



WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council

STAFF

Rupa Venkatesh, Assistant City Manager
Kelli Pryor, Director of the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care
Sgt. Annie Hill, Police Services, HOPE Team
Brittany Depew, Social Sustainability, Homelessness Lead Specialist

SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSIONS

Staff Report: Overview of Homeless Response System and Community Report: Northern Colorado Continuum of Care.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acknowledging that homelessness is a housing problem, and that people experiencing homelessness are part of our community, a people-centered approach is the key to addressing homelessness. This approach includes humanizing data and solutions and orienting the response system toward stabilizing and exiting people out of homelessness and into housing. Using both a Housing First approach and balancing housing and service needs with compassion-based enforcement, these efforts must be highly coordinated with a focus on supporting vulnerable community members and maintaining safe and healthy outdoor spaces for all.

Notable progress has been made over the past few years, especially due to increased funding opportunities through both the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act and ARPA (American Rescue Plan) Act, and thanks to high levels of collaboration across sectors, largely coordinated regionally by the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care. Coordination between government and nonprofit agencies is critical to building effective and sustainable solutions and, coupled with sufficient ongoing funding to meet the needs of the community, it is possible to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

GENERAL DIRECTION SOUGHT AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What reflections does Council have about the Northern Colorado (NoCO) Continuum of Care (CoC) and the City's role in the homelessness response system?
2. Are there next steps around this that Council would like to prioritize?

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Connection to Housing Strategic Plan, Strategic Objectives, and Council Priorities

For several years, the City has been an active collaborator, funder, and supporter of homelessness response and solutions in an effort to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring specifically in Fort Collins and as part of the northern Colorado region. This is clearly supported in City policy, including:

- Council-adopted priority (Homelessness Initiatives)
- Housing Strategic Plan vision that “everyone has healthy, stable housing they can afford.”
- Strategic Objective 1.2: Collaborate and leverage community partners’ expertise in addressing priority human service issues like poverty and mental health and make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Strategic Objective 5.7: Reduce incidents of, and impacts from, disruptive and unwanted behaviors through working closely with the community’s human service providers to offer creative approaches that balance compassion and consequences.

The City’s role is to effectively manage homelessness to balance the needs of our most vulnerable and maintain quality of life for the community. This is done through a variety of community partners, programs, and tools.

Northern Colorado Continuum of Care

The City participated in Homeward 2020, a ten-year plan to address homelessness in Fort Collins that included a decade of research, system development, application of evidence-based models, data collection, consultation, technical assistance, and community collaboration.

The creation of a Northern Colorado Continuum of Care was one recommendation in the Homeward 2020 final report (attachment 1), along with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) which is described in more detail below.

What is the Continuum of Care?

- Continuums of Care (CoC) are federally designated regions tasked with coordinating a community-wide response to homelessness, including funding priorities, system interventions, and elevating Housing First practices (attachment 2).
- The Northern Colorado Continuum of Care (NoCO CoC) consists of Larimer and Weld Counties and was officially recognized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in January of 2020 as the fourth CoC for the State of Colorado. Prior to this, northern Colorado was part of the Balance of State CoC along with over 50 other Colorado counties.
- The NoCO CoC is not one entity, but rather a collective of community partners that believe homelessness can only be solved by working together to improve our system’s ability to identify, intervene, and house people quickly, so that when it happens, homelessness can be rare, brief, and only once.
- There are two Lead Agencies designated by the NoCO CoC general membership to act on behalf of the CoC and coordinate its work, United Way of Weld County as CoC Lead and Homeward Alliance as HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) Lead.

Types of Homelessness

The experience of homelessness does not affect everyone in the same way, and it is important to have a dynamic response system that can intervene appropriately.

