

A Ten Year Housing Plan for Lincoln County



With Special Focus Chronic Homelessness

Report to the Community:
Year Two

September, 2009

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www.homelessinlincolncounty.com

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In October 2007, “At Home in Lincoln County,” a ten-year housing plan with a special focus on chronic homelessness, was formally launched (the full plan can be found at www.homelessinlincolncounty.com and at <http://www.csc.gen.or.us/10yearplanlincoln.htm>). The second year of plan implementation has brought both new challenges and new opportunities.

Despite some real successes, the demand for decent, safe affordable housing in Lincoln County continues to grow. The county has not been immune from the national economic downturn; the unemployment rate has almost doubled in the past year. Social service agencies in the county are reporting record demand for services. The local experience reflects a statewide trend:

- In January, the statewide one-night homeless count showed a 36 percent increase over the previous year, reaching a total of 17,122. Forty-three percent of those identified as homeless were in families with children.
- In July, new figures were released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) showing Oregon leading the nation in homelessness on a per capita basis.

The decision to develop the plan was an outgrowth of a county-wide summit on housing and homelessness held in late 2005. Work on development of the plan began in the fall of 2006 after the county and each of the seven incorporated cities passed resolutions supporting the project. The Community Services Consortium (CSC), the Community Action Agency for Lincoln, Linn and Benton counties, agreed to serve as lead agency for the

plan’s development and implementation. The plan is the product of extensive research into innovative and best practices in homelessness and affordable housing and a series of community meetings and forums held in Newport, Waldport and Lincoln City.

This report attempts to capture some of the important milestones of the past year both locally and at the state level in the fight to end homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing. While it is not all-inclusive, an effort has been made to cover developments that took place under the auspices of the ten-year plan and outside of it as well.

Permanent Supportive Housing

The national effort to end chronic homelessness is built on the effort to get people into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is housing tied directly to services, and there is no time limit on occupancy. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of PSH, and in the past year it has been certified as an Evidence-Based Practice.



Pelican Place: Twelve unit apartment building in Newport.

The stability that PSH brings to people’s lives is a critical factor in allowing them to address the

issues that led to their homelessness in the first place. For some people, PSH becomes a place of transition to other housing; for others, often those with chronic disabilities, it serves as a permanent home.

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature recognized the effectiveness of PSH by making \$16 million in lottery-backed bond proceeds available to create at least 150 units of PSH statewide. CSC submitted an application in the spring of 2008 that provided for the purchase and rehabilitation of a six-unit apartment building in Newport now known as Tern House.



Tern House: Six unit apartment building in Newport.

State officials visited Newport in the fall of 2008 to mark the opening of Tern House, which had the distinction of being the first PSH project funded under this program to open its doors. Tern House has been a success, remaining full since shortly after its opening.

In early 2008, CSC submitted an application for a second Permanent Supportive Housing Project, and was again successful. This time, an award of more than \$1.2 million (supplemented by additional foundation grants) made possible the purchase of a 12-unit apartment building in Newport that will be known as Pelican Place. While all the units in Tern House

have single bedrooms, 10 of the Pelican Place apartments are two-bedroom units. This will make it possible to provide homes to chronically homeless families, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. At the time of this publication, Pelican Place is undergoing renovations. It is expected that the first families will be able to move in sometime in early 2010.

Runaway and Homeless Youth

During the 2008-09 school year, the Lincoln County School District enrolled 484 runaway and homeless youth (RHY), according to figures submitted to the Oregon Department of Education. This represents nine percent of the school-age population in the county. This remains one of the highest percentages of school-age homeless children of any county in the state.

“At Home in Lincoln County” charged the Lincoln Commission on Children and Families with developing strategies to address the needs of homeless and runaway youth. The commission partnered with CSC to develop a successful application for a RHY project grant, one of eight funded through a pilot program established by the 2007 session of the state legislature.

The grant allowed CSC to hire a part-time RHY coordinator, who has chaired regular meetings of a Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition and provided direct services to youth to supplement the work of the Lincoln County School District’s homeless liaisons. The RHY project has met or exceeded the majority of its service goals, helping youth return to school, obtain employment and access other services, along with successfully improving communication among service providers.

The 2009 Legislature continued funding for the pilot projects, but at a reduced level. Dur-

ing 2009-10, CSC's work on behalf of RHY will be supplemented by an AmeriCorpVISTA volunteer based at the Lincoln Commission on Children and Families. In addition to provid-



New AmeriCorpVISTA Kaija Daniel and LCCF Director Barbara Dougherty.

ing direct services and a communication and planning forum for service providers, the RHY project has developed a resource website (www.homelessinlincolncounty.com) and produced a pocket resource card for youth.

