



MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Economic Development Committee (CEDC)

FROM: Karen Harkness, Director of Community & Economic Development

DATE: October 14, 2020

RE: Homelessness Concern in Appleton

People experiencing homelessness in Appleton are already at heightened risk for COVID-19 at the same time that resources and capacity are reduced due to the health, economic, and social crisis. Considering higher unemployment, a decrease of open public spaces, a diminished capacity to supportive services, and a lack of access to mental health, we quickly understand how homelessness is a growing concern for our nation and community.

The City of Appleton, in collaboration with many of our community partner organizations, began tracking the homelessness trends prior to the pandemic. Since the pandemic, the City, in collaboration with many stakeholders, has created processes, programs, and additional resources to do more to provide people experiencing homelessness with shelter and safety. The attached document provides a detailed list of these efforts since February of this year.

The City of Appleton added the position of a Coordinated Entry Specialist in April 2020. This position works with organizations supporting this vulnerable population to implement a robust coordinated entry process. Coordinated Entry means the individual or family in need of housing services can get access to resources regardless of which agency they start (no wrong door policy) through a formalized assessment and evaluation process. The coordinated entry process prioritizes individuals and families based on needs and allows all of the housing agencies that are part of coordinated entry system to serve the highest priority needs as housing program openings become available. This process is an approach to coordination and management of a crisis response system's resources that allows users to make consistent decisions from available information efficiently and effectively connecting people to housing and service interventions that will rapidly end their homelessness.

The Community and Economic Development Department is in the process of solidifying an initiative in partnership with the Appleton Police Department, the Clarion Inn Appleton, and LEAVEN for a Motel Voucher Program. Funding was secured, Council approved the program, and the City is seeking hotel/motel partners to work with us.

The Motel Voucher Program will be used as a last resort to keep homeless individuals in a safe and secure location overnight. Wrap-around care, addressing their individual situation, will be provided with the goal of stabilizing their housing, which will then allow other issues and concerns to be addressed.

City of Appleton staff, in collaboration with Pillars, applied for and was awarded a \$325,000 Emergency Solution Grants COVID-19 (ESG-CV) grant to target activities related to street outreach, prevention, and diversion of homelessness due to COVID-19. Additionally, the City received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) -CV funding of \$348,255 targeted toward community development activities due to COVID-19. The award of those funds are at CEDC tonight. In May, unused CDBG funds in the amount of \$84,780 were reallocated to LEAVEN, Pillars and Salvation Army to bolster their prevention, diversion, and emergency assistance programs. Additional funding from the Federal and State government is expected.

One immediate need we have is for property owners willing to work with local nonprofit agencies to rent affordable units to those experiencing homelessness. Anyone interested in learning more, please call our Community and Economic Development Department at 920-832-6408.