- The majority of people who experience homelessness resolve their housing crisis with no or minimal outside resources.
 - For those who have low to moderate acuity of needs, many still will not need permanent support to stabilize in housing.
- Those who have been homeless for long periods of time are the smallest percentage of people experiencing homelessness but have the highest severity of needs. Often due to untreated mental and physical health conditions among other factors, they interact the most with public services, such as hospitals, behavioral health, and criminal justice systems.
 - However, it has been well researched that funding programs that provide long-term housing subsidy and supportive services targeted to this population lead to long-term positive housing and health outcomes and reduces strain on the emergency response system.
- In Fort Collins, based on a vulnerability needs assessment of about 400 people experiencing homelessness in August 2023:
 - 14% had severe acuity of needs
 - 44% had moderate to high acuity of needs
 - 42% had lower acuity of needs

Homelessness Data

- Homelessness is very fluid, as people flow in and out of our system, and data related to homelessness should be understood within its specific context.
- Every year in January, the NoCO CoC (along with many communities across the country) conducts a Point in Time Count (PIT), attempting to survey all people who are sheltered and unsheltered in Larimer and Weld counties. The NoCO CoC published a PIT Count and Disparities Analysis Report (attachment 3) which is available on the nocococ.org website.
- While PIT Counts are helpful to understand trends over time, PIT Counts are notoriously an undercount of the true number of people experiencing homelessness. To counter this, we rely on real-time data available through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Using HMIS we can monitor the number, demographics, and other trends on homelessness in northern Colorado in a much more accurate and comprehensive way than the yearly PIT Count.
- Data Points
 - Please note: *Active = has received homelessness services in FC the last 90 days and have no documented housing destination

Fort Collins	
PIT Count 1/24/23	393 Total Counted; 106 Chronic
HMIS 1/24/23	1,043 Total Active without Permanent Housing*; 379 Chronic
HMIS 8/24/23	1,578 Total Active without Permanent Housing*; 553 Chronic

Sheltered and Unsheltered Homelessness

Chart 1: 2023 Point in Time Count Data

Location	Sheltered		Unsheltered		GRAND TOTAL
Fort Collins	273	69.5%	120	30.5%	393
Greeley/Evans	220	71.4%	88	28.6%	308
Loveland	103	71.5%	41	28.5%	144
Estes Park*	1	10%	9	90%	10
Fort Lupton*	19	100%	0	0%	19
Location Not Recorded	0	0%	8	100%	8
TOTAL	616	69.8%	266	30.2%	882

*Starred cities/towns were *new* to surveying for the PIT Count in 2023

**Surveying efforts also occurred in Windsor and Berthoud; however, no persons experiencing literal homelessness were identified.

Priorities and City of Fort Collins Involvement

The NoCO CoC's goal is to functionally end homelessness in Larimer and Weld counties. This means we understand homelessness will continue to happen to some individuals and families, but we have created a response system robust enough to make any experience of homelessness rare, brief, and only one time.

To do this we have three major priorities: regional strategic alignment, coordinated housing placements, and shared quality data.

Regional Strategic Alignment

- We work towards regional strategic alignment around implementing [Housing First](#) and other best practices within the homeless response system.
- Much of this work is done within our General Membership and CoC committees and workgroups, our CoC Governing Board, and representing Northern Colorado at State tables. The City of Fort Collins has a seat on the Governing Board and also participates in other CoC committees and workgroups.
- A portion of this work is also done through the annual CoC Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which is a competitive Consolidated Application process to the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department that funds nearly \$1.5M in Housing and System Infrastructure projects.
- In Fort Collins, RedTail Ponds Permanent Supportive Housing, Homeward Alliance HMIS, SummitStone Health Partner Vouchers, and Crossroads Safehouse Domestic Violence (DV) Resource Navigation programs receive CoC Program dollars.

