Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness

Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)

DRAFT PLAN
September 1, 2017

ECHO
FIERCELY COMMITTED TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

About ECHO

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) is a non-profit that plans, develops, prioritizes and implements systemic, community-wide strategies to end homelessness in Austin and Travis County, Texas. Together with its community partners, ECHO uses strategic, data-driven decision-making and innovative, bold thinking to transform the system to end homelessness. ECHO engages over 100 stakeholders every month through taskforces and working groups.

ECHO is recognized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency, the local leader in coordinating the system of housing and services for persons experiencing homelessness. ECHO is also designated as the lead agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a system-wide database that tracks the needs of households experiencing homelessness, services received across the community and their outcomes.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following contributors who generously provided data, information and time toward the completion of this action plan:

- Persons with lived experiences of homelessness,
- Services providers,
- Elected officials,
- Business leaders
- City of Austin and Travis County staff, and
- The many other public- and private-sector stakeholders who participated in the public input process, including input sessions, meetings and interviews.

Questions or Comments

For questions, comments or for more information, please contact Ann Howard, ECHO Executive Director at annhoward@austinecho.org or Mariana Salazar, ECHO Director of Research and Evaluation at marianasalazar@austinecho.org.

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I. Executive Summary

In February 2017, Mayor Steve Adler and Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo partnered with the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) to convene a diverse group of representatives from local organizations to urgently address the crisis of homelessness in Austin, Texas. ECHO convened meetings with key stakeholders across the community and developed a plan. This document summarizes areas of investing that are innovative, impactful and cost-saving solutions to expand the homelessness response system to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring for adults, youth and families in our community.

The Goal:	**Launch a public-private partnership to build a sustainable system that ends people's homelessness in Austin, Texas**
The Ask:	**This plan calls for an expansion of resources to:** **1) End homelessness for chronically homeless individuals & families,** **2) Quickly re-connect people who become homeless with housing & support, and** **3) Prevent homelessness.**

This plan specifically outlines implementation of five elements that work _together_ to end homelessness for individuals and families and make the community stronger for all. These components are 1) outreach services and shelters, 2) addressing disparities, 3) providing housing and support services, 4) strengthening our response system, and 5) building community commitment from both the public and private sectors.

Ending homelessness does not mean that no individuals and families will ever again experience homelessness. Instead, it means that we as a community have a systematic response that can address immediate needs, quickly connect people to housing and provide services to ensure long-term stability.

Our community is receiving national recognition for successfully implementing strategies that end homelessness. In August 2016, Austin was recognized for effectively ending veteran homelessness, ensuring we have a system that makes veteran homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. In January 2017, Austin was chosen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as one of 13 communities nationwide to serve as a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program site to develop and implement a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness by 2020. Also in January 2017, Austin received a national grant to implement an innovative funding model to expand permanent supportive housing.

This Action Plan seeks to build on our success and mobilize public and private resources in the right order of magnitude to address the large unmet need, to continue to implement strategies that work, to continue to think creatively, testing new and improved practices, policies and programs. The action plan is meant to be a living document updated along the way to reflect learnings.

II. Home Stories

We want to share the following stories from persons with lived experiences of homelessness. The first is Mr. Moran's account as he gets back into housing. The second is a poem by Mr. Borders reflecting on his experience of homelessness in Austin. We honor their resilience and willingness to share their personal stories with us.

M. Moran, Austin Native, Army Veteran

"I was born and raised in Austin. I was born here in 1968. We've been homeless a few times actually though, and this last time we were homeless for about a year. We just lost our apartment—couldn't keep up with it. I had to try to get back on my feet, and couldn't get back to work because I had some knee injuries and an ankle injury also. It was hard for me to get work and pay the rent.

While I was in the woods, my kids were staying with some friends of mine, and I didn't want to impose, so I stayed out in the woods and tried to get this housing program going. And I mean, I was moving as fast as I could, with a purpose in life, just to get some housing going and to get back with my kids, because I missed them so much.

I am just a whole lot happier and so are my kids. They got so excited when we first moved in. It was Caritas who got us some furniture and stuff. And we had the mattresses downstairs and we had bedframes. My kids ran up the stairs with the bedframes, set them up, and then right as soon as we got a chance, we just ran & zipped right up the stairs with those mattresses. They didn't waste any time getting set up. It was pretty fun. It was a big weight off my shoulder and their shoulders too.

One thing I could tell you is, I am so happy right now. It made my life and my kids' life a whole lot better. To me, been back in housing means that I am carrying on my responsibility, been a responsible father because I care about my kids. And I always go by the motto, never leave a soldier behind, and I always checked on them. But I always said, I'll be damn if they don't have a roof over their head, four walls around them, clothes on their back, and food on the bellies—and my food pantry is full right now."

D. Borders, Austin Youth Homelessness Collective Founding Member and Poet

I am from…

I am from my grandmother's calloused hands,

from the crock pots of my family household kitchen.

I am from my mother's smile, the way she works day in and day out.

From my daddy's mistakes,

from my father's excuses,

I am from a new day.

I am from forgiveness and I am from forgetfulness.

I'm from the dirty alleyways

and the street corners of my block.

No place to sleep, I was grateful under a bridge,

passed out on a one-inch thick cardboard box.

I'm from the dirty pockets of drug dealers

in front of the liquor store shooting dice with hoodies on and handguns,

Cuz they don't think tomorrow will be any better or

tomorrow doesn't make a difference.

I am from granny's front porch,

I'm from the south side,

where black and brown leaders were overlooked

and were put down for their passion for standing up to oppression.

But where I'm from doesn't determine where I'm going,

and who you were doesn't defeat the fat facts of a better life you have today.

You have to be the change you wish to see.
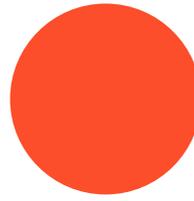
II. Data: Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

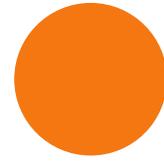1. **Persons who experience homelessness face many complex challenges.**
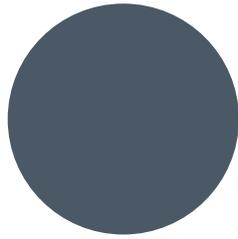
67%
Can't access employment/ do not have any earned income
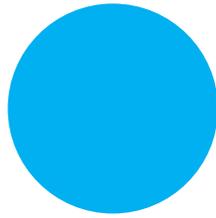
61%
Access healthcare through an emergency room or do not access any healthcare

