

Interfaith Works
"People's House"

Section 3

Narrative Statement

Narratives

1. Housing Needs Statement

(50 points)

1. Describe the compelling need within the community and how your project will specifically address the need.

The Peoples House program is a new project conceived to address the vast gap in services for street dependent adults in Thurston CO, specifically in downtown Olympia. Drawing from our diverse experiential backgrounds we have designed a program based on the stated needs of the people utilizing available services. A growing body of evidence suggests that programs designed with the direct input of clients are able to better meet the needs, build capacity within communities and create sustainable, transformative projects. We view this as a project responding to a documented public need and serving a beneficial public purpose. We are responding to the call to create innovative approaches to homelessness and to lead organized efforts that impact the problem.

The Problem

Per the state homeless program each county should have reached a reduction in their homeless population by **75% in 2013** (Please see attached bill report). In the 2013 census (please see attached) count the homeless population showed to have increased by **64.1% between 2006 and 2012**. To be on track with the state funding for homeless projects, Thurston County needs to reduce their homeless population from **686 to net zero by the end of 2015**.

There are many challenges, which need to be addressed in providing services to the chronically homeless in Thurston County. Significant mental health challenges have been identified as one of the top 3 causes of homelessness. Domestic violence is the leading cause among women and children while veterans make up 1/3 of the total homeless population. All three of these populations often experience co-occurring trauma and substance abuse, thus perpetuating cycles of homelessness.

The population with the greatest need for low-barrier sheltering have significant obstacles to overcome including, mental health challenges, substance abuse, addiction, trauma, physical abuse, malnutrition, physical disabilities, no income, address, or ID, limited or zero access to public transportation. Additionally, there are small yet significant barriers to people accessing housing and sheltering services including: Valid identification,

addiction and sobriety, poor credit and rental history, inability to adhere to length of stay requirements (which are typically between 2 weeks and 1 month), ownership of a companion animal, location to store personal belongings and the separation of adult partners.

Night Shelter

In 2013, 214 year round beds were available for use by the homeless population with an additional 41 cold-weather beds. The Thurston county shelter network is not utilized 100%, but even with the lack of utilization, there are nearly **2 homeless people for every available bed in Thurston County**. Our current number of persons homeless in Thurston County is 686--a stark contrast exists between the capacity of our sheltering system and the needs of the unsheltered population.

Survey Results

Creating adequate shelter was cited as an immediate priority and a necessary component of the comprehensive Homeless System Coordinator Project in the Gaps analysis (please see attached). Over the course of April 2013, 45 unique, unsheltered adults residing in downtown Olympia were surveyed by Emma Goldman Youth Homeless outreach Project (EGYHOP) street outreach workers about sheltering. Participants were asked if they sleep in front of businesses or doorways downtown. 37 out of 45 individuals answered sometimes, often or very often. When they were asked if they would prefer to sleep at a low-barrier shelter with the same components proposed as the People's House program, 40 of 45 individuals responded yes.

Day Shelter and Respite

Similarly to night shelter, day shelter is an emergent and persistent need for the unsheltered, chronically homeless. People are sent out of night shelters early in the morning and for the rest of the day there exists extremely limited places for people to gain respite from the elements. People are discharged to the streets from the hospital with physical, mental and sometimes medical needs. Social problems commonly associated with homelessness are exacerbated when people have heightened medical and emotional needs. The same sheltering survey from April 2013 of street based homeless in downtown Olympia asked participants if they would use a day use drop in center with the same components proposed as the People's House program. 43 of 45 responded, yes.

Currently, the street community in Olympia has created makeshift day shelters in: *The public library, Sylvester park, The Intercity transit center, The artesian well, Heritage park, and Overhangs of local businesses downtown.* In order to have the largest impact on the chronically unsheltered population in downtown Olympia, **a shelter needs to be in close proximity of the current makeshift day and night shelters.** According to the 2013 Thurston County gaps analysis (please see attached) increasing numbers of people are relying on the streets of downtown Olympia. Out of 532 Thurston county census (please see attached) survey respondents, **477 or 90% stated that they are currently located in Olympia.** Services need to be centrally located in the core of the county's largest city to adequately meet the need. **Proximity to downtown is key.**

Through a 24-hour hotline, community outreach, and a partnership with The CRC's Downtown Ambassador Program and PATH program as well as EGYHOP's street outreach workers, we will provide business owners an alternative to calling 911 when issues arise. This will greatly decrease pressure on the Olympia Police Department in responding to nuisance calls. Providing Downtown Olympia with a safe, accommodating, and well-managed facility for homeless individuals will create relief for downtown businesses, public works, and sidewalks so that these places may be used for their intended purposes.

