

City of Charlottesville

Homelessness Intervention Plan

BY TIMELINE

POSITION

The City of Charlottesville position on homelessness is one that prioritizes the comprehensive delivery of services to ensure any member of the community experiencing homelessness has a chance to access basic human needs services (food, clothing, medicine, shelter), and an opportunity to engage with resources that provide a human-centered, multilayered, and reliable ladder to achieving self-sufficiency as soon as possible. The priority is to ensure no gaps exist in the continuum of care because the presence of such realities equate to people being stranded with no connection to the next step on the ladder. The City strives to fill gaps, ensuring upward movement remains viable, thus ensuring the continuum exists unbroken.

PRIORITY

- Low-barrier, year-round shelter facility
- Family-focused shelter facility to ensure family unit remains intact despite housing interruption
- Facility to serve the specific needs of seniors experiencing homelessness as a specialized segment of the community
- Winter & Summer Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to accurately measure
- Strengthen capacity of the Continuum of Care (COC) Lead Agency: Blue Ridge Area Coalition for the Homeless (BRACH) with a focus on expanding and adding deliverables that help improve outcomes
- Critical need for 24/7 detox and other emergency mental health beds

TIMELINE

AUGUST 2023

- A new City Manager tenure for Charlottesville begins with a series of Community Conversations – homelessness was a repeat theme
- City Manager initiates a round of inquiries with local nonprofits working on housing, homelessness, substance abuse & recovery, and mental health supports for an update
- City Manager also made inquiries to local funders and county officials regarding homelessness

SEPTEMBER 2023

- City Manager lifted park closure at Market Street Park in response to allegations expressed during a Council Meeting of police mistreatment of unhoused people in the park overnight
- Following CPD investigation and confirming inaccuracy of complaint and clearing officers, City Manager announces park hours resume October 21 with an expectation that the overnight encampment at Market Street Park end
- City Manager convenes a 15-member workgroup of 12 City departments and offices to provide a comprehensive perspective on the issue of homeless in the city
 - Goal: share collaboration reports with local homeless service providers
 - Goal: identify strategies for the City to consider investing in both short- and long-term

OCTOBER 2023

- Market Street encampment surges to over 40 individuals camping overnight
- Engagement of Region 10, Virginia Supportive Housing, and local churches to broaden understanding of the community supports ecosystem and interest in deeper interventions

- City Manager appealed to Chamber Leadership requesting outreach to membership in the search for possible shelter space; The inquiry was framed with an expression of this issue being on that is: *a whole community problem and the only way to make an impact is for there to be a whole community solution*; after a brief exchange of questions and answers, the city received no options or further feedback
- City Manager and Chief of Police developed a “soft touch” approach to working the relocation of the unhoused
 - The priority was: peaceful transition and avoidance of arrests
 - Local homeless providers were invited to participate and mostly declined City Manager’s invitation to assist
 - The encampment closure process was executed by city personnel as directed, resulting in a peaceful transition with no arrests
- Market Street encampment cleared peacefully on October 21st
- PACEM opened thermal shelter one-week early in coordination with City
- City Manager convenes a 15-member workgroup of 12 City departments and offices to consider the development of a homeless intervention strategy for the city to commit to working
- City Manager presents to City Council a Homeless Intervention Strategy: identifying short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions with central recommendations being the establishment of a low-barrier shelter facility and strengthening BRACH, the Continuum of Care Lead Agency
- City Manager taps City’s Economic Development Director to search property listings for a space to recommend acquiring for the purpose of opening a low barrier shelter

NOVEMBER 2023

- City identifies homelessness as a top policy priority with state partners, to include VA First Cities and VA Municipal League for leveraging statewide support
- Senator Deeds engaged in discussion of the priority of low barrier shelter, mental health supports, and deeply affordable housing
- Introductory meeting between City Manager Sanders, Deputy City Manager Marshall, and BRACH Executive Director Shayla Washington – confirmed top priorities as shelter for families w/children, shelter for very ill individuals, more deeply affordable housing (Ex: Crossings II), and a fixed-site low barrier shelter
- City secures agreement with the Salvation Army to place a POD on the property for storing of items by people experiencing homelessness; the \$2700 annual cost is underwritten by the City and the Community Involvement Division of CPD manages access as needed (this resource continues to be available)

