

Project Plan to Reduce Homelessness and Mitigate the Impact of Homelessness in Lancaster City

EXTENDED SHELTER UPDATE - FEBRUARY 2024

CITY OF LANCASTER AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION: This update follows the November 3, 2023 extension request by the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Lancaster for the City of Lancaster to allow until February 1, 2024 to operate forty (40) beds.

SUMMARY:

ARPA funding request:

- Close the Extended Shelter operations on March 31, 2024 and reopen operations in December 2024 at Otterbein United Methodist Church.
- Utilize the remainder of the City’s ARPA investment of \$600,000 for shelter operations at Otterbein United Methodist Church for forty (40) expanded shelter beds beginning December 1, 2024-April 1, 2026 pending upon approval for occupancy. All other terms of the agreement will be met.

Interim plan to serve individuals who are unhoused:

- Through March 31, 2024: Forty (40) expanded emergency shelter beds will be provided at 232 N Prince St. (plus the existing 40 beds).
- April 1-December 1, 2024: No expanded emergency shelter beds will be provided.
 - In the interim, the Homelessness Coalition will utilize best practices and leverage existing programs (targeted outreach and supportive services) to best support the unhoused during this time based on financial resources secured and available.
- April 1-December 1, 2024: Existing shelter beds
 - The forty (40) existing beds are contracted with the Lancaster County Food Hub through June 30, 2024.
 - During the period of July 1-December 1, 2024: The Homelessness Coalition is working toward securing all necessary resources to provide the existing 40 beds.

EXTENDED SHELTER BED CENSUS:

Request made on shelter beds from December 1, 2023-February 1, 2024 referenced in the November 3, 2023 report.

Starting on December 18, 2023, the Lancaster County Food Hub increased services to provide forty (40) beds at the Extended Shelter. Shortly thereafter the extended shelter of 40 beds became filled and has remained at a census of 38-45 beds to date. (Lancaster County Food Hub is to be applauded for their work to secure staffing for beds so quickly.)

Stats based on Lancaster County’s Homelessness Management Information System (Empower Lancaster):

December 18-31, 2023	January 1-31, 2024	February 1-14, 2024
Total # of clients served = 17	Total # of clients served = 89	Total # of clients served = 60
Total # of households served = 17	Total # of households served = 88	Total # of households served = 57
Total # of bed nights = 95	Total # of bed nights = 797	Total # of bed nights = 473
Average daily # of beds = 10	Average daily # of beds = 26	Average daily # of beds = 34
Range of daily # bed nights = 6-15	Range of daily # bed nights = 13-43	Range of daily # bed nights: N/A
Average # of bed nights per client = 6	Average # of bed nights per client = 9	Average # of bed nights per client = 8
Average utilization = 25% (ramp up staff)	Average utilization = 65%	Average utilization = 85%
Demographics	Demographics	Demographics
Male = 14	Male = 64	Male = 45
Female = 3	Female = 23	Female = 15
Data not collected = 0	Data not collected = 2	Data not collected = 2
Average client age = 46	Average client age = 47	Average client age = 47
Disability status = 12 out of 14 responded	Disability status = 38 out of 60 (data not collected = 5)	Disability status = 15 out of 26 (data not collected = 3)
Chronic homelessness status = 6 out of 16 responded	Chronic homelessness status = 14 out of 60 (data not collected / refused=6)	Chronic homelessness status = 4 out of 26 (data not collected / refused=4)
Monthly Income	Monthly Income	Monthly Income
Zero income = 13 out of 17	Zero income = 50 out of 61	Zero income = 21 out of 26 reported

Frequent Questions: *Is there an increase in usage of the Low Barrier Emergency Shelter and Extended Shelter from individuals without a Lancaster County address?* Of the 165 unduplicated individuals accessing services at the Low Barrier Emergency Shelter and Extended Shelter between December 1, 2023 – February 14, 2024 only 21 clients ever reported an address outside of Lancaster County and 2 clients ever reported an address outside of Pennsylvania. In summary, 12.7% of clients reported ever living outside of Lancaster County and 1.2% reported ever living outside of Pennsylvania. (Source: Empower Lancaster)

Did individuals show an interest in shelter but not show up that evening? During the reported time periods above, an additional 40 clients had open program enrollments in the Extended Shelter but no bed nights. That means that 40 people completed intakes at Lancaster County Food Hub after expressing an interest but did not return for a bed night.

