Portland Homeless Facility Feasibility Study

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In March of 2016, two independent consultants were hired by an Oregon non-profit to assist the homeless and members of the Portland-area business community to explore the feasibility of building a co-located, collaborative homeless campus in the city. Thirty-eight persons, all stakeholders, were formally interviewed for this study, of which 19 were CEOs or Executive Directors within the business or nonprofit community. Others included persons in governmental office, both elected and non-elected, and homeless advocates. In addition, 18 informal interviews were completed with people who are currently homeless on the streets of Portland.

The consultants asked the interviewees how they or their organization were involved with homeless issues in Portland. In comments made during these interviews, the following thoughts were offered:

The homeless problem in Portland is becoming larger, more visible, and will grow.

There is compassion fatigue among the citizens of Portland.

Nonprofit organizations in Portland must work together to help solve the issue.

The need for a new vision to help solve this problem is needed immediately.
Two general questions about the homeless in Portland were asked of the stakeholders. The first simply asked for their personal thoughts regarding the homeless situation in Portland. The second asked how the citizens of Portland perceived the current homeless situation. The answers to these two questions were varied. These two questions elicited the most responses of any questions in the survey.

Many stakeholders spoke of the general city atmosphere as it relates to the homeless issues. It was often noted that Portland is a city that is ideologically very progressive; that the most people have a sense of wanting to help the homeless. It was noted that the citizens of Portland have a high degree of tolerance for difficult social issues. In the same regard, many of the stakeholders admitted that the citizens of Portland are feeling a sense of compassion fatigue in trying to deal with the homeless situation, suggesting that people’s compassion had turned to, “I don’t care what you do as long as it is not in my backyard”. It was also suggested that Portland’s compassion ended with the homeless that “truly needed help” and that those who were able-bodied felt “entitled” were not of the same concern. Generally, people were concerned about the “homegrown homeless” and not those who had come into the city from other locations. Finally, it was noted that people feel very vulnerable when around the homeless and that generally there is a feeling that homelessness is “out of control” and that there is “no recourse.”

“Collective anxiety is at an all time high in Portland.”

Interview Response

“Portland has great intentions but we just need to learn how to work together to solve this problem.”

Interview response
Stakeholders talked about the changing climate of homelessness but suggested that they recently are seeing a very different level of behavior from the homeless. Said one: “Aggressiveness has become normal”. Some people in Portland believe that people are choosing to become homeless, “even though that is not the reality.”

“Everyone is affected this issue.”

Interview response

The two subjects most commonly discussed within these two questions were homeless camping and housing. Most stakeholders noted that homeless camping is a great concern to the people of Portland, that the downtown is no longer safe, that the downtown is dirty and that it is harming tourism. Several people mentioned that they have heard people say they don’t feel safe going into certain places in the city that did feel safe five years ago. Camping has increased the visibility of the homeless in Portland. One stakeholder suggested that “Historically the homeless have been viewed as part of the community, they are our neighbors, but since camping began, people are less supportive of this issue”. Another suggested that “camping is butting up against our love of green space”. Finally, it was stated that legalized camping is “testing people’s patience”, that businesses are not happy with the Mayor’s plan, and that the Mayor is not “thinking of the end game” – that camping has “polarized” the people of Portland.
The second most discussed issue in the survey was the issue of housing. In general the stakeholders acknowledge that affordable housing in Portland has become impossible to find. It was acknowledged that the market has changed dramatically and that, until recently, affordable housing was available in the city. Now, for the first time, people are getting “priced out of their homes”. Many noted that it simply is not possible to find affordable housing in the city, that there are not enough “affordable housing units,” that the city needs to invest in affordable housing and that currently there are not a lot of tools for developers that would like to build affordable housing. Finally, an interesting idea offered is that “People believe that the affordable housing situation is out of control and that people are coming in from out of town and taking houses. They believe that when you build more houses it attracts more people from out of town.”

“There must be a distinction between Portland’s homeless crisis and its housing crisis.”

Interview response.

