

# City of Bethlehem Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness



Bethlehem City Council Community Development Committee  
October 18, 2022

# What to expect tonight:

- The most current data on the Lehigh Valley's unsheltered population
- Extent to which pandemic has heightened need
- How the City has taken a leadership role
- The costs to construct and operate a year-round shelter

# Bethlehem steps up

- The Lehigh Valley has no permanent year-round emergency shelter.
- The City of Bethlehem embarked on this study in early 2022, a year in which demand for sheltering jumped.

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## Bethlehem needs a permanent homeless shelter. The city's studying how it could happen.

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By [Sara K. Satullo](#) | For [lehighvalleylive.com](#)

[Bethlehem's](#) leaders agree the city needs a permanent homeless shelter. The question is where to locate it and how to make it happen.

[Bethlehem City Council](#) Tuesday night voted 6-1 to hire consultant Michael Baker International at a cost of \$84,690 to develop a strategic plan to address homelessness and study the potential for a year-round shelter. The firm will begin stakeholder outreach starting in April, said Mayor [J. William Reynolds](#).

The Lehigh Valley's existing housing shortage and the

## Purpose of the Plan:

- Address critical gaps
- Lehigh Valley's first permanent shelter

# State of Homelessness in the Region

# Homelessness and housing insecurity rose sharply from 2020

Over the first two years of the pandemic there was a:

- 26% increase in households experiencing homelessness
- 36% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness

Specific populations saw sharp rises:

51% families with children

93% increase for veterans

46% of the chronically homeless

46% of households experiencing domestic violence

Source: 2022 Point-in-Time Count



The Lehigh Valley has a  
shortage of 14,480 housing  
units for households  
making <\$25,000



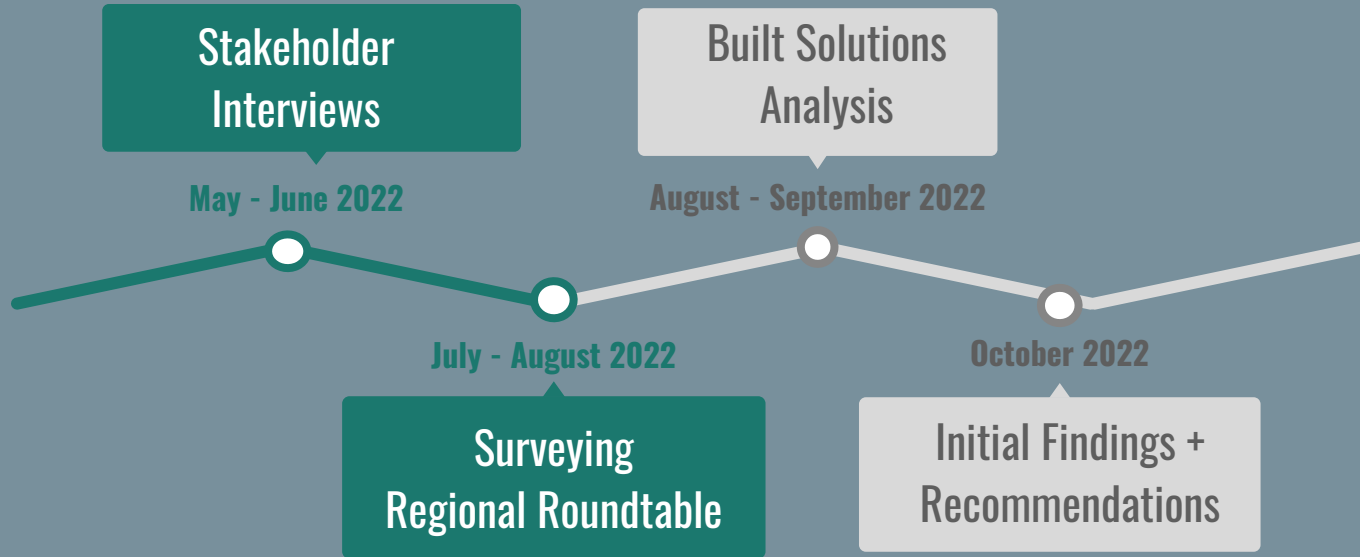
In 2021 eviction rates in Lehigh County were 9.5% and 5.6% in Northampton County.