Transitional Period

Interfaith Works (IW) Shelter Coordinator, Meg Martin MSW, will be working over the summer to secure a transitional sheltering site for the IW women's shelter while the People's House implementation is underway. This temporary shelter will provide a necessary transitional element for the faith communities to step away from the past model as The People's House steps into the role.

Background of Attempted Site Navigation

Starting in January of 2013, the Low-Barrier task force comprised of a variety of homeless service providers, the faith community, a representative of the ODA and the Thurston county homeless coordinator began scouting potential site locations for the low-barrier shelter project. The task force looked at most potential sites within the bounds of Plum Street to Water Street and Union Avenue to Olympia Street. Members of the task force also scouted options further outside of the downtown core such as the Bailey Motel on Martin Way.

Some sites were not large enough or cost prohibitive and from past experience it is well known that the size and cost of a location is crucial to success for the whole community.

Current proposed location

A location has been identified as good fit for the low barrier shelter on Franklin St. between 5th and Legion. This location is within the downtown core and off the main streets. William Perkins, the owner of the building has written a letter of intent (attached) for leasing his property to the People's House shelter project. Additionally, we have identified the necessary steps to opening a program of this type in this location with the help of Tom Hill, the Building Official-Code Enforcement Supervisor Permit and Inspection Services Manager for Olympia.

2. Describe your proposed project. Be specific and include who will benefit, how many units will be produced, or number of households served.

The People's House will offer a managed, nightly, low-barrier shelter program of 40+ beds, year round for street dependent single adults (over 18). We will absorb the faith based shelters (Interfaith Works scattered site women's shelter and St. Mike's/Sacred Heart men's shelter) and add 10 beds to the current shelter system. We will serve chronic, unsheltered individuals 24 hrs. /day that otherwise choose to go without shelter due to barriers of entry. We will better meet the basic needs of people on the streets with day time drop-in services including showers, laundry, mail, telephone, internet access, personal storage and a 24 hour bathroom within the downtown core. We will provide qualified and supervised mental health support 40 hours per week through a partnership with the Capital Recovery Center. We will be a necessary entry point for people to access a pathway to housing. By working closely with our agency partner SideWalk, we will actively assess and refer individuals that would qualify for rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing programs.

Staffing structure

The People's House extensive staffing structure is necessary to meet the demand of a more comprehensive service model and the higher level of needs presented with this population of people (please see staff organizational chart, attached). On-site staffing structure will include: 1 overseeing MSW Program Director, 2 Shelter managers (HMIS trained), 9 shelter staff, 2 Certified Peer Counselors.

Shelter staff/Peer Counselors will be trained in, trauma informed care, motivational interviewing techniques, mental health first aid, de-escalation techniques, harm reduction, anti-oppression training, Critical Incident Management and mediation techniques.

In collaboration with Capitol Recovery Center (CRC) we will offer a certified mental health day program with contracted LMHP clinical oversight (from CRC) and full time MSW Program Director on site. We will have Certified Peer Counselors (CPC's) offering trained peer support in treatment planning, self-advocacy, art, music and inclusive social activities. They will provide support for anxiety, PTSD, Depression, Bipolar, and Co-occurring disorders.

3. How effective and efficient is your approach to meeting the need?

This project will succeed in fulfilling multiple needs outlined by the County Homeless Coordinator's gaps analysis (see attachment). Client accessibility and retention will be increased by low-barrier parameters. The People's House will have 40 beds, contributing **14,600 bed nights** a year to the existing shelter capacity. The People's House, in partnership with The Capitol Recovery Center and Sidewalk Advocacy Center, will target gaps identified in the Coordinated Entry Point section of the Gaps Analysis by providing shelter placement within 24 hours, and client intakes within 72 hours. With a 24 hour model of sheltering we have a projected cost of \$39/bed night for The People's House shelter program. In comparison, the Thurston County jail = \$92/bed night, SafePlace = \$47.76/bed night, Haven House = \$218.92/bed night, Drexel House = \$36.64/bed night, Salvation Army = \$15.19/bed night.