56%
Have experienced trauma or abuse in their life

44%
Currently experience mental health issues

2. **Persons experiencing homelessness represent a diverse population.**

Subpopulations
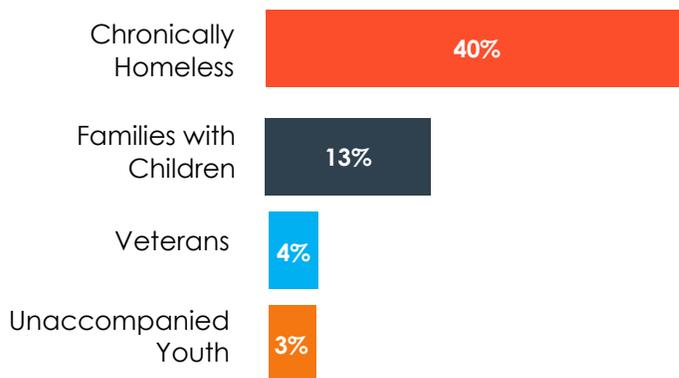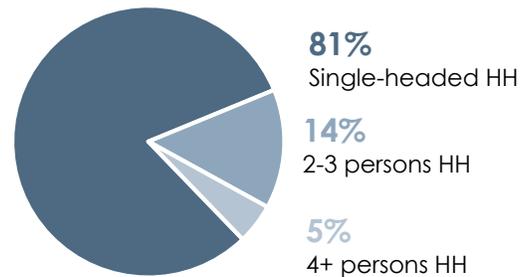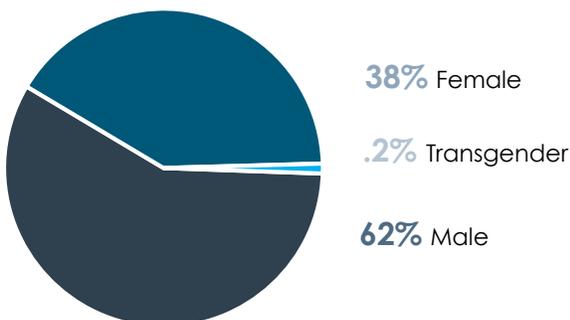
Chronically Homeless	40%
Families with Children	13%
Veterans	4%
Unaccompanied Youth	3%

Household (HH) Size

81%
Single-headed HH

14%
2-3 persons HH

5%
4+ persons HH

Gender Identity

38% Female

.2% Transgender

62% Male

Age

Adults 45-64	37%
Adults 25-44	33%
Children 0-17	21%
Youth 18-24	6%
Adults + 65	3%

Source: Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (2017). "DRAFT Homelessness in Austin: Current Needs and Gaps Report. Austin, TX

Data: Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

3. African Americans are disproportionally represented in the homeless population.

	Black/African American	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic or Latino	Other
County Population	8%	49%	34%	9%
Below Poverty Level	11%	27%	42%	20%
Homeless Population	42%	30%	25%	3%
Jail	26%	33%	32%	1%

Legend: ■ County Population ■ Below Poverty Level ■ Homeless Population ■ Jail

4. Homelessness is most visibly concentrated downtown.

Salvation Army Downtown Shelter
The ARCH
Caritas of Austin
Downtown Austin Community Court

● Homeless Services Centers   ● Persons sleeping in the streets

650

Total persons waking up homeless within ¼ mile of downtown homeless resources - 472 stay in shelters & 178 stay in the streets
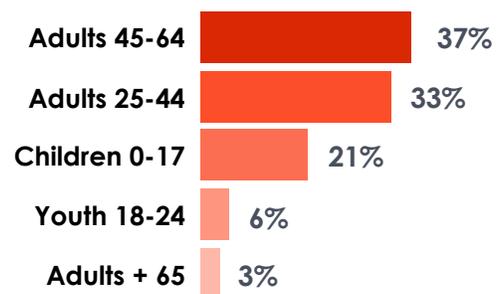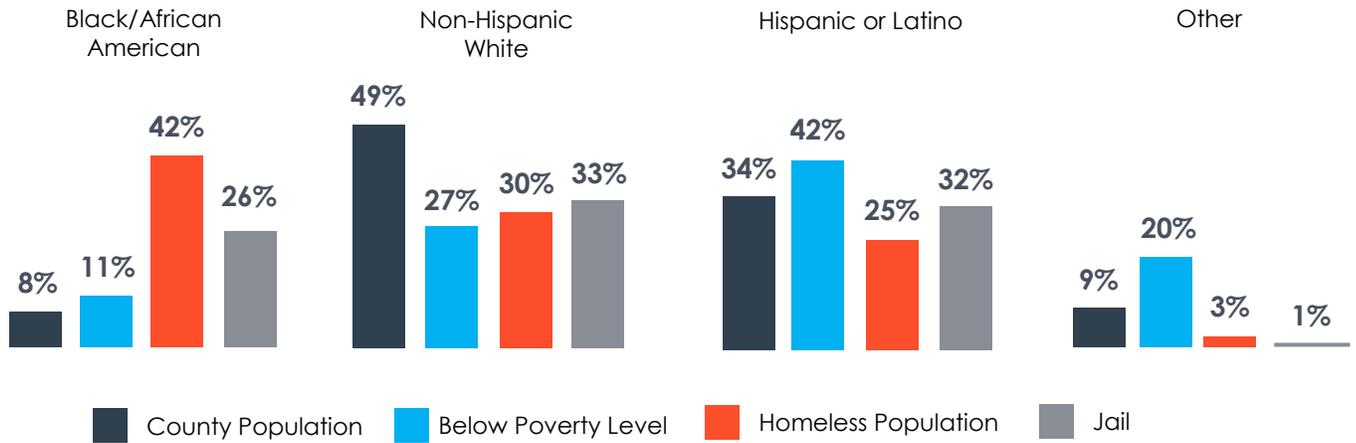
Source: Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (2017). "DRAFT Homelessness in Austin: Current Needs and Gaps Report. Austin, TX

III. Our Solution to Ending Homelessness

Ending homelessness does not mean individuals and families will never again experience homelessness. Instead, it means that we as a community will have a systematic response that can address immediate needs, quickly connect people to housing and provide services to ensure long-term stability.

Every year over 7,000 people experience homelessness in Austin/Travis County. When so many of our neighbors are in crisis, the community of Austin suffers. People experiencing homelessness may have a disability, fixed or no income, may have experienced domestic violence, and may have a criminal history or rental debt—making it almost impossible to get back into housing without additional support. With support, it has been proven, that people can access and maintain housing, improve their health and well-being and participate effectively in our community.

This plan calls for a community-wide approach to ending people's homelessness. It specifically outlines implementation of five elements that _together_ will work to end homelessness, making our community stronger for all of us.

System Components to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

1. OUTREACH & SHELTER

2. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

5. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

3. HOUSING & SUPPORT SERVICES

4. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE

1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

Our vision is to have all homeless programs focused on connecting individuals to housing and supportive services. Currently, limited outreach cannot reach everyone experiencing homelessness across Travis County and shelters operate over maximum design capacity, sleeping more persons than was intended. This plan calls for increased resources for outreach and shelters and the necessary funding to then connect people to housing and supportive services.