Many general thoughts were offered in regard to the Portland homeless situation that ranged from health care services to political will. Stakeholders noted that private investment was needed to help resolve the current situation, that mental health services were severely absent from the current system, that centralized intake for the homeless is very weak in Portland, that the current system of care houses the homeless but doesn’t give them the necessary skills to move on with their lives, and that the homeless issue is very “silo-ed”. Finally, there was an interesting mixture of optimism and fatalism in the general comments, with some suggesting that the current system of care was actually working well but could improve with additional funding and that non-profits are doing a great job. On the less positive side there are those who believe that the city is “swimming upstream to end homelessness” but the answer just “isn’t going to happen.”
“There is a lot of duplication of services. We have good intentions but a lot of people aren’t figuring out how to work together in a way that creates efficiencies”

*Interview Response*
TOPIC THREE: HOMELESS GROWTH IN PORTLAND

Two questions on the survey asked if there had been growth in the homeless population in Portland in the last five years and, if so, how that growth affected the care given to the homeless. There was a great polarity in the answers received from the stakeholders on these two questions, which may indicate a divide in the beliefs of the general community, as well.

Many stakeholders felt that there had been a “significant” growth in the homeless population in Portland in the last five years, that all it took was a drive through the city to see that, noting that the metropolitan area had grown by 100,000 people in the last five years. Some thought that camping probably also positively affected the rate of growth of the homeless, suggesting that some are not “true” homeless but find a tent better than “anything they can afford.”

Most cities track the growth of the homeless population in their area through a yearly “point in time” (PIT) count. It was suggested by several people that the PIT numbers for Portland had been “corrupted” or “manipulated” by the city government to appear lower than are actually the case. Service providers interviewed noted that their service number had increased dramatically in the last five years. One noted that in 2009 they served 99,000 meals to the homeless, rising to 331,000 in 2015. Another suggested that homeless numbers are “increasing by 25-100 a day in the city. Finally, one stakeholder suggested that the numbers have increased quite a bit because it is “easy to be homeless in Portland” and that the city needs to create rules that make it harder to raise a tent”.

“The numbers are clear. The count shows the numbers have not dropped and yet there has been an investment of millions of dollars”

Interview Response
“There is a little bit of smoke and mirrors in town. Tents make it feel like there are more homeless when there are not.”

*Interview Response*

Those who believed the homeless numbers had not risen significantly suggested that the issue was not the numbers but the public visibility of the homeless with the new camping ordinance, suggesting that the PIT numbers has not increased but the visibility had. “PIT is the same but visibility is 500% more than it was.”

Once again, housing has mentioned with stakeholders mentioning that it is the tight housing market that has led to the increase in homeless numbers in the city and that in order to end tent camping in the city, the city must have more housing units available. In regard to how increasing numbers of homeless people on the streets has affected services, there seemed to be a clear belief that the increasing numbers of homeless is drastically affecting the ability of service providers to meet the needs of the homeless in Portland. The general belief is that the social service agencies in the community “cannot keep up with the growth,” that service providers feel “overwhelmed,” that there is not enough capacity in the current system, that services are unavailable or are too hard to get and lines are already “way too long” for the homeless in need of services. For many, the shortage of homeless services in Portland is directly tied back to the lack of funding for those providing the services with the suggestion that the “level of care has not been able to match the growth” in services for the homeless population. It was also suggested that public-funded service are stretched tight and that stimulus money used for homeless services is now gone, leaving less money for more services that are needed.

“We are doing a great job with the sub-populations like veterans. Demographics are changing with no fault evictions and rent increases. The new Portland homeless have full-time jobs.”

*Interview Response*
The general comments in regard to the rising numbers of homeless in Portland were diverse, suggesting that no one in the community is “talking about the ten year plan,” that the number of homeless African Americans and unhoused youth and families with children has increased and the thought that some families had “just gotten stabilized from the recession and are not getting hit with higher housing costs.” Finally, several stakeholders mentioned the failed strategy of the city several years ago to move entirely to the “Housing First” model while leaving all shelter beds behind, noting, “The city ignored the shelter strategy completely and now we have left the homeless on the streets and the sidewalks. There are not enough low-demand shelter beds. We need 650 more by the end of 2017.”