Source: PA Housing Alliance, 2021



# Approach: Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness



# July 18 Regional Roundtable on Homelessness

## Municipal Partners:

- City of Allentown
- City of Easton

## County Partners:

- Northampton County
- Lehigh County

Bethlehem Area School  
District

## Service Providers:

- New Bethany Ministries
- Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering
- Lehigh Valley Regional Homeless Advisory Board (LV RHAB)

## Institutions:

- Lehigh University
- Moravian University
- St. Luke's University Health Network
- Lehigh Valley Health Network

## Elected Officials:

- Pa. Rep. Steve Samuelson
- Pa. Senator Lisa Boscola
- Pa. Rep. Jeanne McNeill
- Congresswoman Susan Wild

## Historic Bethlehem

# Survey

107 individuals were interviewed  
at service provider sites

- New Bethany Ministries
- Ripple Community Inc.
- Daybreak
- Free Laundry Night  
(sponsored by St. Luke's  
Parish Nursing)
- Bethlehem Emergency  
Sheltering - Weekend Lunch



This past winter,  
what shelter services  
did you use?

The most frequently visited  
shelters were **Bethlehem  
Emergency Shelter** and  
**Allentown Emergency Shelter**

Have you ever chosen to  
not stay at a shelter?

**45% of respondents have chosen  
to not stay in a shelter**, citing  
reasons such as: **Feeling unsafe,  
feeling unwelcome, no option to  
stay with partner/spouse/family,  
no accommodation for pet(s)**

Have you ever been turned away  
from a shelter?

**76%** respondents **have never been turned away** when seeking shelter.

The **24%** of respondents who **have been turned away** cited reasons including: **shelter was too full, they arrived late, lack of ID, and/or a protocol violation**

The last time you were securely housed in a place you considered to be your home, why did you leave that home?

**20%** were **evicted** and/or **forced to leave due to crowding, condemnation, or landlord issues**

**14%** left due to **relationship conflict**

**11%** were **kicked out or ran away**

What is keeping you  
from finding housing?

**42% cannot find a place they  
can afford**

**10% are on a waiting list**

**9% have a physical disability  
and can't find an accessible  
apartment**

**6% lack an ID/proper  
identification**

Where do you spend time during the day when the shelters are closed?

**50%** spend time at a **day program** like **Daybreak, Ripple Community Inc., etc.**

**18%** spend time **outside**

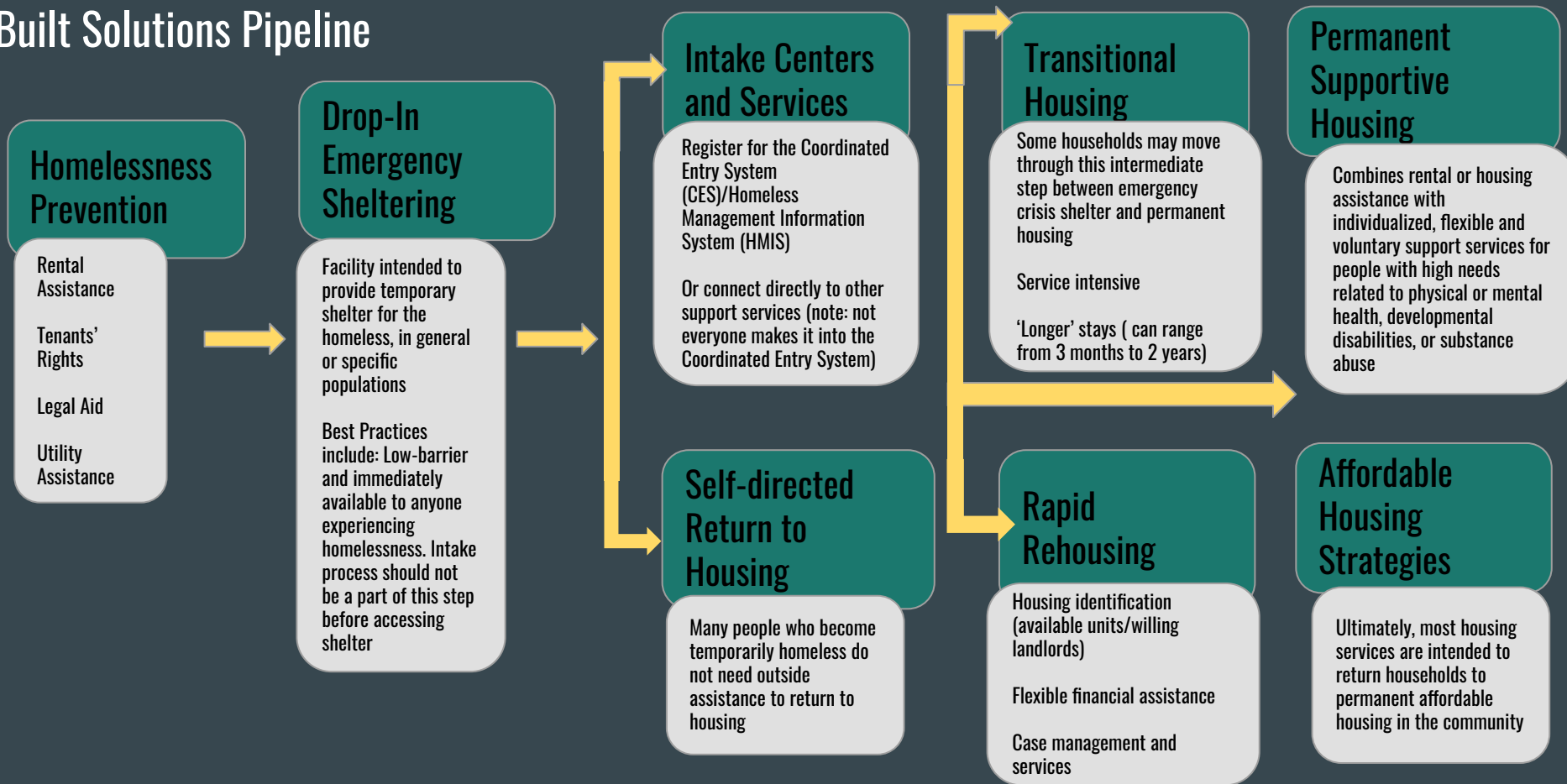
**11%** spend time at a **family member or friend's house**