Actions

- Increase funding for housing and supportive services so outreach and shelter programs can effectively connect people to permanent housing

- Enhance focus of outreach services and shelter on permanent housing outcomes

- Add resources to conduct mobile outreach on a regular basis across Travis County

- Create additional shelter space throughout the city to shelter people currently sleeping outside

- Sleep fewer people in downtown shelters to reduce crowding, linking shelter beds to system strategies

Targets

- Identify all people experiencing homelessness

- Help every person sleeping outside create an individualized, personal plan to return to permanent housing

- Reduce the time it takes for people to be connected to housing

2. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

In our community, African Americans and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth are over-represented in the homeless population. Although homelessness is hard as it is for all people who experience it, it can be much harder for individuals further marginalized by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other form of discrimination. Our vision is for everyone experiencing homelessness to access housing and supportive services regardless of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, familial status, or disability.

Persons experiencing homelessness often have criminal histories that make it difficult to obtain housing on their own. Landlords or property management companies often use stringent screening criteria, even in cases when criminal charges pose no risk to the person's tenancy or property. Persons experiencing homelessness may also face income discrimination when it comes to renting housing, as some landlords may not accept tenants who pay rent with housing vouchers. Our vision is for everyone to be able to overcome any barrier to housing and to partner with landlords to offer access to housing.

It is essential for programs to operate in ways that ensure 1) the persons least likely to apply for assistance are reached, 2) persons experiencing homelessness are treated as equal partners in determining their own future, 3) housing options located in high-opportunity areas are available, and 4) service data is regularly analyzed and used to ensure all all sub-populations have equitable access to services and can improve their lives.

Actions

- Treat persons experiencing homelessness as equal partners in determining their future

- Working directly with landlords and property managers, address barriers to housing such as criminal history, rental debt and income discrimination

- Provide housing choices that are geographically dispersed in high-opportunity areas, affirmatively furthering fair housing

- Ensure the system consistently evaluates program service data to ensure all target populations are being reached and outcomes are equitably achieved for all populations

- Improve staff diversity among programs to ensure staff reflects the population experiencing homelessness

- Implement a Pay for Success initiative with a target population of frequent users of the criminal justice and emergency health care system

Targets

- Housing barriers for each person are addressed, effectively connecting them to housing

- Partnerships and resources are created with landlords and property management companies to access housing in high opportunity areas

- Programs use and understand their service data to ensure equitable access and outcomes for all

- Programs hire more diverse staff including people with lived experiences of homelessness

- House 250 persons in frequent contact with the criminal justice and health emergency systems are housed as part of Pay for Success, improving their health, increasing appropriate heath care usage and decreasing criminal justice involvement

3. HOUSING & SUPPORT SERVICES

Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing are the primary solutions for ending homelessness that have been successfully implemented in Austin and are currently used across the nation.

Rapid Re-Housing involves providing short-term rental assistance and services and has been demonstrated to be effective in connecting people to permanent housing. By connecting people with a home, they are in a better position to address other challenges that may have led to their homelessness, such as obtaining employment or addressing substance use issues. Rapid Re-Housing is also effective for people traditionally perceived to be more difficult to serve, including persons with limited or no income and survivors of domestic violence.

Permanent Supportive Housing combines non-time limited affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of persons with complex mental or physical health, addictions, or cognitive challenges. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with healthcare, substance treatment and employment services. In addition to ending a person's homelessness and increasing their housing stability, Permanent Supportive Housing has been shown to improve a person's health and well-being.

Actions

- Increase housing resources for Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing so more people can return to stable housing

- Increase connections to healthcare, mental health services, employment, substance use treatment and mainstream benefits for which persons may be eligible

- Increase meaningful community connections and a sense of purpose for the newly housed

- Increase respite services, medical care for persons too ill or frail to recover on the streets but not ill enough to be in a hospital

Targets

- Reduction of the number of persons experiencing homelessness

- Increase in the percent of persons who exit to or retain permanent housing

- Increased income and employment growth for program participants

- Increased access to primary healthcare and reduced usage of inappropriate emergency healthcare

- Increased access to mental health services

- Increased persons enrolled in mainstream benefits

4. SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS

A successful approach to ending homelessness requires systematic coordination to maximize the use of all resources. It requires 1) sharing a vision of connecting people to housing and providing services to maintain housing, 2) having clear goals and measuring progress to achieve targets, 3) a recognition by each program and stakeholder of the role they play in ending homelessness and 4) accountability from all involved.

In Austin, we have all the foundations of an effective system. This action plan reflects the shared vision of addressing people's immediate needs, quickly connecting people to housing and providing services to ensure long-term stability. It lays out clear targets for each system element and spells out specific ways of measuring progress. Through continued partnerships, we continue to define the role each of us plays in ending homelessness and invite others to join the efforts.

Actions

- Continue to use outcome data to inform and drive change, track system progress and evaluate impact

- Increase alignment and impact of current funding

- Continue building system partnerships across sectors (e.g. health care system, criminal justice system, education system, foster care system, employment system, transportation system, and benefits and childcare programs among others)

- Redesign and better target resources downtown for persons experiencing homelessness

- Increase effectiveness of prevention efforts to reduce number of newly homeless and prevent discharges from institutions onto the streets

- Use continuous learnings from ongoing system review and evaluation to improve all system elements

Targets

- Reduced number of persons newly experiencing homelessness

- Increased number of persons prevented from homelessness

- More efficient use of downtown homeless services

- Increased program and funding impact

5. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

This plan calls for investments in the right order of magnitude to end the homelessness at an appropriate scale. We invite people to volunteer with any of the network of service providers actively ending people's homelessness or donate to build and sustain the system. We need both a local funding stream that consistently generates funding at appropriate scale and for Austin's private sector to invest in ending homelessness, understanding that ending homelessness improves our community for all.

Actions

- Create a dedicated local funding stream to meet the large unmet need at appropriate scale

- Create an options menu for the public to be involved in the solutions

- Bring in new public and private partners, including the faith community, private donors and other funders and volunteers

- Create an electronic platform for volunteers to support the work of ending homelessness across systems

Targets

- Larger investments to meet large unmet need

- More people aware of how to effectively contribute both in-kind and financially to ending people's homelessness

