

A Ten -Year Housing Plan for Lincoln County



With Special Focus On Chronic Homelessness

Report to the Community:
Year One

September, 2008

Bill Hall & Tom Hatley

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It's been almost a year since the launch of At Home in Lincoln County, a ten-year housing plan with a special focus on chronic homelessness. The plan (available at www.lincolntenyearplan.org) is a comprehensive effort to better utilize existing resources and generate new resources to address the county's housing and homelessness crisis.

The decision to develop the plan followed a county-wide housing summit in the fall of 2005. Work on the plan commenced in the fall of 2006 after the county and each city government passed resolutions supporting development of the plan. The Community Services Consortium (CSC), the Community Action Agency for the tri-county region, agreed to oversee the plan's development.

The plan is the product of extensive research, a survey of local homeless populations, and a series of community meetings and forums held in Newport, Lincoln City and Waldport. It identifies 10 major action steps and 59 individual tasks. To date, we have made at least some progress on 19 of those tasks, thanks to the investment of time and energy by a number of organizations and people. These are some of the highlights.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Getting chronically homeless people into stable, permanent housing is a cornerstone of the national effort to end homelessness. Studies show that Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)—housing tied directly to services, with no time limit on occupancy—has a high rate of success in helping people to escape chronic homelessness. The 2007 Oregon Legislature made \$16 million in lottery backed bonds available to finance 150 new units of PSH

statewide. Lincoln County has moved aggressively to take advantage of this opportunity.

In May, the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department awarded CSC a \$540,000 grant that allowed for the purchase



Tern House is a six-unit apartment building in Newport.

of a six-unit apartment building in Newport (pictured above) which will be known as Tern House. The first residents are expected to move into Tern House before the end of the year.

CSC is working on a second application to OHCS for \$810,000 in PSH funding. If that grant is submitted and approved, the agency will acquire a 12-unit apartment building that will be known as Pelican Place. While Tern House will serve single homeless individuals, ten of the units at Pelican Place will accommodate families. CSC will look at additional opportunities to acquire units of PSH after the first two facilities are up and running and as additional funding opportunities become available.

Runaway and Homeless Youth

Last year, 403 school-age children in Lincoln County, or 7.4 percent of the school-age population, met the federal Department of Education's definition of homelessness. *This is the highest percentage of any county in the state.* The plan charges the Lincoln Commission on Children and Families with developing strategies to address this aspect of the crisis. The

commission created a Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition, which is meeting on a regular basis to improve communication and coordination of services to these young people.

One of the first tasks for the coalition was an application for \$80,000 in state grant funds, which was approved in February. This money allowed CSC to hire a RHY coordinator to supplement the work of the Lincoln County School District's homeless liaisons. Also, being hired through the grant are four homeless students, one from each region of the county, to assist with outreach efforts.

Many other ideas are in the discussion stages for the coalition, including providing training and support to families providing temporary housing to runaway youth; development of a youth shelter and/or drop-in center; and creation of strategies to address the needs of youth aging out of foster care.

Community Resource Center

A committee has been meeting for several months to develop a Community Resource Center in Newport. The goal of this center will be to assist individuals and families in crisis, with the aim of ending, or better yet, preventing homelessness.

This center would provide direct services (showers, laundry facilities, storage, meals, a place to receive mail) as well as links to a broad array of services—health care, mental health and addictions treatment, job training and placement, assistance with obtaining identification and more. The center will also host one or more business enterprises to provide an opportunity for those awaiting or receiving help to be economically productive. The goal is not to enable homelessness but to provide the resources people need to help themselves.

The Resource Center Committee hopes to partner with another community non-profit in its formation stage. Key initial tasks will be to secure funding for facilities and operations, as well as a site. The group has identified proximity to services and to public transportation as primary factors in site selection.

Community Housing and Land Trust

An organizing committee has been at work for several months on creation of a Community Housing and Land Trust (CHLT), and incorporation of the trust is expected to be completed before the end of 2008. The land trust model is a proven mechanism to create affordable housing and, equally important, keep it affordable. The trust develops housing, which is then sold to buyers who meet income requirements. The trust retains ownership of the underlying land, which is leased to the buyer. When the home owner is ready to sell, they must sell to another qualifying buyer.

The organizing committee has met with elected officials, business leaders and community groups to introduce the land trust concept. It has also developed by-laws, a model lease, policies and procedures and other key documents. The CHLT is expected to begin pursuing properties and funding opportunities during 2009.

Workforce Housing Committee

The principal initiative of the Workforce Housing Committee is development of a "tool box" for homebuyers and potential homebuyers to help connect them with programs and resources that can help them achieve home ownership. Although many sources of help are available to families seeking to purchase a home, many are probably unaware of the full range of available options.