Coordinated Housing Placement

- We support the Coordinated Entry process, called the Coordinated Assessment Housing Placement System (CAHPS), to facilitate identification, assessment, referral, and navigation to permanent housing.
- Coordinated Entry (CAHPS) is a HUD mandated process for making referrals to housing programs dedicated for people experiencing homelessness based on vulnerability and circumstance, not based on a stagnant waiting list.
- The NoCO CoC sets local priorities of how to dedicate these scarce resources and facilitates the process through which CAHPS partners work together to support the unhoused.
- CAHPS Data Dashboards are available to the public at www.nocococ.org/data-reports

Shared Quality Data

- We manage the regional homelessness data through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- HMIS is used both by individual service providers to assist in client file management and service coordination and is also invaluable in understanding the depth and breadth of homelessness and housing outcomes within our system.
- The CoC provides access to HMIS software and licenses free to agencies and provides technical assistance to create custom reports and monitors data quality.
- In addition to managing HMIS, the NoCO CoC facilitates the annual Point in Time Count, a snapshot count of sheltered and unsheltered persons on one night at the end of January each year.
- This information, as well as other aggregate reports generated by HMIS are provided to HUD and influence the amount of funding dedicated to Northern Colorado.

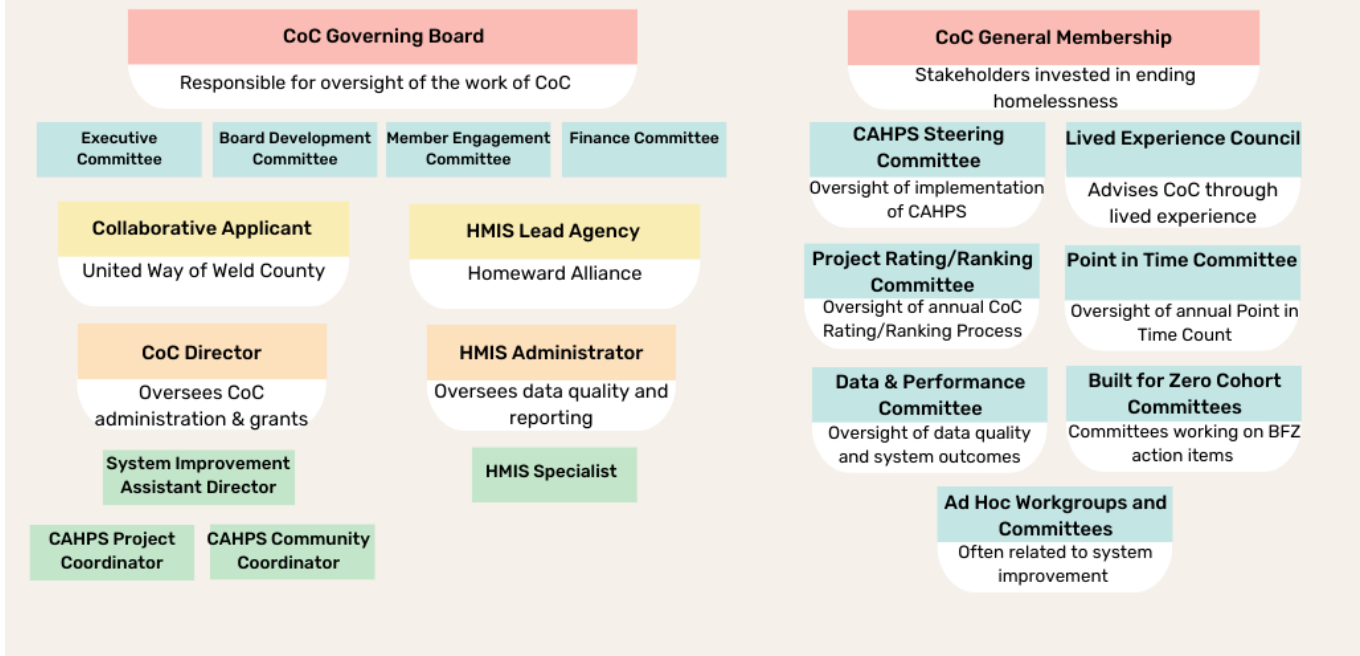
Coordinated Assessment Housing Placement System (CAHPS)