SHORT-TERM GOALS (DECEMBER-MARCH 31, 2024) UPDATE:

Request made to provide progress update on meeting the short-term goals through March 31, 2024 (facility and provider) referenced in the November 3, 2023 report.

Current Update: The Extended Shelter has been operating at a temporary facility located at 232 N. Prince Street in Lancaster City, along with the Emergency Low Barrier Shelter. Both shelters are on the first floor and operated by the Lancaster County Food Hub. (We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Lancaster County Food Hub for operating and overseeing the Extended Shelter from December 18, 2023 through March 31, 2024). By way of background, the facility is under contract with LCHRA through March 31, 2024 and has now been extended to May 31, 2024.

Further, during the extreme weather conditions in which a Code Blue was activated from January 16 – 23, the Lancaster County Food Hub expanded hours and staffing to accommodate the guests. Additional partners also extended their support by expanding bed capacity or service hours. As for the Code Blue in the city, Tenfold and the Office for the Homelessness Coalition provided support.

MID-TERM GOALS (APRIL 1, 2024 – DECEMBER 1, 2024) UPDATE:

Request made to provide an update on providing 40 extended shelter beds and 40 existing beds through December 1, 2024 referenced in the November 3, 2023 report.

Current Status:

- *Emergency Low Barrier Shelter Provider:* Lancaster County Food Hub is contracted to operate the Emergency Low Barrier Shelter (40 beds) until June 30, 2024. In addition, Requests with Proposal to operate emergency shelters were submitted to our office on Tuesday, February 20th and under review.
- *Extended Shelter Provider:* To date, there has not been a provider to operate and oversee the additional forty beds beginning April 1, 2024.
- *Facility:* The current facility at 232 N. Prince Street has been secured until May 31, 2024.

Efforts Made:

Securing a Provider: Since December 2024, continued efforts have been made to secure a provider. The first agency invited into conversation was The Lancaster County Food Hub (LCFH). We have continued to engage with LCFH to explore options to extend its operations into the Spring 2024. Respectfully, LCFH has declined due to capacity and exhaustion. Second, our office has been meeting individually with providers, exploring additional leads from out-of-county providers, and collaborations among the providers. Please note that the community winter shelters across the county will close the week of March 31, 2024 (Water Street Mission and Elizabethtown). The Ephrata shelter closes on February 29, 2024. Water Street Mission will stagger the client exits from their Winter Shelter closure over a period of 4-5 weeks and convert to their emergency shelter of 76 beds with a 90 day stay.

Third, the shelter and day center providers met on February 13, 2024 to explore collaborative options to provide services on April 1, 2024. Represented at this meeting were LCFH, Water Street Mission, Tenfold, Good Samaritan Service, Anchor Lancaster, and YMCA. Providers shared a common theme of chronic understaffing for their programs, inability to secure adequate staffing even through hiring services, and overall lack of capacity.

Securing a Facility: As referenced, the current facility is secured through May 31, 2024 but is not guaranteed through December 2024. In addition, Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities continue to proceed with renovating the lower level of the Otterbein United Methodist church for up to 80 emergency beds to be available in December 2024. The construction costs are approximately \$1.2-1.4M for the renovation (code upgrades, restrooms, elevator, handicap accessible entrances). Further, a service provider will be needed to operate this program.

CURRENT PROJECTED COST FOR EXTENDED SHELTER AND EMERGENCY SHELTER

Based on the anticipated cost incurred to date, the following tables represent budgets for the Extended Emergency Shelter (40 beds for 101 days) and for the pre-existing Emergency Shelter (40 beds for 101 days).

Agreed Upon Budget (Anticipated): December 22, 2023 – March 31, 2024 (101 nights)