Increase capacity, decrease burden

The low-barrier shelter will increase shelter utilization and capacity, decreasing the number of illegal encampments, street violence, and weather related deaths and illnesses. For over 20 years the faith community has built a network of approximately 450 volunteers making up 11 congregations. The greater faith community has been a stronghold of homeless service provision for decades. However, the needs of clients have changed over the years. Churches are no longer able to meet the need of hosting the scattered site model due to increased mental health incidences that have strained the church network and facilities. In addition, volunteers are not

adequately trained. They do not have the necessary experience to have repeated exposure with vulnerable people in crisis. Similarly, The Salvation Army has tirelessly hosted the cold weather contract for Thurston County and is no longer willing to expand their program to include a much lower barrier cold weather program each winter.

The drop-in center will decrease visibility of homeless people in public space, and decrease crimes associated with homelessness (i.e. loitering, littering, panhandling, drinking or sleeping in public). The People's House will host a 24-hour public restroom, alleviating pressure on local government, downtown businesses, and decreasing rates of public urination. Through a partnership with the EGYHOP street outreach program and the Downtown Ambassadors, we will actively engage in outreach of the street community to get people on the path to housing and decrease the social problems associated with unmanaged homelessness in our community. Further, this project will aid in the expansion of mental health services in Thurston County-another identified social service gap not only on the county level, but nationwide as well.

4. What best practices are being used and the model of service delivery?

The Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) program in Seattle, WA is recognized as a monumentally successful program in reducing street homelessness and the many social problems often associated with chronic homelessness. The DESC model incorporates a network of care including **three emergency shelters with two locations downtown and one in Queen Anne** at the Morrison building, 8 supportive housing sites (Housing First), scattered site housing, chemical dependency and **mental health support on site**. The success of the Housing First model comes from the network of care they have created that begins with sheltering. Similarly, according to the 2012 Vancouver, BC homeless strategy document, the low-barrier shelter initiative decreased street homelessness by 82% over the course of 4 years according to the Vancouver housing and homeless strategy of 2012. The initiative identified the highest populated areas of homelessness across the city and created four emergency shelters. In partnership with local housing agencies and the city government, Vancouver has created a successful network of homeless services incorporating low-barrier shelter as part of the core.

Consumer involvement in homeless services is another identified best practice of homeless service provision according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Consumer involvement involves the integration of people with lived experience of homelessness, mental health, substance abuse and trauma into staff and leadership roles. Through the Certified Peer Counselor program we will have access to consumer involvement from day one at The People's House. The low-barrier model of sheltering is also based on the principle of consumer involvement at its core. It is paramount to the success of homeless services that programs be built based on the stated needs of those using the services rather than the perceived needs of those providing the service.

5. Describe and identify how the project is consistent with the County's Ten-Year Homeless Goals and Objectives identified on page 4.

The Thurston County Homeless Coordinator identified five top gaps in the homeless system: *Low barrier shelter program for adults, rapid Re-housing for families, permanent supportive housing for adults, youth bridge program and youth sheltering.*

The People's House shelter program will primarily meet the needs of a low barrier shelter program for adults. The People's House will actively refer qualifying people for rapid rehousing and advocacy services, increase outreach and engagement capacity through a close relationship with SideWalk. We will work closely with our partners at the Capitol Recovery Center and be able to plug people into rental assistance programs they offer through their TBRA and PATH programs. We will assist existing programs to increase program efficiency by creating a clear, consistent and present entry point for the "hardest to serve" individuals in our community.

6. Identify any homeless or special need populations that will be served. Describe how the unsheltered homeless population will be reduced.

The People's House will serve many people along the continuum of homelessness. Our target population is the chronic, "hardest to serve" population that often have an intersection of challenges that affect their ability to move out of homelessness. This population is often the largest drain on community resources with the least amount of access to services. Shelter occupancy rates have circulated around the city of Olympia over the last 6 months showing fluctuating usage rates among shelter programs. While shelter occupancy rates do not

illuminate the entire context for which individuals access shelter, lowering barriers for entry into shelter has shown an increase in shelter utilization in other cities in the Pacific Northwest particularly in Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Likewise, The People's House management has over 9 years of experience and rapport that has organically grown through the informal, no-barrier relationship of EGYHOP street outreach. Chronically mentally ill, homeless, traumatized and chemically dependent people access services through EGYHOP everyday and oftentimes, it is the only service they are accessing. Through our experience with no-barrier street based service provision, we can offer a unique relationship with the chronically homeless street community that no other service provider can.