TOPIC FOUR: TRANSFORMATION

“Transformation means the capacity to change someone’s attitude and their way of thinking. How they value themselves. We need to create conditions in which people can be transformed.”

*Interview Response*
“On a good day our system has transformational effects, but there are a lot of walking wounded.”

*Interview Response*

Three questions in the feasibility study revolved around the general concept of “transformation” and how that concept related to the current system of care for the homeless in Portland. It was asked if the current system of care was indeed “transformational” or if it was more to “providing services that helped sustain lives in their current condition.” (It should be noted that no negative stigma was placed on the idea of “sustaining lives” as they were, noting that with decreased funding for services on the street, “sustaining lives” was a noble and important endeavor in helping the homeless of Portland.)

To that end, many people talked about the current homeless system in terms of “transformation” noting that the system itself was in true need of transformation, that services for the homeless needed to be more mobile, that the system’s transformation would multiply the services to the homeless “10-fold” to move people out of homelessness and that people were generally tired of a system that kept people in a state of homelessness. It was also noted that transformation of the system would “require everyone to put aside their interest and work for the greater good,” including “transforming the way partners work together and how they work with the people they serve.” One stakeholder said they would like to see “collective and agreed upon goals that everyone is working toward.”

Again, housing statements were part of the vision of transformation in Portland with stakeholders saying that it is “housing that allows for true transformation – that it provides a foundation” and that until the “housing issue is solved, there won’t be transformation.”
“Sometimes getting someone out of harm’s way is a good day.”

*Interview Response*

General thoughts regarding transformation as it relates to the homeless situation in Portland ranged from the thought that if there was true transformation of the system the “trend line would go down,” to the thought that “there is an understanding that it (transformation) needs to happen but there isn’t a commitment to make it happen.” The idea that transformation requires money was voiced frequently as was the thought that transformation required people having an opportunity to rebuild relationships, the need to expand services geographically, and the need to get to the “root cause” of homelessness and then move people through the system to “next steps.” Finally, the hopeful thoughts on system transformation included the belief that if there was systemic transformation, “we would no longer see a lot of people on the street. Everyone would have a place to go and there would be solutions.”

When it came to the question of whether Portland’s current system of care transformed lives or sustained lives, the answers were once again varied and most found common ground in the belief that the system currently balanced on a little bit of both (transformation and sustaining) with a “spectrum ranging between harm reduction and transformation.”

Many stakeholders were proud of the work currently being done by social service organizations in transforming lives on the streets of Portland, suggesting that transformation is taking place, but there are currently not enough services available and there are a lot of people in the continuum. The belief that there are not enough services available and funds to sustain current services was omni-present in the survey, but so was the belief that Portland has “very effective programs that transform,” suggesting that the system “does provide transformation if you are lucky enough to get into a program” but for others, “there is no access.” A few stakeholders believed that the system was currently in a state of simple “sustaining” with one offering the thought that, “You simply cannot prescribe a solution that is successful to transform a life.” It should be noted that several of the people interviewed who are not service providers were of the opinion that the service system was not effective.
TOPIC FIVE: SOLUTIONS

FIRST STEPS

Four of the questions on the feasibility survey dealt with the issues of what “next steps” were in terms of dealing with the homeless situation on Portland, including asking what is needed to help resolve the current issue, what is the most important issue to solve and asking how important it is to invest more money in housing and social services in the city in an effort to help the homeless.

A major theme in what is needed to help solve the current homeless situation centered around what is perceived to be a leadership vacuum as it relates to strategy and vision with comments such as, “We need a clear vision and the leadership to get us there,” as well as, “We need leadership and more transparency,” and “We need a vision for how to find a way out.” Housing was again mentioned with the need for the expansion of Section 8 housing vouchers, an increase in permanent supportive housing and housing that included mental health and general wrap-around services. “There are too many meetings and process and not enough action and progress,” said one.