- Initially, CAHPS began in 2016 as an effort to identify and house veterans in a coordinated way.
- Since then, CAHPS has expanded dramatically and now is the process primarily used to identify and house anyone experiencing homelessness in Northern Colorado.
- United Way of Weld County (as the CoC Lead) has hired two full-time CAHPS Coordinators, onboarded more than 40 CAHPS partner agencies across Larimer and Weld Counties, facilitates four weekly case conferencing meetings, and manages a comprehensive by-name list of people as they have been identified, assessed, referred, and housed.
- As we improve the system, the CAHPS process is capable of tracking in-flow and out-flow of people within our homeless system, housing outcomes, bright-spots, and disparities. CAHPS also has multiple committees and workgroups tasked with carrying out this community-supported process.

Built for Zero and Involvement with Community Solutions

- Northern Colorado is a Built for Zero community since 2019, meaning we have signed on to reach benchmarks for quality system data and other system efficacy measures to reach the goal of Functional Zero homelessness.
- Reaching Functional Zero essentially means that our homeless response system sees reductions in the number of people experiencing homelessness and is capable of housing more people each month than are becoming homeless.
- We are currently working toward reaching Functional Zero for our Veteran population.
- We regularly house about 16-17 veterans a month, but also regularly identify about 15-16 new homeless veterans each month. We are developing new strategies to make a housing surge to make a larger reduction.

NORTHERN COLORADO CONTINUUM OF CARE



Major Accomplishments

- In January 2022, the NoCO CoC hired a Director, Kelli Pryor, to oversee the administrative and community coordination work of the CoC.
- The NoCO CoC distributed \$1.1M in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding and ESG-CV for Rapid Rehousing and Emergency Sheltering.
- The NoCO CoC developed and released a Plan to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs that outlined the work currently being done as well as future strategies for housing our most vulnerable.
- In 2022, 1,434 homeless households were identified and assessed for their housing and 468 were permanently housed through the CAHPS process. (Note: this number does not include people who exited CAHPS to temporary housing or who left the system due to inactivity or lack of contact for 90+ days)
 - In Fort Collins in 2022, there were 544 households identified and assessed for housing, 135 of whom were permanently housed through CAHPS.

2023 Goals and Priorities for NoCO CoC

- Prioritizing System Improvements – hired Assistant Director of System Improvement in April
- Addressing Disparities in our System through System Evaluation from a DEI lens
- Elevating Lived Experience – Began a Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) to provide guidance and feedback on the priorities and work of the CoC/CAHPS
- Strategic Planning – CoC Board has begun this process
- Statewide Coordination - representing Northern Colorado within statewide work on the governor's housing and homelessness Wildly Important Goals

Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC)

- The NoCO CoC has implemented a Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) to inform systems work from the perspective of people who are recently or currently experiencing homelessness.
- The LEAC members are paid for their expertise and are welcome to join other CoC workgroup and committees. They are currently assisting with the annual CAHPS Evaluation process and our work on creating a new housing assessment tool.

City Role in Response System

A multitude of departments across the City organization are connected to the homeless response system, with varying levels of involvement and a diversity of roles. While this work has always been collaborative, there have been growing efforts to coordinate and strategize as a cohesive unit, rather than in siloed teams. The increasingly collaborative response efforts have had noticeable positive impacts, although the growth and evolution are ongoing.

Tenets of the City's Homelessness Response System

- **People-Centered**: Homelessness is a result of systems failure, not individual shortcomings. All people deserve dignity and humanity. Input from people with lived experience of homelessness is integral to a successful response system.
- **Housing First**: While a true housing first model requires adequate and affordable housing, Fort Collins strives toward a housing first model with supportive services whenever possible. This approach honors that individuals are the experts in their own lives.
- **Data-Driven**: Data is a critical component of success in ending homelessness. It is imperative for stakeholders to share data and data analysis – as well as recognize the limitations and biases inherent within the data.
- **Collaboration is Key**: No one can do this work alone. A strong, effective system requires alignment in goals and outcomes across community groups.