Extended Shelter	Contracted Costs	Description (40 beds)	
Direct Service Personnel Expenses Total	\$106,651	Staff salaries and fringe benefits	Compensated per bed night rate of \$26.43
Direct Service Operating Expenses	Anticipated Costs		
Facilities /Utilities	\$44,100	First floor/ < \$10 square foot (both shelters)	LCHRA
Toilets/portable toilets	\$13,050	9 portable units and sinks serviced 2x/week (both shelters)	City/LCHRA
WIFI	\$1,400	Initial charge/monthly at \$100 (both shelters)	LCHRA
Dumpster	\$725.00	Serviced 2x/week	City/LCHRA
Security	\$71,050	Extended shelter only	Contracted with LCFH/LCHRA reimburse
Payroll/HR (contract)	\$3,000	Extended shelter only	Contracted with LCFH/LCHRA reimburse
Food/snacks	\$2,500	Extended shelter only	LCHRA reimburse
Drinking water	\$2,030	Extended shelter only	LCHRA reimburse
Bed Linens/Blankets	\$4,350	Extended shelter only	Contracted with LCFH/LCHRA reimburse
Subtotal	\$145,216		
Total	\$252,867	101 nights	
Pre-existing Emergency Shelter (101 nights)	Contracted Costs	Description	
Direct Service Personnel Expenses	\$83,038	Staff salaries and fringe benefits	Compensated per bed night rate of \$21.00
Total	\$335,905	80 beds for 101 nights	\$3,326 / per day

At the current rate, if there were no changes to the provider or facility, the costs for the emergency shelters of 80 beds for a full year (2024) is \$1,213,990 or through April 1, 2026 is \$2,731,478. Further, our projections indicate there may be approximately \$600,000 remaining of the City commitment of \$800,000 as of April 1, 2024.

Efforts Made to Secure Operation Funds:

To date the funds secured for operations include Lancaster County Community Development Block Grant of \$50,000 and the Joint Funding Homelessness Grants of \$40,000. Based on previous allocations, we anticipate a set aside of \$300,000 for the next funding cycle of the Joint Funding Homelessness Grants for emergency shelter during fiscal year 2024. Finally, LCHRA has released a Request for Funding Proposal to secure a fundraising consultant to raise funds for Prince Street Community Hub and Otterbein UMC construction and operations, and for Joint Funding Homelessness Grants (operations) over the next three years. No other funds exist for operations at this time.

Given the extraordinary costs for the emergency shelter services anticipated through the end of the 2024 (namely, \$1,213,990), these efforts are not fiscally prudent or sustainable. The ability to meet the needs of individuals unsheltered while being effective stewards of funds cannot be met adequately. Further, as previously stated, the inability to secure an emergency shelter provider to meet the needs has become a very challenging obstacle. Therefore, our office is a revised plan to cease the Extended Shelter operations until December 2024.

REVISED PLAN

Due to the expensive programming and obstacles mentioned above, our office is proposing a revised plan to balance the needs of the unsheltered while being fiscally responsible with scarce resources and meeting the agreed upon goals.

Recommendation: To close the Extended Shelter operations on March 31, 2024 and reopen operations in December 2024 at Otterbein United Methodist Church. The remainder of the City's investment of approximately \$600,000 will be earmarked for the additional forty (40) beds that will operate upon the approved opening of the renovated building. The agreed upon terms of providing the additional forty (40) beds will continue as planned through April 2026.

Efforts Made to Ensure Facility Renovations: Architects and engineers have been diligently collaborating with the City and County representative, preparing necessary drawings for the renovations at the lower level of Otterbein United Methodist Church. The lower level of the building has capacity for up to 80 emergency shelter beds. Plans have been agreed upon by the trustees and leadership of the Church and will be submitted for bid with construction occurring during the summer. Further, LCHRA is hiring a fundraising consultant to raise the construction funds needed for the renovations to the building. In the meantime, any funds needed have been secured in collaboration with a local financial institution to meet the goal.

INTERIM PLAN (APRIL – DECEMBER 2024)

The interim plan is to utilize best practices of targeting support, extended supportive services (case management), and expanding housing options to address homelessness and redirect efforts away from extended shelter from April through December 2024. Lancaster County is not isolated from the national housing crisis and spikes in homelessness (12% increase). The nation continues to be pressured into creative problem solving while stewarding limited resources and incorporating practices of intentional targeted support, extended supportive services, and creating housing options.

#1. Intentional Targeted Street Outreach:

Recommendation: Invest additional resources to increase Street Outreach efforts engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness in the City of Lancaster. Currently, there are four agencies providing Street Outreach services to the City of Lancaster: Lancaster County Food Hub, City Alliance, Tenfold, and Moravian Center. (Note, Tenfold's Street Outreach team also engages with the County.) All in all, there are three full-time employees employed for the work within the radius of several miles from city center. Our recommendation, in lieu of providing extended shelter beds, is to increase these services from April through December 2024 until the emergency shelter is operational at Otterbein United Methodist Church. The Street Outreach efforts would continue to focus on relationship building, securing independent housing, referrals into substance abuse and mental health treatment centers, and direct engagement with housing programs (crisis housing, Pathways rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing). The expanded Street Outreach team would be able to strengthen current engagement with Lancaster City police and police social worker, emergency room staff, Blueprints and RASE staff, and Lancaster County Behavioral Health & Developmental Services.