Funding was also a subject mentioned often with some stakeholders suggestions that housing funding needed to be doubled as a first step and that funding was desperately needed for higher wages for those working in the social service agencies. Other first steps offered were for the police to help with engaging the homeless, safe and legal access to camping, more emergency shelter and wrap around services, employment opportunities, and businesses coming to the table to help and not hinder homeless initiatives. (A comment was made about the perceived negative business community billboard advertising campaign against the homeless.) The summer migratory population was brought up quite often in the interview process and several stakeholders felt that dealing with the young migratory summer homeless population was very important. Finally, the issue of the coordination of services was mentioned, including the need for the coordination of funding efforts, a social services commitment to “an impending and agreed upon plan,” an “integrated solution” and finally, “coordination between all of the key players ….social services, judges, the police department. We can’t arrest our way out of this problem.”

“We need leadership. It sets the tone of expectations of what it means to transform lives and hold people accountable for getting that done.”

Interview Response
When asked what the most important issue is to solve in regard to the homeless situation in Portland, the answers from stakeholders was varied. The list included a clear plan and leadership to follow the plan; vision and coordination; emergency beds; coordinated services; rent control; a plan to get people into treatment when needed; integrated care with mission and relational aspects, and more affordable permanent housing. One stakeholder said, “The City is in a crisis and is not acting like it,” while another said, what was first needed to solve this issue was a responsible way to address the need and not just “a knee jerk to what the public wants.”

When asked on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the most important, how important did the respondents feel the addition of more low income housing was in meeting the needs of the Portland homeless community, a resounding 69% rated housing a “10” as a necessary tool in meeting the needs of Portland’s homeless.
When asked on a scale of one to ten with ten being the most important, how important did respondents feel additional funding to social service agencies was to helping meet the needs of the homeless, 29% said it was the most important, with 22% giving the question an "8" on a "10" scale.

Q20 On a scale of one to ten, ten being the most important, how important is additional funding to social service agencies that work with the homeless?

Answered: 35  Skipped: 3

"The problem with Portland is that it is just too fair. It shouldn't matter if organization X gets money. Just get it to the provider that can get the job done."

Interview Response
TOPIC SIX: “A HOME FOR EVERYONE.”

Much money, time and thought has been put into Portland’s plan to end homelessness, “A Plan for Everyone.” Considered the “reset” of the City’s original 10 year plan, A Home for Everyone was written to be a multifaceted “road map” to moving toward the end of homelessness in the City of Portland. Because this plan is seen as the city’s road map, several questions on the survey revolved around the plan itself. Stakeholders were asked if they knew of the plan, if they were involved in creating the plan and most importantly, if they felt the plan was a good roadmap in solving the perceived homeless crisis in the city.

Almost all stakeholders were aware of the plan with only 8% unfamiliar with the plan. Forty-two percent of respondents were a part of creating the plan with 23% being part of the board or one of the committees that developed the plan. Others were part of various workgroups and part of the coordinating board. One stakeholder served as a consultant. Some distress was voiced over the fact that no peers (homeless people) were a part of any of the committees involved in writing the plan.

Over 80% of the stakeholders believed that the A Home for Everyone plan was a good roadmap to move the City forward on homeless issues, with only 20% disagreeing with that thought.

“We do way too much “for” people instead of “with” people.”

Interview Response
When asked for input on their thoughts about the plan being a good roadmap, many of the comments centered around the process of writing the plan and putting the plan into action. Some suggested that it was a good plan with good intentions but they were not sure how well the plan was working, with others suggesting it was only a partial roadmap that only looked at a couple of parts of a solution. One stakeholder suggested that there were too many priorities in the plan.

Data and outcomes were mentioned on a number of occasions with stakeholders saying that there must be accountability associated with the plan and that a good look was needed at the “real data” and the “real outcomes” noting, “It seems they aren’t taking an honest look at what is really going on.” Stakeholders suggested that there needed to be an “accountability” partner to make sure progress was being made in moving the plan forward.