Coordination

Short-Term Response

Tactical Team

- A homelessness tactical team was created in November 2022 and has led to a significant increase in collaboration within the response system, including both internal and external partners to the City. This team meets weekly to address urgent and emerging needs and provides collaborative rapid response.
- City departments engaged with this team include Social Sustainability, Parks, Natural Areas, Code Compliance, Police, Transport, and Recreation, and external partners include Outreach Fort Collins, Poudre Fire Authority, NoCO CoC, Larimer County Sheriff's Office, and the Colorado State University Police Department.
- During each weekly meeting, this team supports Natural Areas in planning the weekly cleanup, which requires pre-checks, tagging, and outreach from various departments and agencies.
- Collaborative efforts have increased with the creation of the tactical team, which has led to better consistency in response, approach, and messaging. This consistency helps support trust-building with agencies in the field, including Rangers, Police, and Outreach Fort Collins, which leads to better outcomes. In one instance, a person who had been living in the Fort Collins community unhoused for nearly 20 years finally agreed to be added to the housing list and was moved into permanent housing within 20 days!

Internal Coordination Team

- This team consists of a multitude of internal departments and is larger than the tactical team.
- The focus in these monthly meetings is updates, larger-scale coordination, brainstorming solutions for ongoing issues and concerns, and aligning goals and outcomes.
- Once per quarter, external service providers join this meeting to share updates, concerns, ask questions, and build partnership with internal departments and teams.

Expanded City Partnerships

- The City maintains strong partnerships with community nonprofits that serve in front-line roles within the homeless response system.
- Regular meetings with outside agencies allow Staff to maintain strong understanding of current system successes, challenges, gaps, and funding needs.
- In May 2023, NoCO CoC launched the Lived Experience Advisory Council for Larimer County. All members of this board have past or current lived experience of homelessness and serve as advisors on projects and programs across the county.

Accelerated Site Cleanup Process

- With consistency in messaging and response to clean up sites, clarity is provided to those who are not using shelter. The aim is voluntary compliance and setting community-wide expectations.
- Site occupants are offered resources at the time of tagging and again if they are still there when cleanups are conducted.
- Outreach Fort Collins is called frequently to sites to provide resources or help individuals understand their status on the housing list.
- The tactical team served in an integral role in developing the accelerated site cleanup process, led by Natural Areas. For occupied sites, outreach and engagement steps are taken first, in an effort to connect people with resources and/or housing options before a site is cleared and cleanup takes place.

HOPE Team

- Police Services' new Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (HOPE) Team has increased direct outreach and coordination across the system.
- More information on this team is available below.

Systemic Approach

Quarterly Strategy

- Every quarter, program staff and executive leadership convene to discuss high-level strategy and prioritization of projects and funding.

County

- Homeward Alliance received transformational grant funding from the state of Colorado to lead a county-wide strategic planning effort over the next 24 months, including hiring an outside consultant to coordinate the process.
- Initial strategic planning partners engaged in these efforts include City of Fort Collins, City of Loveland, United Way of Larimer County, Larimer County, and NoCO CoC, and this list will expand as efforts progress.