The committee has also coordinated presentations to the county planning commission and most of the cities in the county to examine their planning and zoning regulations and fees and consider modifications that could help encourage the production of more affordable housing for the county's workforce.

Expanded Rent Assistance

Thanks to a \$47,598 allocation from Lincoln County's general fund, CSC will be able to ex-



Sharon Cox discusses transitional housing on a recent episode of "Inside Lincoln County"

pand the scope of its existing rental assistance programs. The county money will allow CSC to access an additional \$90,000 in matching federal funds. This will allow an additional 20 families to be served in the emergency housing program and 15 more households to be served in the transitional housing program. Both national research and the track record of the existing CSC programs show rent assistance to be an extremely successful and cost-effective tool in preventing homelessness or helping people out of homelessness. The addition of flexible local dollars will also allow these programs to serve families without children for the first time.

Housing Education

The Regional Housing Center has focused

much of its staff time in Lincoln County to provide homeowner education and counseling to first-time homebuyers and to market existing housing programs and services. It has offered several homebuyer and financial fitness classes in cooperation with the Lincoln County school district, banks, realtors and the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians. The Regional Housing Center has also provided long-term on-going case management services to help repair damaged credit to increase the chances of future home ownership. An additional collaboration with the Oregon Coast Community College has helped to expand Individual Development Accounts that can be used to start new micro-enterprises, fund education or purchase a home.

Project Homeless Connect

Project Homeless Connect (PHC), a one-day service fair for homeless individuals and families, has taken place in more than 150 communities from coast to coast. Philip Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, describes PHC as the "community's living room"—an opportunity to welcome our neighbors and friends, get them the immediate help they need as well as connecting them to other services.

The first Lincoln County Project Homeless Connect took place in October 2007 at the Newport Church of the Nazarene. More than 125 guests had access to hot meals, free haircuts, free medical exams and care, free bus tickets, blankets, clothing and non-perishable food. More than 30 federal, state, county and community non-profit agencies were represented.

The second PHC will be held at the Church of the Nazarene on Oct. 9, 2008. All of the services offered at the first PHC will be available at this event. Additionally, a dental van will be on-site to provide care for serious dental needs. As with the first PHC, all Lincoln County Tran-

sit buses will be free for the entire day in order to make it easier for people from other parts of the county to get to the event.

A Home for Hope: Oregon's Ten-Year Plan

The State of Oregon's Ending Homelessness Advisory Council completed work this year on A Home for Hope, Oregon's ten-year plan to end homelessness. The state plan is designed to support local ten-year plans and identifies key areas where state government must take the lead in eliminating barriers and improving systems.

The plan sets goals and describes strategies in three areas: prevention and intervention, permanent housing with supportive services and system improvements.

The complete plan is available at: <http://www.ehac.oregon.gov>

Other Successes

The past year has seen other notable successes in pursuit of the effort to address homelessness and expand the county's affordable housing supply.

The Lincoln County Community Development Corporation was awarded a grant through the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department's Combined Funding Cycle to construct Blackberry Hill, a nine-unit workforce housing project in Toledo.

A group of churches in Lincoln City have established Faith Community Services, and are opening a five-unit men's transitional living center in a house rented from the city of Lincoln City.

In January, My Sisters' Place, the county's

non-profit agency providing shelter and services to victims of domestic violence, opened its new 5,100-square foot shelter, replacing an aging facility that was in poor repair. At maximum capacity, the old shelter could house 23 women and children in two bedrooms. The new facility can house up to 30 women and children in six bedrooms, providing both increased capacity and a greater degree of privacy.

Recently, the county board of commissioners agreed to sponsor a Community Development Block Grant application for the Ken Trueman recovery center, which provides residential and outpatient treatment to individuals dealing with substance abuse and also provides respite beds for mental health patients in crisis. This project is designed to replace the current 12-bed Trueman facility, which is in very poor condition, with a new 24-bed facility.

In Closing

Our initial progress has been encouraging, but the work has only just begun. If you have an interest or expertise, want more information, or would like to become involved in these solutions, please contact:

General information:

Bill Hall 541-265-4100

bhall@co.lincoln.or.us

Tom Hatley 541-758-2626

thatley@csc.gen.or.us

Community Housing and Land Trust:

Clay Martin 541-758-2615

cmartin@csc.gen.or.us

Workforce Housing Group:

David Huntington: 541-574-0320

david@lincolncdc.org

Project Homeless Connect/Youth Homeless-
ness:

Barbara Dougherty 541-574-7811

bdougherty@co.lincoln.or.us

Community Resource Center:

Sharon Cox 541-574-0091

scox@csc.gen.or.us