

**Community Forum on Homelessness Solutions
May 13, 2019
Summary of Feedback**

Attendance

Approximately 140 people attended the forum including some elected officials

Service Providers Present at Breakout/topic Tables

CARE Housing
Catholic Charities
City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department
City of Fort Collins Parks Department
City of Fort Collins Police Services and Co-responder
City of Fort Collins Special Agency Session
Coordinated Assessment & Housing Placement System
Crossroads Safehouse
Family Housing Network
Hand Up
Housing Catalyst
Housing First Initiative
Larimer County Behavioral Health
Larimer County Workforce Center and Veterans Services
Matthews House
Murphy Center
Neighbor to Neighbor
Northern Colorado Health Network (aka Northern Colorado Aids Project)
Northern Larimer County Health District
Old Town Library
One Village One Family
Outreach Fort Collins
Peak Community Church
Poudre Fire Authority
Poudre School District
Re-entry Program
SummitStone Health Partners
UCHealth
Volunteers of America

Feedback/Questions Received at Breakout/Topic Tables

Affordable Housing (Housing Catalyst, CARE Housing, Coordinated Assessment & Housing Placement System, Housing First Initiative, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Volunteers of America)

- Concerns about conditions of some affordable housing and how to register concerns/complaints about living conditions

Community Policing, Outreach, and Alternative Solutions (Outreach Fort Collins, Police, Poudre Fire Authority, Natural Areas Rangers, Parks, Special Agency Session)

- Library Park residents expressed that problems have gotten incrementally better and appreciated efforts to make the park more welcoming to everyone
- Frustrations regarding loitering at churches close to Library Park resulting from meal serving
- Frustrations about trespassing and police response to events on church property as well as heckling from people hanging out on church property
- Concern about increased crime in Library Park and within Library – seeking data from Old Town Library regarding Police interactions and crime in the Library
- Concerns about drug use, disturbances, trespassing, and burglary
- People asked for business cards so they could meet after the event but no follow-up yet

Families and Youth (Matthews House, Poudre School District, Family Housing Network, One Village One Family)

- Positive feedback about how nice it was to share the work going on in our community
- Comments/questions specific to Family Housing Network program
- What community services and resources exist for families experiencing homelessness?
- What type of services does One Village One Family offer? How many families does your program help? What is the process for a family to enter the program?
- People generally seemed interested in seeing if there was follow-up care/services for families who moved into housing to make sure they did not fall back into homelessness

Health and Wellness (SummitStone Health Partners, UCHHealth, Health District, Larimer County Behavioral Health, Murphy Center Health Program, Co-responders, Northern Colorado Health Network)

- What kinds of services will the new Behavioral Health campus provide for people experiencing homelessness?
- How will the Behavioral Health initiative impact homelessness in Fort Collins?
- Positive feedback from people excited about the new behavioral health services that will be expanded in the community
- People looking for information and resources to help family members or friends dealing with mental health and substance use issues
- How to best connect/help loved ones with treatment for mental health and substance use disorders
- Concerns about syringe access program – how is the program justified? Provided information and data regarding program
- Learned to engage more openly with the community
- Wanted to learn more about services provided in Fort Collins and how to get people they care about into mental health and substance use disorders services

- Many people have misconceptions about syringe access program and discussions about services offered alongside syringe access was helpful
- General discussions about addiction and why many people with mental health issues who also experience homelessness also have substance use disorders

Outreach and Engagement (Outreach Fort Collins, Police, Old Town Library)

- Some people thought Police are not doing enough while others were concerned they are treating homeless individuals unfairly
- Great connections with other service providers

Other Services (Neighbor to Neighbor Rent Assistance, Hand Up, Larimer County Workforce Center and Veteran Services, Re-entry Program)

- Concern for people they knew personally who were experiencing homelessness and looking for ways to help/support them
- Looking for volunteer opportunities
- Looking for resources to better assist people
- Great connections with other service providers/agencies
- People looking for resources
- Concerns about the number of people experiencing homelessness at Old Town Library
- General curiosity about services offered

Shelter and Warming Centers (Fort Collins Rescue Mission, Catholic Charities, Crossroads Safehouse, Murphy Center, Peak Community Church)

- Requests for information about services provided by the shelters (no complaints)
- Seeking general information
- Requests for services for person going through addiction
- Seeking volunteer opportunities and program information about Crossroads