- More people involved through their work, faith communities and neighborhoods in ending community homelessness
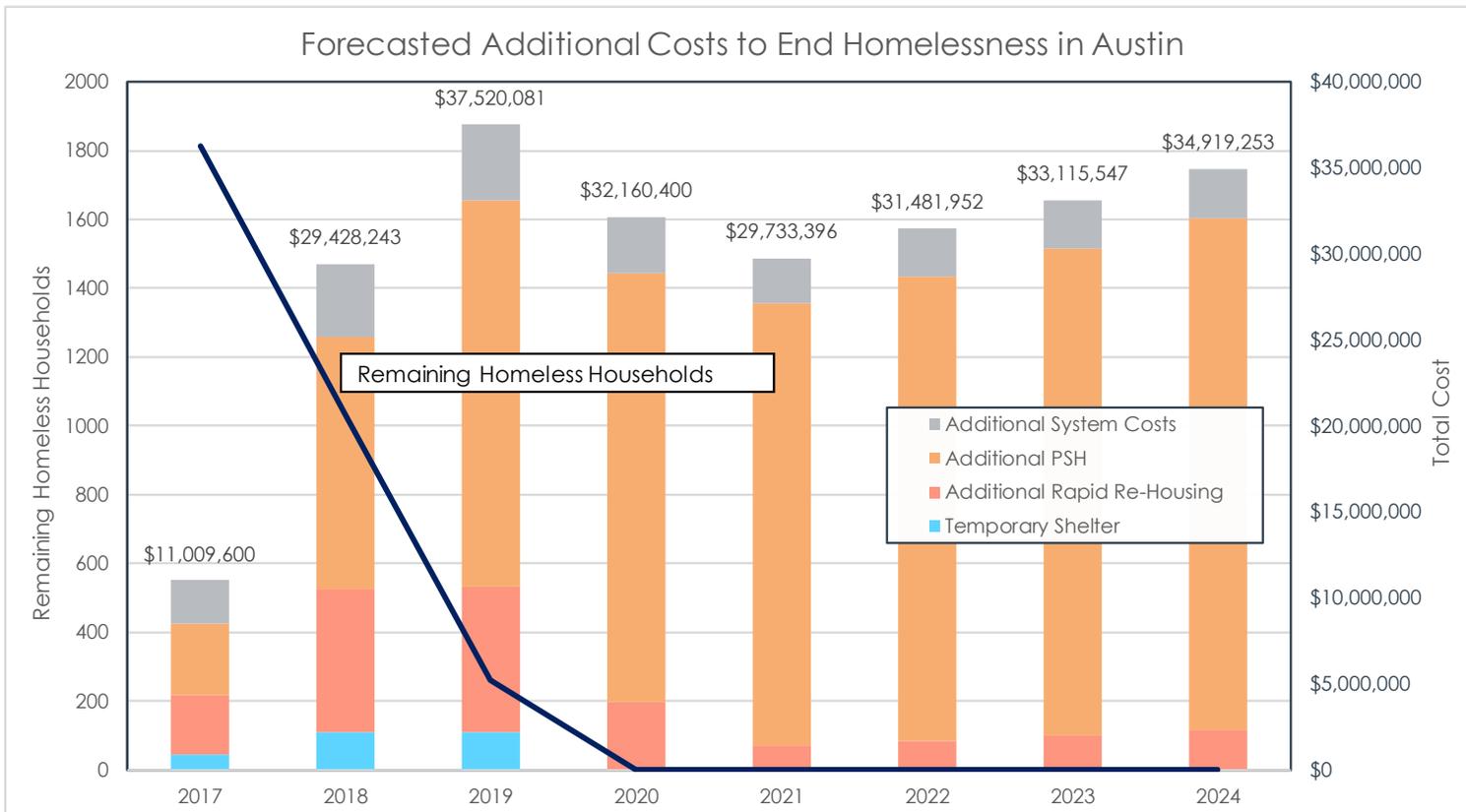
IV. The Cost of Ending Homelessness

In collaboration with other service providers and stakeholders, ECHO has developed a model that calculates the additional costs of ending homelessness in Austin/Travis County beyond the $30 million current annual investments from local, state and federal entities. Below is an overview of the types of costs included in the projection model and examples of the average per unit costs used. As described in other sections of this plan, investments in each and all of the five system elements are necessary to effectively end homelessness in our community.

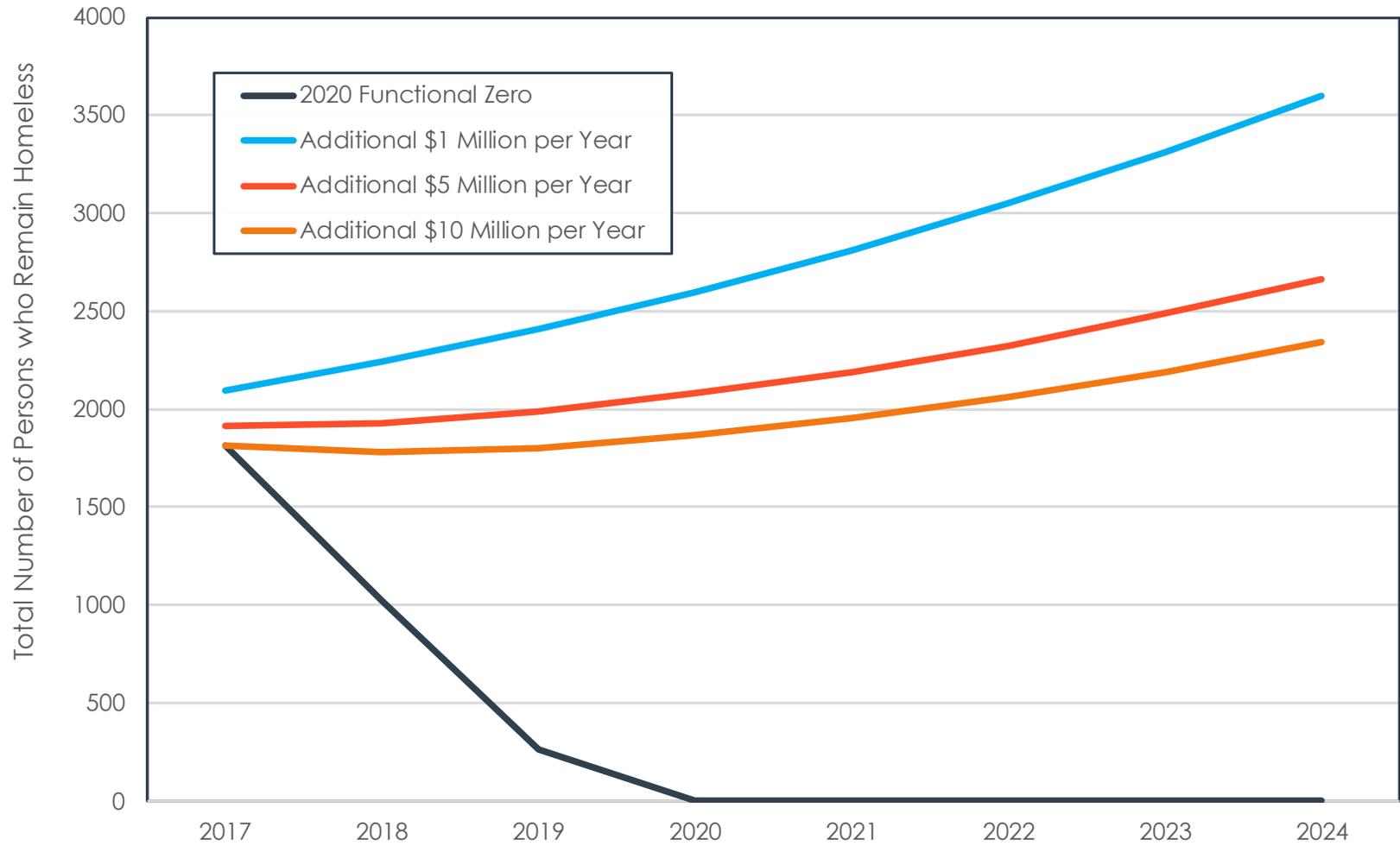| System Need	Average Estimated Unit Cost
1. Outreach & Shelter	
Temporary Shelter Site	*$7,500 per month for rent, utilities, portable toilets, shelters, food*
Respite Beds	*$15,000 per bed per year*
Outreach & Shelter Staff	*$65,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits*
Capacity Building Training	*$300 per training per person*
Program Indirect Costs	*20% per year*
2. Addressing Disparities	
Equity Coordinator/Other Staff	*$65,000 - $75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits*
3. Housing & Support Services	*(Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing)*
Rent + *Utility Assistance*	*$1,332 per month, 3% rent growth rate, 4 months avg. for RRH*
Moving and Furniture	*$800 per household*
Utility Deposit	*$200 per household*
Rental Credit Repair	*50% of clients - $2,000 per household*
Bus Passes	*$41.25 per month for 6 months*
Misc. Housing Support	*50% of clients - $200 per household (e.g. child care, car repairs)*
Risk Mitigation	*70% of households - $2,751 per household*
Buydowns	*25% of households - $2,742 per household*
Substance Use Treatments	*E.g. $10,000 per detox, $6,000 per Intensive Outpatient Treatment*
Program Staff	*$65,000-$75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits*
Capacity Building Training	*$300 per training per person*
Program Indirect Costs	*20% per year*
4. Effective System	
System Coordination	*$65,000 or $75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits - (includes prevention, employment and other coordinators)*
5. Community Commitment	
Engagement & Fund-Raising	*65,000 or $75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits - (includes fund-raising or public engagement coordinators)*