Funding Needed: Our office anticipated a need for \$50,000 for Client Financial Assistance (security deposits, first and last month's rent) and \$50,000 for expansion of street outreach staff (1 FTE). The resources will be matched with \$50,000 set aside from the Lancaster County Joint Funding grants for these efforts from July through December 2024. Our office does not have these funds on hand and will need to fundraise. Another complication is that our office will not know the HUD awards until sixty (60) days after the approval of the federal budget.

Likelihood of Success: Unknown. However, there are two justifications for this recommendation. First, communities across the nation have experienced similar levels of dissatisfaction with exorbitant costs of emergency housing and limited forward movement in permanently housing individuals. (Supported by National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Institutes of Health, SAMSHA, and communities.) By expanding intentionality for Street Outreach staff to perform necessary assessments, connect to resources, and advocate for additional services, we believe these efforts

would steward investments better and prepare for the opening of the shelter in December and the Prince Street Community Hub housing programs. Second, we have piloted a targeted housing program since the Spring of 2023 with Tenfold, Lancaster County Food Hub, Moravian, and Columbia with additional county resources of \$120,000 for case management and client financial assistance to more people from homelessness into housing. These providers have been able to assist 20 households to date with follow-up case management of 3-6 months to ensure success.

Likely Downside: We need to acknowledge the downside to having a targeted approach in lieu of the additional extended shelter beds. First, more individuals will be unsheltered during the evening hours between April and December 2024. Second, expanding Street Outreach staff could take longer than anticipated in the hiring process. Therefore, we would consider repurposing staffing with each agency willing to assist. Third, coordination of efforts will continue to be conducted by our department causing continued strain on limited in-house resources. Finally, we need to raise funds.

Timeline: Start immediately with planning and raising funds (\$100,000). (Match will be secured in May.)

#2. Extended Supportive Services:

Recommendation: Along with the intentional target support is the need to provide supportive services for an extended period of time for individuals who have been unhoused and who secure housing. The goal of this intervention is to keep people housed by providing case management for six (6) – twelve (12) months while in their housing. The homeless providers have experience working with individuals who are chronically homeless or have experienced episodic homelessness. However, we do not have extended supportive services funds to provide this support to clients. We recommend dedicating two (2) full-time employees each with a caseload of 10-15 households to provide intensive case management. Services could include building communication skills, budgeting, increasing income and benefits, securing additional income, emotional regulation, and conflict management. The staff would be employed for a full year and would cost \$140,000 with staffing benefits, fringe benefits, mileage, and professional development.

Funding Needed: We anticipate staffing costs of \$100,000-\$140,000 for a full year. Fundraising needed.

Likelihood of Success: High. Intentional collaboration and efforts have already been seen and proven effective.

Likely Downside: None known except this need could divert from other fundraising efforts.

Timeline: Begin program development and fundraising immediately.

#3. Expanding Housing Resources:

Recommendation: Our office is committed to developing additional supportive housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness. For example, last month the Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition secured a grant awarded by the federal government for the creation of fourteen (14) permanent supportive housing units (rent and supportive services). This is the highest number of units added to Lancaster County homelessness systems in the past ten years and will become available as early as November 2024. Further, the collaboration between the numerous county-wide providers operating Crisis Housing, Pathways rapid rehousing, and Permanent Supportive Housing has increased significantly and leveraging funding and talent resources better than years past. We recommend a continued focus on expanding resources by 1. Developing out the Prince Street Community Hub of 9 Crisis Housing units and 22 Permanent Supportive Units to ensure clients are ready when the doors open. 2. Our office applies for additional funding with the 2024 NOFO to secure funding for housing operations. 3. Create an interdisciplinary team lead by our office and consisting of City staff, County staff, affordable housing providers, and representatives of homelessness providers to further development of affordable housing.

Funding Needed: None needed at this time.

Likelihood of Success: High. Intentional collaboration and efforts have already been seen and proven effective.

Timeline: Begin Immediately.

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Report prepared by

Lancaster County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities

Deb Jones, Director of Human Services / Office for the Homelessness Coalition / February 23, 2024