

Empowerment Center Strategic Planning Summit SUMMARY

The Empowerment Center Citizens Work Group is committed to honest and accurate reporting of recommendations to the Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board. Toward that end, the Work Group recently sponsored an Empowerment Center Strategic Planning Summit to hear directly from representatives from community organizations. This summit was designed to discuss current framework and future plans moving forward regarding services available at GRACE Marketplace and Dignity Village. The event was held at Martin Luther King Jr. Multipurpose Center on September 21, 2015 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm.

The Summit agenda included an overview of the 10 year plan to end homelessness and a brief overview of GRACE Marketplace by the Homeless Coalition. The core planning strategy at the Summit was 6 breakout groups; Housing, Mental Health/Substance Abuse; Health/Environment Safety; Funding; Direct Services/Faith Community and Law Enforcement. The breakout groups were each facilitated by members of the Citizens Work Group gathering information and recommendations. Each member then submitted a summary of findings to the chair who compiled final recommendations. Over 50 organizations were represented and participated in the Summit. The following is a brief summary of key findings and our thoughts about them. We have identified three key and interrelated areas that we will address:

- Significant EMT calls to the Empowerment Center resulting in significant costs – residents with no access to medical/mental health/substance abuse treatment wait until challenges become emergencies. Or some call EMT for minor issues such as obtaining refills on medications.
- Lack of permanent housing options for residents to work on a long term community stability plan. Residents face many challenges finding permanent housing including a shortage of affordable housing, felon backgrounds, inflexible landlords, unemployment and affordability.
- Need for increased direct services at the Empowerment Center. There are many agencies providing services but many are referral based.

Summary:

The top three identified areas were distinctly evident in all the breakout groups. The mission, direction, and goals of the summit were understood and acknowledge by participants leading to conclusions. Acknowledgement was made that the 10 year plan is being realized with positive service provider cooperation.

Recommendations:

The three key finding above are interrelated with several identified recommendations that potentially could lead to improvement of the findings.

- Provide intensive case management to residents. These case managers should have knowledge and skills in the medical as well as substance abuse and mental health. This can be a tool used to prevent emergent issues leading to EMT calls and provide the needed support for vulnerable individuals.
- Maintain governance of Dignity Village including proposed rules and management.
- Provide a Housing Specialist who could work with individual residents as well as develop partnerships with local landlords to bridge the gap leading to permanent housing.
- Provide an Employment Specialist who could work with individual residents as well as develop partnerships with local employers to bridge the gap leading to employment.
- Continue to hold regular stakeholder meetings (like this summit) to keep the communication and coordination moving towards the future. This would promote better coordinated direct services of agencies, assisting the resident's journey out of homelessness.