Projected Additional Cost to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

The following scenario is built on a projection model that allows our community to determine the impact of various levels of additional funding – *beyond the current $30M of yearly local, state and federal investments*. In the following projected scenario, additional increased investments ranging between $29M in 2018 to $38M in 2019, would allow Austin to reach functional zero in 2020 and would require additional investments between $30-35 million for the years thereafter to maintain it.

By functional zero, we mean that at any point in time, the number of persons experiencing homelessness is no greater than the average number of persons returning to housing. The costs of ending homelessness include the costs of temporarily sheltering additional persons, the costs of connecting additional people to housing and support services, the costs of preventing homelessness and the costs of supporting a coordinated response system.

Forecasted Additional Costs to End Homelessness in Austin

Year	Total Cost
2017	$11,009,600
2018	$29,428,243
2019	$37,520,081
2020	$32,160,400
2021	$29,733,396
2022	$31,481,952
2023	$33,115,547
2024	$34,919,253

Remaining Homeless Households

Legend:
- Additional System Costs
- Additional PSH
- Additional Rapid Re-Housing
- Temporary Shelter

Homeless Population Projections Under Multiple Scenarios

Total Number of Persons who Remain Homeless

Legend:
- 2020 Functional Zero
- Additional $1 Million per Year
- Additional $5 Million per Year
- Additional $10 Million per Year

Y-axis: 0, 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000

X-axis: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

V. How We Measure Progress Ending Homelessness

We are using the following System Performance Measures as adopted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to measure progress in ending homelessness in Austin/Travis County. Changes in green represent desired improvements while those in red represent undesired changes.

#	Measure	Goal	Change	Percentage Change
A	Total Experiencing Homelessness	Reduce the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Travis County per the annual point in time count	Point in Time Count — FY 2017: 2,03; FY 2016: 2,138	✓ 4.7% decrease
B	Length of Time People Remain Homeless	Reduce the average length of time people remain homeless from the time people seek services	Days — FY 2016: 96; FY 2015: 90	6.7% increase
C	Returns to Homelessness	Reduce the percent of persons who return to homelessness in 2 years	Returns — FY 2016: 15%; FY 2015: 17%	✓ 2% decrease
D	Number of Newly Homeless	Reduce the number of persons who become homeless for the first time	Newly Homeless — FY 2016: 3,051; FY 2015: 3,015	1.2% increase
E	Successful Housing Placements	Increase the number of persons with successful exits and/or retention in permanent supportive housing programs	Exits/Retention — FY 2016: 94%; FY 2015: 94%	No change
F	Income growth	Increase the percent of adults served who increased their income	Adults with… — FY 2016: 17%; FY 2015: 17%	No change

Note: FY2016 = September 2015 – August 2016 and FY2015 = September 2014 – August 2015.

VI. Phase 1 Planning Actions: (July – December 2017)

#	Action	Outcome	Lead
1	*Funds* • **Local Homelessness Fund** Create a local dedicated funding stream to meet large unmet need at appropriate scale	Sustainable funding to address scale of homelessness	City leadership to identify and secure funding
	• *Jumpstart Downtown Improvements Funds* *Secure immediate funding for additional shelter, outreach and housing as money allows, to start activities in budget*	Public and private investments to demonstrate commitment	City and ECHO
	• *Pay for Success* *Secure $1.2 M in yearly funding for 250 most expensive users of emergency services (hospitals, jails, shelters). Pay for Success fund will leverage funds from other end-payors*	250 persons housed, with improved health, and reduced public costs	City and ECHO
	• *Ending Youth Homelessness* *Secure funding to begin implementing community plan to end youth homelessness including shelter, rapid rehousing and prevention.*	End youth homelessness by 2020	ECHO
3	*Downtown Services Transformation* Redesign operations of homeless service providers downtown (e.g. Front Steps (ARCH), Caritas of Austin and Salvation Army) – to better target resources for people experiencing homelessness. Example activities include improving workflow and service blueprint, coordinating or consolidating food services, better connecting people to available services.	Improved shelter experience Redesigned ARCH activities	ECHO, Front Steps, City, Blomberg grant team
2	*Review & Align City of Austin Assets* Review and align related contracts, buildings, land, staff assignments, cross collaboration among departments and other city resources to maximize impact on homelessness	Maximized contract impact Aligned City of Austin vision for ending homelessness across all departments & partners	City of Austin staff/ECHO
4	*Community Engagement* Increase community engagement, bringing more public support, providing many of options for people to be part of the solution of ending homelessness	Public knows how to contribute to ending homelessness	City of Services grant funded person staff, ECHO
5	*Active System Performance Management* *Continue monitoring system and programs performance, tracking progress towards impact goals of ending homelessness, enhancing coordination & collaboration*	Maximized system performance	ECHO

Appendices

Appendix 1: Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

The following tables summarize the input ECHO collected during several meetings held in February 2017 with key stakeholders in the community. The input from these tables inform the vision and actions described in the Action Plan.