Lingering Questions Provided by Attendees

1. How to engage our federal political system to address and solve homelessness?
 - a. Reach out to your local leadership and state congressional members highlighting an increase in focus on addressing homelessness at the local, state, and national level.
 - b. Send letters to the President and HUD Secretary.
 - c. Use advocacy sites such as NAHRO.com to keep informed and for letter suggestions.
2. How can families volunteer?
 - a. Reach out to agencies with volunteer programming and see what information they have on volunteer opportunities. These opportunities will vary based off the policies and program components of each service provider, as well as the populations that they serve. A great place to start would be to call the Murphy Center at 970-494-9940.
 - b. Contact United Way of Larimer County, Partnership for Age Friendly Communities, or Volunteers of America to find volunteer opportunities.
3. Why does law enforcement give a ticket instead of referring immediately to services?
 - a. Law enforcement can only ticket or arrest someone if they are doing something illegal. Law enforcement officers will often distribute homeless resource guides, or share resource information with individuals they contact, even in cases where that person is being cited. A great example of this is Outreach Fort Collins' partnership with Fort Collins Police Services District 1 officers.
 - b. This question needs context. Often a ticket is the end of many contacts that have not resolved the situation. Often a ticket is the last step of many, not a first step.
4. Do you prioritize services to those who are residents over transient people from other cities/states? If not, why not?
 - a. This depends on the agency, their policies and the type of service they provide. For example, many housing programs require a person to demonstrate or prove their residence in a specific county for a specific time to qualify. Others take residency requirement into account during their intake process. The basic needs service providers (meals, drop-in centers, shelter, outreach, etc.) do not prioritize residential vs. non-residential clients because they offer basic needs services needed for survival. Even in these cases, many agencies limit the frequency or amount of assistance an individual can receive in a period do dissuade abuse of these services.
 - b. The Housing First Initiative works with people who have been homeless in our community for 6 months or longer.
5. Can the City get more Federal housing vouchers or Federal funds to build housing?
 - a. Yes. This is a competitive process which requires a great deal of data collection, regulation, and outcomes-based reporting. Federal dollars are distributed by HUD to communities which demonstrate the greatest need coinciding with the best outcomes. This often leads to larger, more urban communities receiving the lion's share of this funding.
 - b. Periodically, new vouchers are made available to Housing Catalyst, our Housing Authority, from HUD or Division of Housing. They are often for a more specific population, such as disabled non-seniors or veterans.

6. So what exactly can community members do to engage in solutions?
 - a. Support local agencies through donations or volunteering. Advocate for increased financial support to peers, influencers, and leaders in the community. Talk about the issue and work within your community to support local agencies.
 - b. Talk to landlords about accepting housing choice vouchers.
 - c. Speak up at public meetings and in the media about the need for more affordable housing. Provide differing viewpoints when people say “not in my backyard”.
7. What can we do to prevent homelessness before an individual or family crisis?
 - a. The City funds Neighbor to Neighbor’s eviction prevention programs and foreclosure prevention services.
 - b. Support rental assistance programs at churches and workplaces.
 - c. Help people obtain and sustain employment.
8. Where can I go to complain about disrepair, locations for housing?
 - a. Neighborhood Services or the Building Department
9. What specifically will it take for Fort Collins to end homelessness?
 - a. Significant increases in housing availability and affordability, with additional supportive services when appropriate - such as for permanent supportive housing locations like RedTail Ponds. Increased efficiency between community programs and support of enhancing data-driven best practice solutions.
 - b. Better employment opportunities that pay enough to afford housing.
10. What triggers referral?
 - a. This is dependent on the individual or family, their needs, and the services provided by the agency. Usually some form of intake is done formally (like at the Murphy Center or Housing First Initiative), or informally (like at Outreach Fort Collins) to determine the ability to obtain services and the availability of those services at that time. This information can also be obtained through relationship building and client care coordination to meet their needs in alignment with available resources.
11. Where do I refer friends losing housing and employment or for financial counseling?
 - a. The Murphy Center, Family Housing Network, Neighbor To Neighbor or One Village One Family.
12. When will Fort Collins build more apartments for low-income people, more like \$800-\$500/month?
 - a. The City does not build housing. It partners with affordable housing developers who use multiple funding sources to keep rents as low as possible. DMA Plaza is age-restricted and income-restricted. They just completed a major renovation. The City invested in this renovation to keep rents there as some of the most affordable in our community. Housing Choice Vouchers allows a person to pay 30% of their income and the voucher (government) pays the rest of the rent. That is another way to keep qualified people’s portion of the rent low.
13. Provide data and information about Northern Colorado Health Network Syringe Access Program as well as incidents at the Old Town Library.

Preliminary Plans for the Future

This event will continue on an annual basis in an effort to provide information to the community as well as listen to community members about concerns, observations, and experiences regarding homelessness in Fort Collins.