As noted earlier, most stakeholders were generally very supportive of the plan feeling that the plan made a “compelling case” and that it is a very good plan but not “resourced” well and that the plan does “lots of things well.” A comment was also made that the City and County seemed to be working well together in regard to the implementation of the plan. Other thoughts on the plan included the plan needed more input from the homeless; there was not enough focus on permanent supportive housing; the fact that work groups are not playing a significant role in the plan; that there needed to be more prevention in the plan, and more money for housing people with addictions.

“The jury is still out as to where the money gets invested. People are going to notice where $30 million goes and if it works or it doesn’t.”

*Interview Response*
TOPIC SEVEN: PORTLAND’S NONPROFITS

The facility being recommended in this feasibility study is deeply rooted in the co-location of social service agencies in an effort to create a comprehensive, collaborative model of homeless care. For that reason, six general questions about Portland’s nonprofit, social service community were included in this survey.

When looking at questions revolving around general thoughts about Portland’s nonprofits, and questions about whether Portland’s nonprofit agencies tend to “silo” in their work with the homeless, the overwhelming response to the work of the social service agencies was a positive one. Comments such as “we love them,” strong culture and “lots of effective professionals - a sophisticated group” were given. Phrases that were also used to explain nonprofits were “they deliver a lot of bang for their bucks,” “they leverage community support,” and “lots of strong personalities with lots of great programs.”

As with most nonprofit cultures, there are some areas of growth that were identified by the survey stakeholders. Some called the nonprofit community “very disorganized, lacking leadership and training, lacking business skills” and also offered the thought that there are many “opportunities for efficiencies within the organizations.”

Much of the general conversation about the nonprofit community revolved around the general feeling that Portland nonprofits were either unable or unwilling to collaborate in their work with the homeless, suggesting that the nonprofits were very isolated, that they try to collaborate but generally work in their given niche and were rarely given any incentive to collaborate with other organizations. As noted, “Portland has 230 nonprofits who all have a different job to do.”
When asked specifically if Portland nonprofits tended to silo, 65% of respondents answered “yes” with 24% “no” and 10% “other”. Within those “other” comments were thoughts that the work of nonprofits is inherently siloed. Stakeholders thoughts suggested that often the silos were caused because of the difficulty of the given work and the general lack of funds.

Finally, when asked what the primary reason for siloing was, 46% of the respondents answered “funding”, no respondents felt that it was caused by reputation or community exposure, but 55% thought there were other reasons for the siloing that included a lack of incentives, harder work, focus on specialization, nonprofits being overwhelmed in their own field, and organizations being cautious because of funding. One stakeholder suggested that, “nonprofit organizations are selfish and they don’t want to work together because of money.” Another said, “Working together has never been considered. We just do what we are doing and don’t really think very holistically.”
Although several stakeholders felt that Portland nonprofits/social service agencies generally chose to “go it alone,” when asked if they could identify successful partnerships between nonprofit social service agencies in Portland, a dynamic list of partnerships resulted with the organizations most often named being Central City Concerns, TPI, Human Solutions, the Food Bank and Virginia Garcia.

When asked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest, how the stakeholders would rank Portland’s nonprofits in terms of working together on important issues, results were weighted toward a positive response, but were somewhat scattered.

“Portland has a lot of hard working people that are passionate….. and underpaid.”

_**Interview Response**_
Finally, when asked what the biggest barriers were to service coordination, given six choices (funding limitations, lack of a strong coordinating organization to lead the efforts, ego, all of the above or other) stakeholders generally believed that the reason was multi-faceted with 44% responding “all of the above,” 17% believing it was funding limitations, 11% lack of strong coordinating organization to lead the efforts, 6% “ego” and 22% “all of the above.” Those who answered “other” primarily fell into two categories, those who felt that the lack of collaboration was due to a lack of leadership and others suggesting it was the fear of change. “Visions get lost and new ideas don’t get used.”

“The nature of this work is difficult and tends to narrow your vision”

“This work is inherently silo-ed.”

“There are no incentives to work together.”

*Interview Responses*
“Bringing people and organizations together could be a testament to what could be…”

*Interview Response*

As noted at the onset of this study, this work was commissioned with the idea of building a coordinated, co-located homeless center in Portland. To that end, the final questions of the survey dealt specifically with the viability of that specific idea.