Target number of decreasing street based homelessness by 32 individuals in the first year.

II. PROJECT READINESS STATEMENT

How the funds will be used.

The requested funds will be used for operations and management of the low-barrier shelter. The Interfaith Works Board of Directors will not proceed with this project without a full funding request from Thurston County. Due to the necessary staffing structure to maintain safety and quality of services provided, the bulk of funds will go towards staffing costs. Estimated staffing costs of \$205,000 will make up about 55% of total operations costs. The bulk of staffing will be direct program services. We must be able to adequately maintain trained, competent staff in order to be successful in reducing street homelessness. The broad base of the Interfaith network will provide many opportunities for in-kind donations or materials, furnishings and labor to complete certain aspects of building modifications but we will need to purchase basic supplies. This money will also be used to create 3 work stations for the program Director, Shelter managers and Certified Peer Counselors with modest accommodations. We will primarily use a network of cell phones for shelter staff, but will need to install a landline and internet service provider in order to accommodate the drop in center needs.

How other funding sources will be used (please see attached budget summary).

Funding in the amount of \$35,000 from the City of Olympia will be used for seeding low-barrier as designated by the council. In order to maintain site control we must enter into the application process for a change of use permit at the CRC building. The application process for a change of use permit averages 120 days

to process. The application will be submitted no later than July 15th, thus making building renovations possible beginning mid October. After that time we will be able to make basic, first year renovations in order to swiftly open doors before the harsh winter months. The city dollars will also be used to secure a reserve of one month's operating budget in order to responsibly enter into implementation. We will also apply for the cold weather contract (\$42,000) from the County for emergency sheltering in the winter months. A one time private donation of one month's rent from an independent donor will be used to supplement operations and management.

Potential obstacles

The only significant potential obstacles to opening the program's doors would be delays relating to the timely issuance of a Conditional Use permit by the City of Olympia, and funding and successful completion of required work to improve seismic safety and install a sprinkler system. We expect this work to be of a moderate scope, but will need to make a capital request from the available one-time "bubble" funds under the Consortium. If funds are not awarded for these safety and renovation steps, the Peoples House will not proceed.

III. Organizational Capacity Statement

Interfaith Works

The People's House is a proposed program of Interfaith Works, a local association of faith communities. Interfaith Works (IW), established in 1974 as "Associated Ministries of Thurston County," is a non-profit association of faith communities that has been instrumental over time in founding and nurturing many vital volunteer-operated programs in the wider Olympia community. Some projects include, Panza (the support committee for Camp Quixote), the Out of the Woods family shelter, the Family Support Center's family shelter, Bread & Roses, the Thurston County Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity projects, the Crisis Clinic, and the Dispute Resolution Center.

For over three decades, Interfaith Works has directly operated the wintertime Emergency Overflow Shelter for homeless women and children in our community for over 20 years. In 2008 we were awarded a professional services contract with Thurston County to pay costs of transporting women and families to our emergency shelters. In late 2011, Interfaith Works launched the SideWalk Homeless Advocacy and Support Center, serving adult men and women through compassionate advocacy and an innovative rapid re-housing

project that has housed almost 100 single persons. In September 2012, Interfaith Works received funding in support of our direct shelter work, enabling the operation of our women's shelter to be extended beyond the traditional winter months to year-round basis.

IW is structured as a coalition – an organization of organizations. As such, we have a long track record of collaboration and partnership with other groups and stakeholders on a wide range of social concerns and community priorities.

Capital Recovery Center

CRC has a long history of providing day programming for a critical population in Olympia going back to opening doors in 1989. When the CRC was a clubhouse there were a wide variety of day services provided. In the summer of 2012 the CRC became a Community Mental Health Agency and no longer provided clubhouse programming. When the CRC was a clubhouse day programming included employment support (basic job related skill building, resume building, application and interview support), mail services and basic computer skills development. With the CRC no longer operating as a Clubhouse there has opened up a need for some of the services previously provided.

The CRC, as a CMHA, now offers diverse programming with their Certified Peer Counseling program, offering competent and compassionate one on one counseling and groups that range from Adult Daily Living skills to Co-occurring disorders. Through collaboration and partnership with The People's House, the CRC can revive the day program that was so crucial to members of the clubhouse. Together we will better meet the needs of those managing mental illness, homelessness and a variety of other problems that keep them from striving as individuals.