2) provide additional guidance re approaches to reducing homelessness in Gainesville and Alachua County.

Attachments/References

None