1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 1.1	Not enough outreach programs to contact and engage all unsheltered persons and connect them to services that end their homelessness	Executing mobile outreach efforts include PATH, CoC Mobile Outreach team, and the Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST), a multi-disciplinary team of police officers, paramedics, social workers, and behavioral health specialists	Enough outreach programs reach all persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and the outreach programs are linked to shelters and other services that end homelessness	• Create more mobile outreach teams to cover and respond to all geographic areas within Travis County • Design and implement guidelines standardizing effective practices for outreach workers • Determine the best use of the HOST team moving forward
Objective 1.2	Not enough housing navigation resources, including staff, available during the day to connect people to services to end their homelessness	ARCH is an accessible location for resources and services during the day, but lacks capacity to provide navigation services throughout the day Drop-in centers like Trinity Center and Sunrise Church try to provide these services on a case-by-case basis	All persons in unsheltered situations can access housing navigation services to end their homelessness Person can access navigation services throughout the city	• Immediately reorient and increase existing shelter case management staff to provide full housing navigation services at the ARCH • Implement CoC housing navigation guidelines to maximize service effectiveness • Provide more housing navigation resources outside the downtown core

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

1.	OUTREACH AND SHELTER			
#	**Challenges**	**Current Strategies**	**Vision**	**Actions to Take or Scale Up**
Objective 1.3	Not enough communication and coordination between outreach programs, shelters and navigation centers	HOST team modeling real-time communication across outreach programs and crisis services The HMIS data system provides a shared data source and communication platform across program types	When outreach programs reach persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, they can make real time referrals to navigation services, shelter, medical supports, etc. based on client need and choice	• Streamline referral flow from outreach to emergency shelter • Streamline referral flow from outreach to housing navigation services • Incorporate housing navigation services for all persons staying in emergency shelter
Objective 1.4	Not all outreach, shelter, and navigation programs offer continuous pathways to permanent housing because of limited capacity	Outreach and shelter programs should connect clients to housing programs through the Coordinated Assessment system, but not all programs do. Some shelter case management programs create individualized housing plans for clients in their caseloads without coordinating with other programs	All persons in unsheltered situations and those in shelters can access housing navigation services that help people resolve their homelessness with minimal assistance or housing programs to end their homelessness	• Re-orient outreach, shelter, and navigation services to focus on assisting households to rapidly exit into housing • Increase rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing funding and staff so that outreach, shelter, and navigation services are all connected to housing programs

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 1.5	Not enough emergency shelter beds available to people who need it Some clients are turned away from emergency shelters because of lack of capacity, and others do not even try to get in On a given day, there are 836 unsheltered individuals	Downtown shelters are sleeping more persons than they are designed to serve to meet large unmet need. Lottery system used to assign beds draws people to ARCH but does not guarantee entry	All persons experiencing homelessness can access emergency shelters and be connected to services without having to come downtown because shelters and services are scattered throughout region	Immediately provide up to 400 additional temporary shelter beds (e.g. by activating cold weather type shelter on an ongoing, nightly basis) Arrange transportation to the temporary shelters with multiple pick up spots. Allow temporary shelters to be specialized for subpopulations with shared needs (e.g. families with children, youth, the elderly)
Objective 1.6	Unsheltered homelessness is concentrated in the downtown core, causing public safety concerns and business complaints	Some agencies operate satellite offices outside of the downtown core Travis County community centers offer few social services outside of urban areas Many churches offer programs for people at risk of homelessness and those who are literally homeless	Comprehensive services and shelters are offered throughout the City and County; When clients awake in emergency shelters, they have the option to connect with navigation services without needing to go downtown to do so	Locate additional temporary shelters outside of the downtown core (consider using publicly owned spaces or churches already engaged) Provide more housing navigation resources outside of the downtown core for sheltered and unsheltered clients Explore other actions to reduce crowding outside the ARCH to increase public safety

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

2. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 2.1	African Americans are disproportionately represented in the homeless population, making up 8% of Travis County's population, but 42% of the homeless population. African Americans also tend to have more barriers to housing related to the fact that they are also disproportionately incarcerated	Improving access to housing opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds by educating landlords and negotiating lower criminal screening barriers Analyzing program outcomes by racial and ethnic groups to identify any disparities and their causes Designing a Pay for Success initiative to house 250 persons in need of permanent supportive housing who are frequent users of shelters, the criminal justice system, and/or the emergency medical system	Our homeless response system acknowledges and addresses disparities that impact access to housing	• Implement the Pay for Success initiative with a target population of frequent users of criminal justice and emergency healthcare systems • Increase staff / programs dedicated to creating employment opportunities for all persons experiencing homelessness, including persons with criminal records • Increase resources dedicated to educating and analyzing program outcomes by race. Change program designs, policies, and practices as needed to address any disparities (e.g. participating in Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing (AFHM), training opportunities on cultural competency) • Explore creating new partnerships with stakeholders who are not working with the homeless population but already work to address racial disparities (e.g. City of Austin Equity Office)

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

2. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 2.2	Persons experiencing homelessness often have housing barriers, including a criminal record, negative rental history, and/or debt, that increase their length of homelessness	Partnering with private landlords and property management companies to make units low-barrier by reducing criteria that screens people out Using flexible funding to provide incentives to landlords to mitigate perceived risks of housing persons exiting homelessness	All persons experiencing homelessness are connected to housing regardless of their criminal, debt, or rental background	• Hire additional Landlord Outreach Specialists with real-estate expertise who can efficiently find housing for 3,350 households, and can negotiate lower screening criteria • Create a network of Landlord Outreach Specialists who collaboratively maximize housing opportunities

Summary of Actions Agreed by Stakeholders to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3.	ADDRESSING DISPARITIES			
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 2.3	Lack of diverse representation from persons with lived experiences of homelessness in the design of policies and programs to reduce homelessness	• Working with youth with lived experiences of homelessness through the Austin Youth Collective to develop a plan to end youth homelessness • Hiring staff with lived experiences of homelessness by some service providers • Dedicate voting seats for persons with lived experience of homelessness in the CoC decision-making body (Membership Council) including two members of the Austin Youth Collective to End Homelessness • All HUD CoC-funded organizations have a min. of 1 seat on Board of Directors for a person with lived experience of homelessness	Our homeless response system effectively acknowledges and addresses disparities that impact housing stability by centering the participation and input from people with lived experience of homelessness and systemic inequity in Austin, TX	• Consistently include more persons with lived experiences of homelessness in decision-making bodies • Incorporate regular input from persons experiencing homelessness in development and management of programs • Improve staff diversity across the homeless response system to ensure staff members reflect the population experiencing homelessness • Hire persons with lived experiences of homelessness for peer-to-peer support and training

