Homelessness in Fairfax County: Progress and Meeting the Challenges Ahead

Board of Supervisors Housing Committee

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Speakers

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• Tom Barnett
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2008 – 2018: Ten Year Plan

Overview of the strategies, successes, and challenges in the execution of the “Blueprint for Success” and “Implementation Plan” to prevent and end homelessness.
Strategies from 10-Year Plan

1. Prevent homelessness due to economic crisis and/or disability.
2. Preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing to prevent or remedy homelessness.
3. Deliver appropriate support services to obtain and maintain stable housing.
4. Create a management system for plan implementation with the collaboration of the public and private sectors that ensures adequate financial resources and accountability.
10-Year Plan Retrospective

• Successes
  • 46 percent reduction in homelessness.
  • More effective, efficient homeless services.

• Challenges
  • Demand for temporary shelter and permanent housing programs consistently exceed capacity.
  • Racial disparities in homelessness.
  • Community understanding about causes of homelessness.
2019 – 2022: Current Era

OPEH Merger with HCD

• One department, a continuum of housing needs

• Early Benefits
  • Retooling Bridging Affordability
  • Broader staff expertise to support the development of new permanent supportive housing
  • Emergency Housing Vouchers
Lessons from COVID-19 Pandemic

• QPID shelters were response to a health crisis, not homelessness.

• Successes
  • Rapid isolation and quarantine.
  • Protect individuals at high risk of serious illness.
  • Decompress shelters to mitigate spread of virus.
  • Over 700 people housed from the hotels.

• Challenges
  • Increases in temporary shelter increases homelessness.
  • Insufficient affordable, permanent housing for guests.
Point-in-Time Count Trends
Evidenced-Based Best Practices

• Housing First

• Built for Zero

• Permanent housing with support services:
  • Permanent supportive housing
  • Rapid rehousing
Countywide Strategic Plan

• Community Outcome Area: Housing & Neighborhood Livability

• Indicator of Success: Preventing and Ending Homelessness

• Strategies:

  • HNL 14. Expand the availability of permanent supportive housing units and services for people experiencing homelessness, including both individuals and families.

  • HNL 15. Provide incentives so that nonprofit and for-profit housing developers and landlords will set aside units for people experiencing homelessness.
Moving Forward

• Planning for Zero: Ending Homelessness in Fairfax County
  • Seek community input on updating existing strategies
    • Community forums, surveys
  • Process to update performance metrics

• Governance
  • Evaluate current structure and make recommendations
Moving Forward

• Operations
  • Conduct operational assessment of the effectiveness of county and private homeless services
  • Analyze hotel usage

• Longer Term Solutions
  • Find locations for permanent supportive housing
  • Review zoning requirements
  • Identify new or under-utilized options
Moving Forward

• Create more capacity in emergency shelters and reduce the population of various encampments

• Share findings and recommendations at Nov. 22, 2022, Housing Committee
Questions?

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