When asked if the vision of a co-located “transformational service and residential center” would help with the homeless situation in Portland a resounding 100% of participants answered “yes” with none saying, “no.” Several comments added to those results included the need for a version of the vision that could fill current service gaps and augment (and not replace) the current plan. Several concerns regarding press on the Haven for Hope Campus in San Antonio were voiced, including concerns about the outdoor “prospect’s courtyard” in San Antonio while other people embraced the Texas model suggesting that coordination of service providers was “brilliant,” adding “It will be hard to get everyone onboard in Portland. The ‘stragglers’ will be difficult. There will be opposition to that vision here. Egos are a part. We must move away from soundbites of understanding. Portland is all about soundbites.”

Stakeholders were also asked if they thought such a vision was viable to the Portland homeless situation. Seventy-two percent of respondents replied “yes,” 3% replied “no,” and 25% replied, “other.” Of those that replied “other,” comments included that the concept had “huge potential,” the fact the vision had several layers of housing was positive and such a move could motivate Portland to “change the flavor” of its services. Others, concerned with the vision, suggested that if the housing bottleneck was not present in Portland, such a facility might not be needed and that such an endeavor should not become an extension of the “Housing First” program. Others suggested that what is really needed is transitional programmatic beds for specific subpopulations, such as people in substance abuse recovery, those with severe mental health issues and also people leaving corrections facilities.

“The idea has potential to be a real center of improvement to the current system. The key components should be that it must support people’s recovery, must deal with people that are actively using, employment and housing opportunities are essential and it must have wrap-around services.”

*Interview Response*
Finally, general comments about leadership and services were mentioned, including the fact that someone with “hope and a thick skin” should run such a facility in Portland and that such a vision “cannot encompass everything and it would be important to find just the right services for the Portland continuum.” The question was asked if such a vision would not be a viable answer to Portland’s homeless issue, why not? Money was the answer for most respondents that answered “no,” as well as concerns that included mixing men with children on a campus; a problem in defining the current problem; the fact that Bud Clark Commons was to be a one-stop shop and is not; that there is a lot of anxiety about the scale of the Texas model, and finally, that a political leader is needed to move such a vision through. Finally, the thought was voiced, “Everyone understands this really isn’t complicated: housing first, campus driven.”

Community and Nonprofit Perceptions

Questions were asked regarding the perceptions of nonprofits and the general community about how such a campus vision would be perceived.

Regarding the perception of the general community, the overwhelming feeling of the stakeholders was that the vision would be embraced by the Portland community under certain conditions. Some of the conditions mentioned repeatedly were that it must be started in collaboration with the community and the nonprofit community. Additionally, the stakeholders and the business community must be engaged and the political will needs to be aligned for such a plan. There is a belief that the community would be excited and would want to volunteer. Several concerns were also voiced regarding the community’s perception of such a facility including the size and scale of the vision. There were concerns regarding the location (not in my backyard), a sense of skepticism that this is “just another fix” and that so many homeless people in one place could be a “negative idea.”

When asked about the nonprofit’s perceptions of such a vision, some respondents suggested that nonprofits would be threatened by such a plan and wouldn’t want “outsiders” to come into Portland with “the magic bullet trampling on our nonprofits.” Some indicated such a plan could be seen as a “threat” to the nonprofit community. Several stakeholders did, but suggested that such a vision would be well received by the nonprofit community and that initial period of “resistance.” An equal number of respondents, however, felt that nonprofits would be open to the idea of a collaborative campus suggesting that if the planning was collaborative, it would be very successful, if “nonprofits see how it can help them prove they are successful” and if the work is an “additive” and not a
replacement of services currently offered, again, the feeling is that nonprofits would be open to the idea of the vision. Some of the stakeholders thought it could be a net positive for non-profits if this vision were successfully able to get the business community “off the sidelines” on this issue. Finally, the questions was asked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most supportive, how supportive did the stakeholders feel the community would be as a whole to such a development in Portland; 49% rated this an “8” on a “10” scale, with 15% rating it a “9,” and 12% rating it at a “10” and “7.”