The AmeriCorpVISTA will be addressing several action steps of the 10-year-plan with continued support from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition. Work will continue to identify additional community resources, address gaps in services, and assist the Coalition in providing community education on housing and homelessness issues.

Family Resource Center

A committee has continued work on developing a Family Resource Center to be based in Newport. During the past year, the committee has continued to develop and refine a plan for services to be offered, worked on a public education and outreach plan, and explored potential sites.

The center is envisioned to be a one-stop

daytime service center for families in crisis, whether homeless or not. The plan is to provide direct services such as access to showers, laundry facilities, storage for personal belongings, a place to receive phone messages and a mail drop. The center will also be a location providing information and referral to a broad range of services, including health care, mental health and addictions treatment, housing assistance, job training and placement and more.

The center will house one or more business enterprises to provide an opportunity for those seeking help to be economically productive. The goal of the center will be not to enable homelessness, but to provide people with the tools they need to help themselves.

In the coming year, the committee will develop a business plan for the center, explore public and private funding opportunities, expand public outreach, and continue to evaluate potential sites. The committee has identified proximity to other services and public transportation as key priorities in selecting a site.

Community Housing and Land Trust

During the past year, the Lincoln Community Land Trust has reached several milestones, including completion of a model ground lease and articles of incorporation. In August, the Internal Revenue Service granted the Land Trust status as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. The LCLT joins more than 200 other land trusts in the United States.

While there are many legally complex issues associated with a land trust, the concept at its heart is simple: to create affordable housing and keep it affordable. The trust builds or buys homes. Each home is sold to a buyer who meets income requirements, but the trust keeps ownership of the underlying land. The homebuyer signs a long-term lease on the land. The hom-

owner also agrees that when they are ready to sell the home, they will sell to a purchaser who meets land trust income qualifications.

During the past 12 months, the Land Trust's executive director and board have met with several property owners and developers about potential land donations or purchases, and some of those conversations may lead to future land trust projects. There have also been meetings with representatives of NeahCasa, a Tillamook County land trust, and with the Lincoln County chapter of Habitat for Humanity to discuss potential partnerships. Nationally, several land trusts and Habitat chapters have partnered in ways that take advantage of the unique strengths of both organizations.

In August, CSC received \$600,000 in funding through the federal government's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), which is designed to purchase foreclosed homes and return them to the market. A portion of these funds has been allocated for the acquisition of what will be the Land Trust's first home. Under the guidelines of the NSP, the potential home acquisition will likely be in either Lincoln City or Toledo.

Workforce Housing Committee

The focus of the Workforce Housing Committee has been the development of a Tool Kit designed to provide information on resources and options to builders, lenders, homebuyers and local government officials. Although many resources are available to those with an interest in workforce housing, there is no single reference guide designed specifically for Oregon and Lincoln County.

In the spring of 2009, the committee secured a \$9,000 grant from the Lincoln County Community and Economic Development Fund to produce the toolkit. A consultant was hired

to write and edit the document. After editing is completed, it will be made available in printed form and on the internet.

Expanded Rent Assistance

Short- and longer-term rent assistance can be one of the most cost-effective tools in helping people out of homelessness or better still, to avoid homelessness in the first place. CSC has offered both emergency and longer-term transitional rent assistance through state and federal funding for a number of years.

The existing federal and state funding during 2008-09 was supplemented by an allocation of \$47,598 from Lincoln County, which allowed CSC to access an additional \$90,000 in federal matching funds. These flexible local dollars allowed the agency to serve families without children for the first time. Due to a sharp down-



Project Homeless Connect - 2008. Last year, 133 guests were served.

turn in county revenues, the local funding was reduced to \$10,000 for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

During 2008-09, the existing emergency housing program helped 14 households, providing 1,420 nights of shelter. Lincoln County's funding allowed 26 other households to be served, providing 1,809 nights of shelter. The standard transitional housing program provided support to seven families, totaling 4,473 nights of shel-

ter. County dollars aided ten more families, for an added 10,803 nights of shelter

The federal stimulus bill provides additional assistance to renters in crisis through the Homeless Prevention and Rehousing Program (HPRP). These funds are to be targeted at



Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln County plans to build its tenth home in Toledo.

families and individuals facing homelessness primarily due to loss of a job or other economic issues, rather than chronically homeless populations. The allocation for Lincoln County under this program is expected to be \$193,788 over a three-year period.

Housing Education

The Regional Housing Center at CSC has focused much of their staff time in Lincoln County to provide homeowner education and counseling to first-time homebuyers and to market existing housing programs and services. They have offered several homebuyer and financial fitness classes in cooperation with the Lincoln County School District, banks, realtors and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

The Regional Housing Center has also provided long-term on-going case management services to households that are interested in repairing their credit so that they may be able to purchase

homes. 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.