**8%** spend time at **the library**

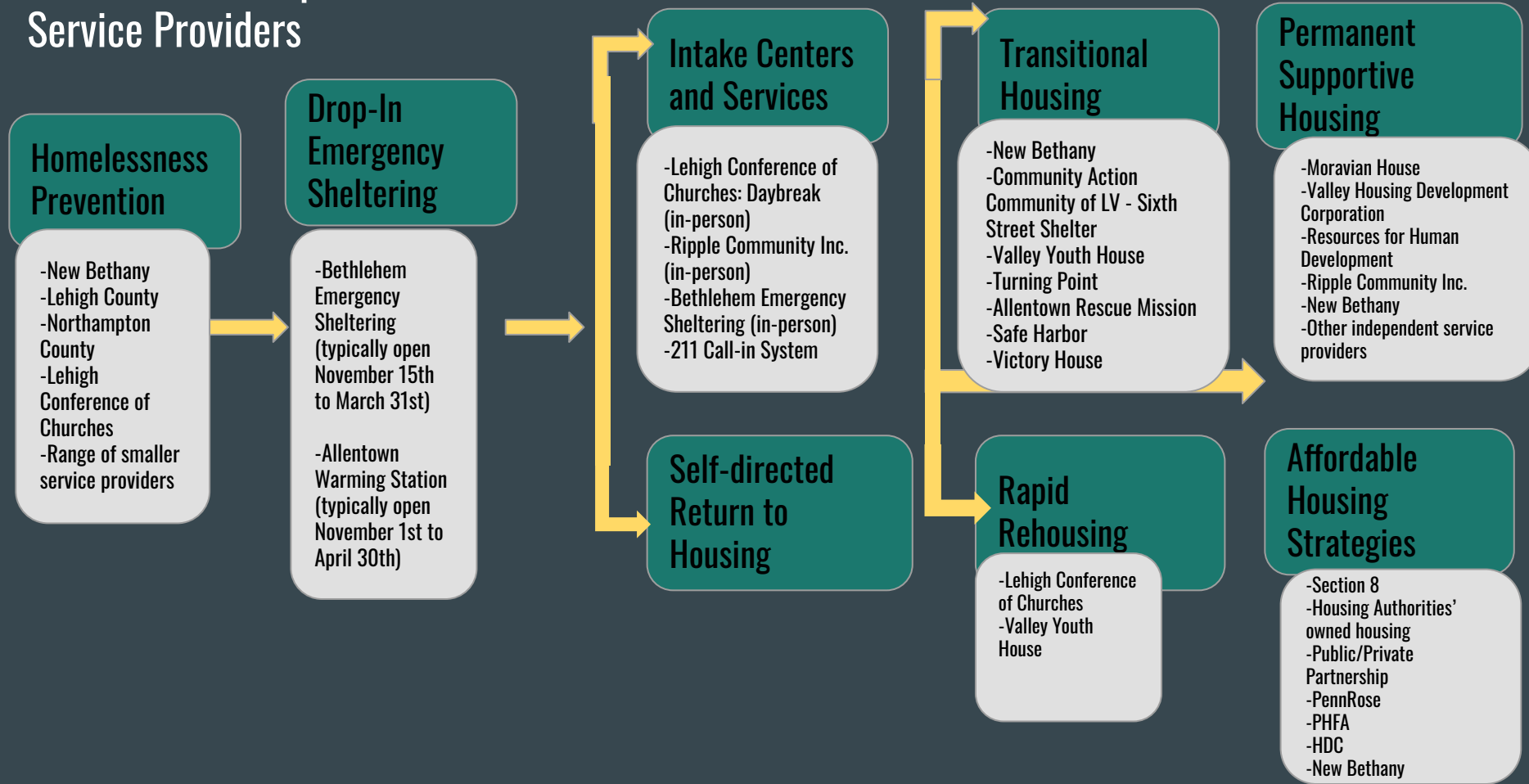


# Built Solutions to Address Homelessness

# Built Solutions Pipeline



# Built Solutions Pipeline: Service Providers



# Built Solutions Pipeline: Gap Analysis

## Homelessness Prevention

- Need: 746 households (including 162 families)
- 2021 eviction rates: 5.6% in Northampton County and 9.5% in Lehigh County, significant increases since 2016
- 1.4% and 1.93% respectively



## Drop-in Emergency Sheltering

- There is no permanent, year-round emergency shelter in Lehigh Valley
- There is no emergency sheltering for families
- Hotels were used at a stop-gap measure to fill emergency housing need using CARES Act dollars - that option is mostly no longer there



## Intake Centers and Services

- Need: 1086 households enrolled (689 in Lehigh County and 397 in Northampton County)
- 69% assessed through 211 system and 31% assessed through walk-in center
- Gap: need for more walk-in intake centers/options

## Self-directed Return to Housing



## Transitional Housing

- Gaps: There is no existing transitional housing for single women and LGBTQ+ populations
- There are very limited family units
- Increases seen in need for domestic violence survivors and women

## Rapid Rehousing

Lehigh Valley RHAB has 84 co-funded units and 1 ESG funded unit → this is 14% capacity to meet the need for Rapid Rehousing

## Permanent Supportive Housing

Need: 295 households (200 singles/couples and 95 families)

## Affordable Housing Strategies

LVPC estimates there is a deficit of 14,480 housing units for households with incomes under \$25K

**In 2022, only 14% of those enrolled by the Lehigh Valley RHAB went to permanent housing**

The City has access to post-pandemic resources that can be directed towards this work, particularly in regards to identifying a 'built solution'.

# City's Recommended Role:

Permanent, year-round emergency shelter

Affordable Housing Policies and Programs

# Built Solutions: Evaluation

How much will it cost to acquire and build?

What will be the maintenance and operations costs?

Where is the funding for long-term sustainability?

Based on best practices and level of need, the vision for a permanent, year-round emergency shelter includes:

- 50 to 70 non-congregant rooms - single beds with a toilet and sink in the room
- Four family-sized units
- 10 congregant emergency beds
- Single-stall showers
- Laundry facilities
- Commercial Kitchen
- Full-sized Lockers
- Day-time drop-in center
- Satellite office space for Service Providers and Coordinated Entry System intake



# Built Solutions Analysis: Costs by structural type for a 24/7 year-round emergency shelter



Figure 4: Built Solution Cost Comparison

# Rehab - Existing Community Building: Cost Estimate

Demolition: \$92,500

Acquisition: \$1,998,000

Site Improvements: \$25,000

Construction/Rehab: \$3,977,500

Permitting & Environment: \$69,375

Inspections: \$11,563

General Requirements: \$173,438

Contractor Overhead: \$57,813

Construction Contingency: \$277,500

Legal & Insurance: \$57,813

Construction Management: \$34,688

Financing: \$115,625

Architecture & Engineering Fees: \$173,438

Fixtures, Furniture, & Equipment: \$296,000

Private Storage Lockers: \$37,500

Utilities: \$20,000

Total: \$7,417,750

## Cost estimate for operations and maintenance, includes:

- Staff salaries/benefits/training
- Maintenance staff Labor and Supplies
- Utilities
- Insurance



\$10,000/bed/year

# Operations & Maintenance Cost Estimates: Permanent, year-round shelter with 50 to 70 non-congregant beds and 4 family-sized apartments

Expense Description	Cost Estimate Range (\$/year)
Staffing (salaries; benefits; training; taxes)	\$305,500 to \$427,700
Administrative Costs	\$106,700 to \$149,380
Utilities	\$41,700 to \$58,380
Maintenance	\$46,200 to \$64,680
Total	\$500,100 to \$700,140



\$10,000/bed/year

# Long-Term Public Sector Funding

**HOME Investment Partnership Act Funds** – Federal HUD program to increase homeownership and affordable housing opportunities for low and very low-income Americans.

**Emergency Solutions Grant** – HUD program to assist people to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

**Community Development Block Grant** – HUD program to provide decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

**Continuum of Care** – HUD program to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness.

**Next steps and closing**