We (Portland) can do this, really we can.”

Interview Response
Finally, a question was asked of the stakeholders of possible barriers (other than finances) that might be encountered in the envisioning and building of a co-location model. Several respondents suggested that struggles with collaboration of organizations could be a major obstacle for such a campus along with the problem of location (mentioned by seven respondents), the need for a team of community leaders to be a part of the vision, the lack of good data, the right leadership and transparency, the vision that such a campus if modeled to be exactly like the one in San Antonio would be “inhumane.” Politics, or a weak mayor system, could also be barriers to success. One respondent remarked that there might be a concern that such a campus would draw homeless in from other cities, with another suggesting that they saw “no insurmountable” barriers to such a project.

The question was then asked, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most likely, how likely did the respondents think it would be that barriers could keep the project from being successfully envisioned and built. Forty-five percent of the respondents chose either, “3” or “5” (meaning a low chance of barriers keeping the vision from being built) with 15% stating “4”, 9% saying “7,” 6% stating “1” and 3% picking “6,” “8,” and “9.” (See chart) No one questioned stated “10” (an assured chance that barriers would keep the project from being built.)

The final question asked of stakeholders was who should be contacted to talk about such a vision. A list of over 50 people was compiled with people from government, nonprofits, social service agencies and people who are currently homeless.

CONCLUSION

In March of 2016, two independent consultants were hired by a non-profit organized to help the homeless and members of the greater Portland business community to meet with stakeholders in the city of Portland. Their charge was to discuss the feasibility of building a co-located, collaborative homeless campus in the city. Thirty-eight stakeholders each spent up to two hours with the consultants, answering 36 questions. The honesty and integrity of those interviewed was noted by the interviewers. The stakeholders were never coerced nor directed in their responses. Often the interviewers would ask for clarification on an answer given. Additionally, eight informal interviews took place with houseless members of the Portland community. That input is not explored in the previous findings but is included in the final recommendations. The recommendations found below have been constructed using the foundation of the information received from the 38 formal interviews, the many informal interviews, as well as being based on the experience of the hired consultants.
Based on the input of stakeholders in the city of Portland, the following recommendations have been made:

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

This feasibility study clearly indicates that there is an overwhelming need to create a multi-service housing and resource center for people experiencing homelessness with low-demand, transitional and permanent housing options for men, women and couples. The funding for this new Portland Center should be a private/public partnership.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

As part of the new Portland Center, there is a need for a first level of housing envisioned as an inside low-demand safe sleeping area for men, women and couples. Because of the immediate and overwhelming need for such a shelter, due to the number of people currently experiencing homeless on the streets of Portland, it may be necessary to open a low-demand shelter before the rest of the Center is built. Adjacent to this would be an ancillary covered outside safe sleeping area for men, women and couples. This low-demand facility and safe sleeping area could shelter up to 500 people with the ability to grow to 600 during inclement weather. This shelter and day service facility would include:

- Bathrooms
- Showers
- Three meals a day
- Legal services
- Medical services
- Mental health services
- Outreach

Such a shelter would be used for people currently on the streets who might resist being in a formal structured program. Basic services would be provided, and peers would be utilized to encourage those who come to find, to discover and realize their hopes and dreams. This area would provide a safe environment off the streets where productive engagement can take place and would alleviate the need for tent camping in the city. The idea is that this would be a first step, and opportunity to meet people where they are. Most importantly, it should have very few eligibility requirements, ensuring that there are few excuses to not seek shelter and services.
RECOMMENDATION 3

It is recommended that the second level of housing constructed for the Portland Center would be transitional in nature and would be built to house subpopulations in need of more structured programs to support them in recovery of mental health, substance abuse and criminal history backgrounds. For each program area identified below, participants would be sleeping in the same area, and would all be going through a structured and peer-supported program. This area of the Portland Center would include:

- Transitional substance abuse recovery beds. This would be a 3-6 month program with a focus on job training.
- Transitional beds for people leaving corrections facilities. This would be a 3-6 month program with a focus on job training.
- Transitional beds for people with significant mental health issues. This would be a 3-6 month program that would focus on stabilization and recovery.

