



# Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness in Lehigh Valley

## April 2021

# We all recognize the need to do more...

- ▶ We all want to do more to address homelessness, but homelessness is just one (very visible) symptom of weaknesses in our broader housing system.
- ▶ If we want to help our unsheltered neighbors, we need to talk about affordable housing, and how insufficient the supply of it is to meet existing needs.
- ▶ Some of these issues have felt impossible to tackle, but the American Rescue Plan provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to make real progress toward ending homelessness.
- ▶ By investing a portion of the ARP funds in evidenced-based housing strategies, we can dramatically impact homelessness and housing instability while creating positive spillover effects for the entire city.

# American Rescue Plan is a Game Changer

## Key Components of the Plan

- ▶ Emergency Rental Assistance for qualified households & Housing Vouchers
- ▶ Homelessness Assistance - To develop affordable housing, to help acquire non-congregate shelter to be converted into permanent housing or used as emergency shelter
- ▶ Homeowner Assistance for rural homeowners
- ▶ Housing Counseling & Fair Housing
- ▶ Utility Assistance

# Evidence-Based Best Practices

- ▶ LVRHAB's Goal: We want to be the best collaborative partner we can be with County & City officials in implementing plans to assist people at-risk of and experiencing homelessness
- ▶ Data-informed, HUD-mandated Standards of the Eastern PA COC, following recommendations of the National Alliance to End Homelessness
- ▶ Examples:
  - ▶ Coordinated Entry with on-going system performance data
  - ▶ Diversion, Prevention, Landlord Engagement
  - ▶ Housing First Model, including PSH and RRH.
  - ▶ For people experiencing chronic homelessness
    - ▶ Street outreach with case management
    - ▶ Access to emergency shelter for up to 90 days
    - ▶ Move quickly into PSH or RRH
    - ▶ "Move on" strategies available when appropriate

## A Snapshot of Homelessness in Bethlehem, 2020:

- 131 NEW households presented as homeless (Coordinated Entry data)
- 301 households receiving rental assistance, otherwise could have become homeless (City of Bethlehem data)
- 49 people counted at the emergency shelter (Point In Time Count)

# Housing First and permanent housing as best practices

## Typical "Housing Readiness"



## Housing First



Housing First is a permanent housing model that does not mandate participation in services before housing. Supportive services offered but not required. Includes Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) combines low-barrier affordable housing and optional supportive services to help individuals and families lead more stable lives. PSH typically targets people who are homeless or otherwise unstably housed and are unable to maintain housing stability without supportive services.

Rapid re-housing (RRH) provides short-term rental assistance and services to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. It is offered without preconditions and the resources and services are tailored to the needs of the person.

# What the Data Tells Us

- ▶ Biggest gap in LV is rapid rehousing for families who do not qualify for PSH (Meaning folks without significant health, behavioral health & D&A issues)
- ▶ Lack of safe and affordable units is a fundamental challenge across multiple types of programs
- ▶ Proven Strategies to address this challenge include:
  - ▶ Blight remediation
  - ▶ Landlord engagement
  - ▶ Access to RRH subsidies and housing vouchers

# Moving from recommendations to meaningful change in Bethlehem

Recommendations on actions to be taken in the next  
24 months

# Improve Access to Appropriate Emergency shelter

- ▶ Expanded emergency and crisis housing for hard-to-shelter populations, in safe, sanitary conditions.
- ▶ Utilize ARP funds to provide non-congregate shelter in local hotels/motels
- ▶ January - March 2021 LVRHAB placed 60 households into hotel/motel stays with ongoing case management
- ▶ We have a list of local hotels participating in our program and have been able to negotiate weekly and monthly rates to keep costs reasonable and provide safe, socially distanced shelter for homeless individuals and families
- ▶ Can be implemented immediately.

**For \$200,000, we can provide up to 3,000 nights of safe, appropriate, and sanitary emergency shelter, including case management services.**



# Expanded availability of safe, healthy housing through landlord engagement

- ▶ Rapid Rehousing rental subsidy can house a family of 4 in a 3-bedroom unit for \$1,352 per month, in a 2-bedroom unit for \$1,048
- ▶ For families needing partial subsidies, costs range from \$300-\$600/month
- ▶ Supported by several existing non-profit programs
- ▶ Process could be further supported by a housing navigator, mediation services, and a mitigation fund

**For \$250,000 we can make safe, healthy housing accessible for at least 15-20 families for a year.**

# Renovation of blighted properties

- ▶ 50+ blighted properties in Allentown, and an estimated 2,100 vacant single-family homes
- ▶ These properties can be renovated to provide safe, healthy, affordable housing for low-income families, including through PSH, RRH, and first-time home buyer programs.
- ▶ Estimated per unit cost per unit for renovation: \$85,000
- ▶ Could be owned by through a land bank and managed by non-profits.

**For \$5 million, the city and its community partners can rehab 50 units of safe, healthy housing for vulnerable residents through PSH, RRH, first-time home buyers, and other housing services.**

# Renovation of larger, underutilized properties

- ▶ Several large, abandoned or underutilized properties in Allentown
- ▶ Sample property near 13<sup>th</sup> Street
  - ▶ Can be renovated into 15 1-bedroom apartments for individuals or couples
  - ▶ Estimated cost of renovation: \$1.7 million

**For \$1.7 million, the city and its community partners can renovate 15 units of permanent, safe, healthy housing for vulnerable residents of Allentown, and benefit the broader community by restoring a nuisance property.**

# To summarize...

## **Emergency Shelter at local Motels/Hotels**

- ▶ \$200,000 would provide up to 3,000 nights of emergency shelter, with case management

## **Landlord engagement**

- ▶ \$250,000 would support at least 15-20 families/year

## **Renovation of Blighted Properties**

- ▶ \$5M to rehab 50 units of safe, healthy housing for the chronically homeless and other vulnerable residents
- ▶ Average of \$85,000 in renovation cost per unit

## **Renovation of larger, underutilized properties**

- ▶ \$1.7M for 15 renovated units

# All of Bethlehem benefits when we provide best-practice solutions for our unsheltered neighbors

By leveraging American Rescue Plan funds to address these housing challenges, we can:

- ▶ Meet our current housing and shelter needs using evidence-based models.
- ▶ Provide housing stability for our unsheltered and unstably housed neighbors. Housing stability directly affects physical and mental health outcomes, promotes employment stability, and leads to education stability and improved academic achievement.
- ▶ Convert dilapidated properties into community assets, while also addressing the challenge of homelessness.
- ▶ Strengthen our shared community by implementing housing solutions that are just, equitable, and sustainable.
- ▶ Bring about change that will last for a generation or more by focusing on long-term solutions.
- ▶ We can start now to implement meaningful solutions.

# LVRHAB Governing Board

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