The federal stimulus efforts have provided the Regional Housing Center with additional resources to focus on the needs of families facing eviction. Although Lincoln County's foreclosure rates have been lower than many areas, they have been increasing.

Project Homeless Connect

At the time of this publication, planning was moving into the final stages for the third Lincoln County Project Homeless Connect. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday, October 9, at the Church of the Nazarene in Newport. More than 30 government and private non-profit agencies will again be on hand to provide direct services and service referrals to homeless individuals and families. They include medical and prescription assistance, help in obtaining identification, food stamps, energy, housing and legal assistance.

The Lions Health Van will be back for a third year, offering a variety of health screenings, and the Medical Teams International Dental Van returns for a second year. Other services include free haircuts, immunizations, pet care and bike repair. A hot meal will be served, and personal care items and packaged food will be offered. Lincoln County Transit bus service will again be free throughout the day.

The first Homeless Connect in 2007 drew 125 people. Last year, 133 guests were served. Organizers are anticipating another increase this year, as many agencies are reporting record increases in demand for services.

Lincoln Commission on Children and Families has played a lead role along with Lincoln County Food Share and Samaritan Health Services in organizing and finding financial support for Project Homeless Connect for the past three years. Part of the AmeriCorpVISTA's work plan this year will be to develop an organizational manual for this event in hopes of finding a service club, church or organization willing to take the project on for subsequent years.

Other Developments

Housing Authority of Lincoln County

A partnership between the Housing Authority of Lincoln County and a private developer, Cascade Housing Group LLC, has made possible the completion of Fistera Gardens Apartments, a 25-unit affordable housing development located in Yachats. Support from the City of Yachats, the Yachats Affordable Housing Committee, and other community partners helped to make the project a reality. Grand opening and ribbon-cutting for the project is set for Wednesday, October 7th, at 10:30 a.m.

Habitat for Humanity

The Lincoln County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity International has achieved several important milestones in the past year. The organization dedicated its ninth home in August, located in Lincoln City. Habitat plans to build its tenth home in Toledo. A grant from Habitat International has allowed the organization to hire its first full-time executive director. The local chapter has set a goal of increasing its housing production from one home a year to three per year by 2012.

The Lincoln County Habitat Chapter was a successful applicant with four other Oregon chapters in securing a \$500,000 grant through the Neighborhood Partnership Fund. Chapter representatives have also met with the Lincoln Com-

munity Land Trust board of directors to explore potential project partnerships.

Warming Center

In November 2008, a group of volunteers organized to provide an overnight warming center for homeless single adults during a cold spell. The center operated at the main Exhibit Hall of the Lincoln County Fairgrounds in Newport and served as many as nine people per night. It was staffed entirely by volunteers, who also provided breakfast for those using the shelter. The effort was deemed a success, and the group will meet soon to look at the feasibility of reopening the shelter during severe weather conditions in the coming winter.

The 2009 Oregon Legislature

Although the State of Oregon faced one of its worst budget crises in many years, 2009 proved to be a landmark year for housing legislation, thanks largely to the leadership of the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department and the advocacy of the Oregon Housing Alliance. Lincoln County is a member of the Housing Alliance, which includes local governments, community action agencies and a number of other housing advocates.

Perhaps the most significant legislation was HB 2436, the Housing Opportunity Bill. That measure added a \$15 surcharge to document recording fees, and the revenues will be dedicated to affordable housing and homeless services. This is expected to generate \$15 million in revenues during the 2009-11 biennium, with the amount increasing in future years as the economy continues to recover.

A significant policy bill, SB 200, won support of both houses of the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Kulongoski. It calls for a comprehensive and collaborative system of support and housing, including a

focus on permanent housing; enhanced cooperation between county and state agencies to deliver seamless, cost-effective services in a timely manner; and measurable outcomes.

Senate Bill 5535 also passed, providing \$19.4 million in lottery-backed bonds to support preservation of existing affordable housing. The majority, \$16.3 million, is for multi-family housing with federal rent assistance, and \$3.1 million is for manufactured home parks. Oregon Housing and Community Services estimates this will save 1,598 units of housing through acquisition and rehabilitation of existing units.

The Oregon Ending Homelessness Advisory Council, created by a governor's executive order in 2006, delivered its ten year plan for the state, "A Home for Hope," in 2008 (the plan is available online at http://www.ehac.oregon.gov/OHCS/EHAC/docs/EHAC_Action_Plan_Final.pdf) The full Council continues to meet on a quarterly basis, with several subcommittees active in implementing various phases of the plan.

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