RECOMMENDATION 4

It is recommended that the third level of housing constructed for the Portland Center would be for 300 efficiency apartments of permanent supportive housing for people who will need ongoing support provided through the recommended co-located services at the Portland Center. (see recommendation six) Because Portland already has a “wet” permanent housing development in Bud Clark Commons, the recommendation for these units would be that they be “dry.”

RECOMMENDATION 5

Because of the clearly voiced need for housing, it is recommended that a working group be established to look at the ability of the housing community to create 300 low income housing units to be either centrally based or scattered site to meet the needs of the community and those exiting the Oregon’s Harbor of Hope facility. This housing is imperative to this vision and to the needs of the community.
RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended that the Portland facility’s services be based in an integrated and co-located, supportive Service Center in the middle of the facility. This Service Center would be used as a “hub and spoke model” for the city and its social services, serving as a “one-stop shop” for those in the facility and those in the community needing multiple services. Nonprofit partners choosing to be co-located could use the service facility as a satellite office or as a hub for their services. It is also recommended that nonprofit leaders help to identify services and best-practice partners for the facility built on the need of the Portland homeless community. A team should be formed that can help identify the services needed, and the non-profits that can fill the needs for each service identified.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that the Portland Center create a partnership governance model in which the homeless residents and staff work hand-in-hand with social service organizations to operate and manage the facility. Combining the experience of groups that have organized homeless rest or camp areas with an established and strong non-profit that could provide backbone support for the Portland Center would build credibility and sustainability for the model.

RECOMMENDATION 8

It is recommended that the Portland Center provide low profile, non-armed security for the facility. These individuals would be focused and trained to work in the areas of mental health, outreach and engagement as well as de-escalation security techniques. This group of individuals may be former residents but must be individuals that are comfortable in working with the homeless. Consider calling this group the outreach and engagement team instead of “security.” It is also recommended to have centralized security station to support the outreach and engagement teams.
RECOMMENDATION 9

It is recommended that the Portland Center be supported by a state-of-the-art information system that facilitates real-time coordination and provides visibility to data that serves as a foundation for a client’s learning and growth as well as organizational policy and management decisions. This new system should sync fluidly with (Homeless Management Information System) HMIS. The current HMIS platform, housed in the Portland Housing Bureau, should be vetted to determine if it has the capabilities needed to support the dynamic nature of the new Portland Center’s operations.

RECOMMENDATION 10

It is recommended that the Portland Center, its service providers and other service providers in the city consider the use of a centralized case management/service system. Such a system will allow organizations to work in a very integrated, collaborative manner in moving clients from homelessness to self-sufficiency. The case management team should continue to embrace the assertive engagement model currently being used in the (Continuum of Care) CoC while also adjusting it to the considerations that will need to be made for recovery-oriented transitional programs.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It is recommended that an intake and triage component ultimately be located at the Portland Center. This component of the Center should be closely tied to the coordinated entry efforts in the Continuum of Care. It should use best practice assessment and screening tools in order to connect people interested in living in the Center to appropriate levels of care and services. Referrals could be made to services throughout the CoC for anyone that is assessed for services.
It is recommended that the Portland Center house a robust job training and employment program for those living at the Center and others that may need services to prevent homelessness. This program would ideally be run by Work System Inc. (WSI), assisted by one or more nonprofit organizations currently working in the job training and employment fields and would work in tandem with local employers to employ those associated with the Portland Center.

It is recommended that “workgroups” be established to help with the envisioning and initial planning for the facility. These workgroups can include, but not be limited to, a facilities, programming, funding and operational workgroup. Members of these workgroups will come from the nonprofit, business and homeless community.

It is recommended that the funding workgroup for the facility be tasked with working on a capital and operational budget for the Portland Center while helping to identify possible funding organizations/individuals. It is imperative to note that messaging for this funding must revolve around establishing funding that supports both the start-up and the operation of the social services needed to provide services at the Portland Center. Funding must not be moved from current social service agencies but must remain with them while also funding the Center.
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