

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memorandum

Date: October 6, 2022
To: Michael G. Colón, President of City Council
From: Laura Collins, Director of Community and Economic Development
Re: Presentation on Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness

Earlier this year, the City of Bethlehem began work with a consultant to complete a Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness. The focus of the work was to identify a feasible built solution that is part of a comprehensive approach to provide necessary sheltering and services to those who are experiencing homelessness in Bethlehem and the greater Lehigh Valley region.

We respectfully request the opportunity to present the recently completed Strategic Plan to City Council at the upcoming October 18th joint Public Safety and Community Development Committee Meeting. We will present the Plan recommendations and also outline the Plan development process, which included stakeholder and service provider interviews, a community-based survey of those experiencing homelessness, a comprehensive built solutions assessment of the Lehigh Valley and a corresponding gaps analysis, and an initial cost-estimate assessment for construction, operation, and maintenance of a potential built solution.

Sharing the Strategic Plan with Councilmembers is an important step to move from recommendations for a solution to actualization of a solution, which we hope to do without delay. To further a built solution, we intend to direct funds from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) American Rescue Plan Program (HOME-ARP). Accordingly, concurrent with this letter, we are requesting a public hearing on the City's HOME-ARP allocation plan to be held at the beginning of the October 18th regular City Council meeting. Shortly thereafter, we will be looking to City Council for approval of the allocation plan. Council's awareness and understanding of the Strategic Plan will be a necessary precursor to your consideration of the HOME-ARP allocation plan, so we hope to have the opportunity to present the Strategic Plan at the upcoming Public Safety and Community Development Committee meeting.

Thank you for considering this request. We are very grateful for City Council's commitment to this issue of utmost importance to the City and all of our unsheltered neighbors. Please let me know if you have any questions or desire additional information.

Laura Collins
Director of the Department of Community and
Economic Development