DECEMBER 2023

- City conducts evaluation of all active housing production projects with an ability to support the needs of the unhoused – Premier Circle (now Vista 29), Center of Hope expansion, PHA projects: Part Street, MACAA, and Friendship Court (now Kindlwood), Southwood (by Habitat for Humanity), and CRHA projects: Crescent Halls, S. 1st Street, Sixth Street, Westhaven – produce new housing units, but still falling well short of the needs of the unhoused population
- City Manager and Economic Development Director reviewed available properties for possible homeless shelter; one strong lead was duly considered (eventually dismissed as not viable)

JANUARY 2024

- City approves \$750,000 to close the gap in the proposed Premier Circle (now Vista 29) permanent supportive housing development to deliver 80 new units
- City Manager speaks to regional peers on the issue of homelessness and inquired into the interest in pursuing a regional solution (represented jurisdictions: Albemarle, Fluvanna Greene, Louisa, and Nelson counties); encouraged support for Salvation Army capital campaign

- City Manager delivers State of the Community Address and includes homelessness interventions as a top issue and implores the community to support all efforts to address this issue

FEBRUARY 2024

- City Manager speaks to the Charlottesville Rotary Club as his introductory engagement of the group; in addition to the introductory comments, he focused his message on the homeless crisis in Charlottesville that warrants interventions as a whole community responsibility
- City Manager and Salvation Army Major first meeting to discuss the concept of shifting the Cherry Avenue Thrift Store to a low barrier shelter to be operated by an alternate party as the Salvation Army could not operate the desired low barrier shelter per their national guidelines
- The City Manager began studying the feasibility of the low barrier shelter concept through a series of conversations with providers, potential partners, and prospective funders

MARCH 2024

- City purchases Avon/Levy site with no specific plan for redevelopment, although deep conversations were at the time focused on homeless interventions; the site is a great opportunity to produce housing units and Council was advised that there was even more flexibility in considering the acquisition to activate once clarity is reached with the planned development projects in various stages of design and funding pursuit

APRIL 2024

- City Leadership joined a combined group to tour the Cherry Avenue Thrift Store with Major Van Meter to discuss the possibilities for a potential reuse of the facility as a homeless shelter
- Council adopts FY25 Budget with affordable housing investments, including housing production, homeless services, and mental health supports

MAY 2024

- Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall coordinates first State of Homelessness presentation to Council; coordinates participants, frames presentation, and solicits data points from providers
- City and County leaders visited Harrisonburg-Rockingham County's new homelessness receiving center, which features low-barrier day and overnight services in a purpose-built location, representing a public-private collaboration

JUNE 2024

- Nonprofit homeless services providers invited to present The State of Homelessness to City Council (this has now become an annual presentation)

JULY 2024

- Mayor Wade and City Manager Sanders meet with PACEM Board Members to discuss the city's interest in establishing a low barrier shelter in partnership with the Salvation Army; PACEM was invited to consider operating the facility and proposing an Operations Plan to the city for consideration – no limits were placed on the invitation as the matter was noted a priority

AUGUST 2024

- City confirms with BRACH of its interest in pursuing a low barrier shelter and commitment to supporting the operations
- City confirms to BRACH recent meeting with PACEM Board leaders of invitation to engage in low barrier shelter planning

SEPTEMBER 2024

- City Manager compiles a set of implementable Community Interventions to recommend to Council based on their feedback, plus all inputs by city staff and self-directed engagements
- City Manager requests Salvation Army produce a proposed Operations Plan if the local affiliate were granted permission to operate a low barrier shelter