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 3.1	Currently, there are 3,350 households experiencing homelessness	Working with current system capacity to house as many people as possible	Community has enough resources to assist all persons in ending their homelessness	Increase resources to bring Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-housing assistance to scale
Objective 3.2	Limited supply of affordable and low-barrier rental housing units Immediate need of 3,400 housing units for people experiencing homelessness	Using flexible funding to make market rate rental units more affordable Partnering with Public Housing Authorities to establish homeless preference programs, which dedicate a percentage of Housing Choice Vouchers for persons experiencing homelessness Establishing homeless preferences with HUD 202 properties for the elderly	Persons experiencing homelessness have immediate access to rental housing units that are 2. Affordable 3. Low-barrier 4. Geographically dispersed, including high opportunity areas	• Increase flexible funding to incentivize landlords to house persons exiting homelessness, and make units affordable and low-barrier • Increase funding for additional rental housing assistance subsidies • Maximize partnerships with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) so persons experiencing homelessness have access to project based vouchers and units in affordable properties, including PHA properties • Encourage preferences in the awarding of Low Income Housing Tax Credits to increase investments for housing targeted to people experiencing homelessness • Work with City and County to better align all eligible federal funding to address this effort

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 3.3	Expected shortage of affordable rental units continues into the future given region's expected continuation in population growth	Using bond funds to create 400 new housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness Partnering with developers, encouraging them to invest in housing persons exiting homelessness	Community has enough housing units to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness that are 1. Affordable 2. Low-barrier 3. Geographically dispersed, including high opportunity areas	• Educate local public officials and developers on the need to dedicate affordable housing units to persons experiencing homelessness and on the effectiveness of the Housing First approach • Ensure CodeNEXT includes affordable and low-barrier housing developments • Partner with relevant public entities to ensure all unused or underused land/ developments/ funding sources are capitalized for affordable housing • Reduce local opposition to affordable and low-barrier housing for persons experiencing homelessness by de-stigmatizing homelessness • Invite national affordable housing developers to create housing that include affordable and low-barrier units for persons exiting homelessness

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES				
#	**Challenges**	**Current Strategies**	**Vision**	**Actions to Take or Scale Up**
Objective 3.4	Expected shortage of affordable rental units continues into the future given region's expected continuation in population growth	Using bond funds to create 400 new housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness Partnering with developers, encouraging them to invest in housing persons exiting homelessness	Community has enough housing units to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness that are 4. Affordable 5. Low-barrier 6. Geographically dispersed, including high opportunity areas	• Educate local public officials and developers on the need to dedicate affordable housing units to persons experiencing homelessness and on the effectiveness of the Housing First approach • Ensure CodeNEXT includes affordable and low-barrier housing developments • Partner with relevant public entities to ensure all unused or underused land/ developments/ funding sources are capitalized for affordable housing • Reduce local opposition to affordable and low-barrier housing for persons experiencing homelessness by de-stigmatizing homelessness • Invite national affordable housing developers to create housing that include affordable and low-barrier units for persons exiting homelessness

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 3.5	A small subset of persons experiencing homelessness struggle to keep housing (e.g. because of using substances, unable to meet rent portion, or domestic violence)	Landlord Outreach Specialists negotiate with landlords so persons are not evicted, and identify new housing opportunities to avoid returns to homelessness	All persons who have exited homelessness can maintain housing stability	• Dedicate Landlord Outreach Specialists to resolve housing conflicts and find new housing placements when necessary to avoid returns to homelessness
Objective 3.6	Persons experiencing homelessness often use substances, have limited access to healthcare, and have mental health challenges	Increasing access to healthcare, substance use treatments, and behavioral health treatments	Persons experiencing homelessness have access to recovery services, mental healthcare, and other healthcare services	• Increase availability of mental health services • Expand detox services, residential/after care treatment, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, Medical Assisted Treatment, and community-based wraparound supports by Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

3. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 3.5	Persons experiencing homelessness are often eligible for benefits, but are not enrolled to receive them (example include TANF, SNAP, SSI, SSDI and benefits)	Applying to grants to increase community capacity to assist clients' application for benefits	Persons experiencing homelessness access all mainstream benefits and are assisted by social service agencies to successfully enroll in benefit programs	• Increase the number of "benefits" case managers who work with clients to complete applications for social security income and disability income (e.g. SOAR) • Advocate to expand benefit programs investigate streamlining benefits coordination within the coordinated entry system

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

	4. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE			
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 4.1	Creating a coordinated homelessness response system where all programs and agencies align requires dedication of resources that are currently limited, restricting level of necessary coordination	Streamlining existing processes across agencies and programs Increasing cross-system partnerships (e.g. schools, criminal justice, health care) through initiatives like the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness and Pay for Success	All programs and agencies work together efficiently, contributing to the overall goal of reducing homelessness in Travis County	• Continue streamlining existing processes across agencies and programs • Strengthen cross-system partnerships through formalized agreements, shared investments, and dedicated system-level staff • Invest in training and staff development to ensure high quality services are provided

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

4. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE				
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 4.2	Inconsistency in achieving client outcomes by programs and agencies, with limited resources available to assist programs and ensure outcomes are met Outcome data shows some programs are high performers while others need improvement	Understanding each program's performance and contribution to the overall goal of reducing homelessness in Travis County and its cost-effectiveness Developing a shared, community-wide understanding of programs and services Monitoring system performance through quarterly reports and system performance	All programs across the system perform well, achieving performance benchmarks and contributing to the overall goal of reducing homelessness. Any programs struggling to meet performance benchmarks develop a reasonable plan to improve. Should they fail to improve, alternate service providers are sought	• Evaluate the extent to which program models are implemented successfully • Increase funding towards trainings, technical assistance services, and community dialogues to improve capacity of providers • Increase use of performance-based contracts that tie contract outcomes to community-wide goals • Improve the capacity of the CoC and funders to monitor program performance and assess cost effectiveness • Increase use of competitive funding • Align investments to cost-effective efforts that end homelessness • Shift funding towards high performing interventions and programs, recognizing subpopulations' needs and barriers

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

4. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE				
#	**Challenges**	**Current Strategies**	**Vision**	**Actions to Take or Scale Up**
Objective 4.3	Performance among staff working to end homelessness varies Burn-out and high turnover rates among front-line staff working to end homelessness	Developing a shared understanding of effective program practices, including client to case manager ratios Providing training on different topics to support staff and programs (e.g. Motivational Interviewing)	Staff working to end homelessness have all the tools to succeed in their jobs	• Ensure compensation reflects experience and expected outcomes • Staff programs have caseloads based on best practices to prevent staff burnout • The system (programs, agencies, actors) promotes office cultures that support self-care among staff to prevent burnout (e.g. staff workshops, counseling) • Increase training opportunities for staff to improve performance • Programs consider all tools available to incentivize staff (e.g. recognition, competitive salaries, bonuses)