OCTOBER 2024

- Introductory conversation with new Interim PACEM Executive Director

- City Manager expressed concern of no response yet to invitation from City Leadership to PACEM Board Leadership to propose operational plan for year-round low barrier shelter
 - Advised that the Board was considering the opportunity, but focused on soon to start shelter season
- City Manager presents comprehensive set of Community Interventions as a recommendation for the City to pursue as it focuses on *Setting a New Standard and Managing Expectations* as it relates to the issue of homelessness in the City of Charlottesville; the list included:
 - Expansion of Shelter Beds: contribution of \$1.5M to Salvation Army Capital Campaign from ARP and \$2.5M from FY24 Surplus for the increase in shelter beds from 55 to 114
 - Lost Revenue Offset: commitment of up to \$1M over the next 5 years to offset Salvation Army's loss of revenue resulting from the conversion of thrift store to low barrier shelter
 - Facility Modifications: \$250,000 to support 504 Cherry renovations for shelter facility
 - Low Barrier Shelter Operator: annual \$500,000 low barrier shelter operating grant
 - COC Capacity Building: \$250,000 annual contribution to BRACH as a designated Fundamental Agency (non-competitive)
 - Street Outreach: funding to support hiring two FTEs utilizing \$440,000 for a 2-year demonstration project of a limitless Street Outreach Team
 - Emergency Housing/Temporary Shelter: purchase six shelter units (Pallet Shelter: www.palletshelter.com) using \$600,000 for a demonstration project of alternative housing solutions for the unhoused
 - Quality of Life Interventions
 - *Downtown Mall*: \$100,000 Year Round Lighting project; \$100,000 to fund a *Mall Manager* position who will be a resource for downtown businesses and Mall patrons; and \$275,000 for mobile/alternative *Mall Restroom* project using \$275,000 to acquire three full-service restroom units (Green Flush: www.greenflushrestrooms.com)
 - *Clean Team* demonstration project using \$450,000 to retain an ambassador service to enhance the Downtown Mall experience serve as community ambassador for (likely a multi-year demonstration to consider effectiveness)
- City Manager taps Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall to serve as homelessness lead, making this issue a priority of the CMO – DCM Marshall maintains a direct connection with all providers and represents staff and providers in all management discussions
- Also, a direct appeal for the entire community to embrace the solutions to homelessness will require a whole community approach

NOVEMBER 2024

- City Manager's Office met with BRACH Executive Director to confirm forthcoming recommendation to Council for capacity building, development of new strategic plan, and inquiry about long-term possibility of City taking on COC responsibilities in place of BRACH
- City met with Board Chair and new Executive Director of The Haven; discussed low barrier shelter concept, expanding The Haven's operations, and current rapid rehousing strategy

DECEMBER 2024

- City contributes \$3M to Salvation Army Center of Hope Capital Campaign to support the expansion from 55 to 114 overnight shelter beds, expanded dining room, and other enhancements
- City commits \$500,000 per year in operating support for a low barrier shelter operator at the 504 Cherry Avenue (currently Salvation Army Thrift Store)
- City commits up to \$1M in revenue replacement to the Salvation Army to offset losses resulting from conversion of store to shelter facility (City will allocate \$250,000 annually)

- Mayor Wade and Vice Mayor Pinkston meet with the Fifeville Neighborhood Association to discuss the consideration of a low barrier shelter at 504 Cherry Avenue in partnership with Salvation Army as property owner, and other service providers willing to engage

JANUARY 2025

- City Manager Sanders (and leadership) attends Fifeville Neighborhood Association to discuss the City's consideration of establishing a low-barrier shelter at 504 Cherry Avenue

FEBRUARY 2025

- City Manager reminds the broader community that homelessness is a priority for the whole community and will require multi-layered, sustained commitment to help the most vulnerable
- Salvation Army submits a proposed Operations Plan for a low barrier shelter if they were selected to operate it at the Cherry Avenue facility

MARCH 2025

- City Manager Sanders facilitates a discussion with the Fifeville Neighborhood Association on the subject of homelessness; conversation includes discussion of the city's desire to establish a low barrier shelter at 504 Cherry and nonprofit homeless providers: BRACH, PACEM, The Haven, and Salvation Army also participated in answering many questions about the state of homelessness
- City Manager asks Economic Development Director to again search for available non-residential properties for consideration of suitability for a homeless shelter

APRIL 2025

- Council adopts FY26 Budget with the following increased supports for homeless services:
 - Designation of BRACH as a Fundamental Agency to receive \$250,000 per year to replace previous competitive funding pursuit
 - Commitment of \$500,000 annually to support the operation of a low barrier shelter
 - Up to \$1M in the 5yr CIP to offset revenue losses should a shelter operate in place of the current Cherry Avenue Thrift Store
- Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall works with participants in the upcoming State of Homelessness presentation to Council; coordinating data-forward presentation and engaging with providers to highlight topic areas of high interest

MAY 2025

- Nonprofit homeless services providers present the annual State of Homelessness to City Council
- City Manager is joined by Mayor Wade, Chief Kochis, DCM Marshall, and representatives from PACEM, The Haven, Salvation Army, and BRACH to engage directly with the Fifeville Neighborhood Association in answering questions about the state of homelessness and the proposed low barrier shelter

JUNE 2025

- City Manager request approval to expend \$2M in surplus funding for community interventions
- Economic Development Director surfaces four new sites to consider for possible homeless shelter; all sites evaluated and nothing was deemed suitable due to high acquisition cost and equally expensive retrofit expenses to render a space feasible
- City Manager Sanders and Deputy City Manager Freas engaged CRHA Executive Director Sales in review of vacant CRHA-owned property for possible temporary shelter/emergency housing option; requires significant evaluation of zoning, infrastructure, and public support for potential "village concept" to support the unhoused in multiple locations; ongoing consideration
- Deputy City Manager Marshall conducted outreach to all homeless services providers to inform them of the city's need to clear the encampment under the Free Bridge due to public health and safety concerns, which included rising water reports from some unhoused individuals in the area

JULY 2025

- Deputy City Manager Marshall managed the clearing of the Free Bridge encampment utilizing the protocol developed to demonstrate a city staff priority of de-escalation, collaboration, and partnership. All homeless services providers were invited to engage and encouraged to utilize resources provided by the city to support the carrying and containing personal items
- City Manager Sanders requested a briefing from CRHA Executive Director Sales on the previously designed and once pursued Crossings II project at the Avon/Levy site

AUGUST 2025

- Free Bridge encampment was cleared with no incident, although multiple expressions of concern and opposition to the City's focus on maintenance and management of public space

SEPTEMBER 2025

- City Council hears significant opposition to considering an anti-camping and storage ordinance; councilors decided to pull the item and not consider it for a vote – instead they directed the City Manager to work with staff to secure alternatives to include, shelter(s) and housing options as a preferred condition before asking for the relocation of anyone experiencing homelessness
- City Manager and CRHA Executive Director revisit tiny village concept and continue discussions to advance possible temporary shelter/emergency housing option; will require a case management partnership with a homeless services provider
- City contingent toured a potential facility for acquisition, and the property remains of interest although no active negotiation exists at this time
- City continues to look at available properties for financially feasible option(s) capable of delivering a comprehensive impact opportunity to the homelessness issue in the city
- City Manager Sanders and Deputy City Manager Freas joined Sen. Creigh Deeds on a tour of Caritas, a nonprofit that operates a multi-tiered facility aimed at changing lives through shelter, recovery support, education, employment, and HOPE
 - Their model is a replication of a program founded in Louisville, Kentucky
 - The Healing Place is a gender-specific recovery program with extensive supports to regaining self-sufficiency
 - The Safe off the Street Center is a built in low-barrier shelter
 - The Furniture Bank is the resource available for re-establishing livelihoods through place
 - The Sober Living housing is an onsite option for those who successfully matriculate through the prescribed programs that define rungs on the ladder to self-sufficiency

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

City staff continue to work collaboratively on the issue of homelessness. The challenges facing this segment of our population appears daily across departments and offices. We remain committed to engaging inter-departmentally as it is imperative that all perspectives are included in the deployment of the city's efforts to support, interrupt, and intervene. The Homelessness Intervention Task Force has been led by Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall and continue to engage in coordinated study and review of matters facing our unhoused community.

More than 10 possible locations for a homeless shelter were seriously considered despite their varying degrees of feasibility. Another 10 or more sites were eliminated for reasons including proximity to neighborhoods, too costly, too much renovation required, too small, too far away from services, and not

on a bus route. The search for a property or properties will continue as the city is committed to the realization of this critical deliverable.

The City launched its Alternative Co-Responder Model in July 2024 utilizing ARP funds for a demonstration of this coordinated care model. The pilot exceeded all expectations and has generated further consideration of adding or developing an aligned peer-response model because the application of service has been helpful in a variety of situations, including engaging with the unhoused community. As a part of the comprehensive strategy.

The Salvation Army's \$26M *Hope Has a Place* capital campaign is a vital component of the homeless services ecosystem for the Charlottesville area. The campaign brings forward:

- A new 47,000 square foot Center of Home at 207 Ridge Street
- 114 non-congregant shelter beds with additional space to house during inclement weather
- Double capacity dining room for 120 people
- Collaboration space for local peers to work with patrons
- Additional case management space to serve the needs of the unhoused onsite
- Increased classroom space from four rooms to eight (an increase of 44 seats)

The campaign has not surpassed the 50% mark. It is absolutely crucial that the City of Charlottesville rallies around this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness. The Center of Hope touches almost everyone experiencing homelessness in the city, making it a vital place to gather and reach.