Actions to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County, Texas

	4. EFFECTIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE			
#	Challenges	Current Strategies	Vision	Actions to Take or Scale Up
Objective 4.4	Prevention programs may be targeted too broadly, assisting low-income households but not necessarily those who would become homeless without the assistance provided	Understanding current research on how to target prevention efforts	Prevention programs target resources to households that would become homeless if assistance would not be provided	• Support research on effective homelessness prevention strategies, and re-orient current prevention programs to support those effective practices • Increase staff and resources to prevent discharge into homelessness from correctional facilities, hospitals, and mental health and foster care systems • Ensure formerly homeless households maintain housing stability through supportive services, preventing returns to homelessness
Objective 4.5	Transitional Housing is the preferred intervention for domestic violence programs because of demonstrated success, but it is a costly route to helping other populations into permanent housing when more cost-effective solutions are available, such as rapid re-housing	Re-orienting transitional housing investments towards a rapid re-housing model	Persons in Transitional Housing rapidly exit into permanent housing within 6 months Persons who could be successful in Rapid Re-housing programs are served by those programs instead of Transitional Housing	• Continue re-orienting transitional housing investments towards a Rapid Re-housing model • Provide technical assistance to existing Transitional Housing programs to improve efficiency of service delivery and reduce time spent and cost

Appendix 2: Glossary

100 Day Youth Challenge an initiative sponsored by A Way Home America in 2016 in which three cities, Austin, Cleveland, and Los Angeles, set goals to address youth homelessness in their respective communities, and worked towards those goals within 100 days.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) a regulation under HUD that requires communities to evaluate their housing patterns and look for racial bias, as outlined under the Fair Housing Act.

Affordable Housing is housing where the tenant can maintain their monthly rent either independently or through program assistance or subsidies.

Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) a resource center located in downtown Austin that assesses client needs, informs people on how and where to access services, provides a Day Resource Center, and provides sleeping areas for men experiencing homelessness.

Case Manager (CM) provides assessment and coordination services. Uses knowledge of available services and housing to help families move through crisis towards stability.

Chronically Homeless include any person with a disability who has been living in a place not meant for human habitation for the last 12 months continuously or on at least four occasions in the last three years where those occasions cumulatively total at least 12 months.

CodeNEXT is the City of Austin initiative to revise the Land Development Code, which determines how land can be used throughout the city, including what can be built, where it can be built, and how much can be built.

Continuum of Care (CoC) A collaborative funding and planning approach that helps communities plan for and provide, as necessary, a full range of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and other service resources to address the various needs of homeless persons. HUD also refers to the group of community stakeholders involved in the decision-making processes as the "Continuum of Care. In Austin/Travis County, ECHO is the CoC Lead Agency and is responsible for the coordination and oversight of the CoC planning efforts. The decision-making body of the CoC is called the Membership Council and meets once a month.

Coordinated Assessment (CA) assesses the needs of persons experiencing homelessness and matches them to housing programs per level of need and program availability. CA prioritizes a person's level of vulnerability compared to other homeless persons in the community who have been assessed with the same tool, and prioritizes serving persons ranked most vulnerable first.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Federal housing department which funds over $5 million in Continuum of Care homeless assistance funding to Austin each year.

Diversion prevents persons experiencing homelessness from entering the homeless response system by reconnecting them to families or other connections.

Drop-in Center facility that provides resources for persons experiencing homelessness during the day. Resources can include computers and Internet available for public use and staff who can direct persons to various services throughout the community.

Emergency Shelter Facilities that provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. Most serve specific sub-populations including single adults, families with children.

Families with Children include any households with children under 18.

Functional Zero refer to the concept of making homelessness becomes rare, brief, and non-recurring. In technical terms, it means that at any point in time, the number of persons experiencing homelessness will be no greater than the community's average monthly housing placement rate.

High Opportunity Area neighborhoods that offer quality housing and positive economic characteristics, e.g. has low poverty rates and high access to employment.

Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) A multi-disciplinary team of police officers, paramedics, social workers, and behavioral health specialists that conducts outreach in downtown Austin, and connects persons experiencing homelessness to appropriate services.

Homeless Preference Program The Housing Authority developed a local preference program to annually assist up to 100 previously homeless individuals. Applicants need to be referred by a coalition of homeless service providers (ECHO). The homeless service providers are committed to providing referrals, case management, and housing search assistance.

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) is a system-wide database that tracks the needs of households experiencing homelessness, services received across the community, and their outcomes.

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agency Organization designated by the CoC to administer and manage the HMIS. ECHO is the HMIS Lead Agency in Austin/Travis County.

Household (HH) an individual or group of individuals the present themselves as a family unit.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) financial assistance offered through local housing authorities to very low-income families, the elderly, and those with disabilities that helps pay the balance of a rental payment that exceeds 30% of a renters' monthly income.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC) Annual inventory of a CoC's emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe havens, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing resources for persons who are homeless in a CoC. The HIC includes both HUD and non-HUD funded shelter and housing resources.

Housing First an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services that promote housing stability and individual well-being as needed. Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

Housing Navigation services that bridge the gap between homelessness and stable housing by connecting people to permanent housing solutions.

Housing Unit a residence (e.g. a house, apartment, mobile home) that provides a space for household members to live.

Landlord Outreach Specialist responsible for developing and maintaining working relationships with landlords and property managers to secure housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

Low barrier housing is housing that does not exclude program participants with criminal history, negative rental history, low income, and/or other rental barriers.

Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness federal initiative to end Veteran homelessness by 2015 across the country. Austin/Travis County participated and effectively ended Veteran homelessness in March 2016.

Pay for Success (PFS) an approach to contracting that ties payment for service delivery to the achievement of measurable outcomes. The movement towards PFS contracting is a means of ensuring that high-quality, effective social services are working for individuals and communities.

Permanent Supportive Housing combines non-time limited affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of persons with complex mental or physical health, addictions, or cognitive challenges. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with healthcare, substance treatment and employment services. In addition to ending a person's homelessness and increasing their housing stability, Permanent Supportive Housing has been shown to improve health and well-being.

Point-in-time Count - Annual count of the number of persons sleeping in shelters, in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation conducted during the last week of January every year by communities around the country.

Public Housing Authority (PHA) a governmental body that governs aspects of an area's housing. The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) is the PHA for Austin, and the Housing Authority of Travis County (HATC) is the PHA for Travis County.

Rapid Re-housing quickly connects persons, with a mid-range level of needs, to permanent housing by addressing their immediate barriers to permanent housing.

Support Services include employment services, education support, parenting classes, connections to benefits, mental healthcare, substance use treatment, and basic needs, food, and clothing services.

Transitional housing facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families of all levels of need to permanent housing. Homeless persons may live in transitional housing for up to 24 months and receive supportive services such as childcare and job training.

Unaccompanied Youth include any youth under age 25 who do not have an adult or guardian responsible for their care.

Unsheltered Homeless Persons sleeping in places not meant for human habitation; such as abandoned buildings, parks, cars, sidewalks, or the streets.

Veterans include any person who served one day of active duty in the U.S. military, regardless of his or her discharge status.

Appendix 3: References

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