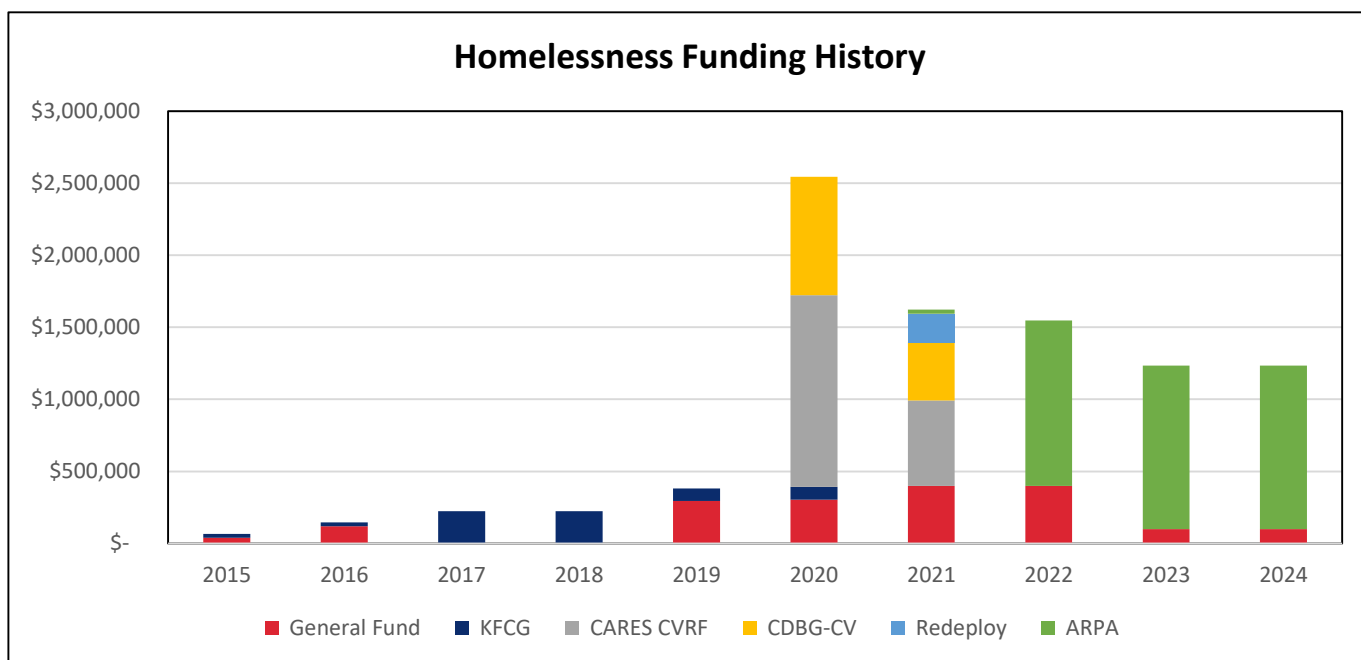
Regional

- Efforts coordinated by NoCO CoC, as outlined above.

Upstream Solutions

- Solutions that increase housing stability and reduce the number of people who become unhoused are necessary long-term, systemic approaches in every community.
 - Resources and funding for programs aimed at stabilizing households are critical, including rent assistance, rapid rehousing, strong landlord network, supportive services, and diversion.
- These solutions must include a multitude of sectors, including education, healthcare, the criminal justice system, and others.
- Some critical needs outlined in the Housing Strategic Plan include:
 - Connecting housing and health
 - Housing First approach
 - Strong partnerships
 - Inclusivity, housing diversity, and affordability as community values

Funding



Notes on Funding:

- This graphic represents funding specific to homelessness programming tied to the Social Sustainability Department. This does not include other departments who may put some funding toward homelessness response (i.e., Parks, Natural Areas, Code Compliance, Police, etc.).
- Aside from staffing, 100% of homeless initiatives funding is granted back out to community partners.
- 2015 and 2016 show the approximate amount pulled from the Social Sustainability general operating budget for homelessness (~\$40,000 per year, plus \$80,000 for a street outreach pilot in 2016).
- In 2017 and 2018, the \$224,000 funded via KFCG became an ongoing offer through the general fund beginning in 2019.

- 2019 was the first year a formal “homelessness initiatives” budget offer was submitted. This supported seasonal overflow shelter, emergency weather response, Homeward 2020, the Murphy Center, Outreach Fort Collins, and the Housing First Initiative.
- In 2021, \$200,000 was redeployed from the Police budget to create funding for both the Homelessness Lead Specialist position and to bolster Outreach Fort Collins’ general operating budget.
- For 2023-2024, \$100,000 for Outreach Fort Collins is coming from the general fund, and the remainder of homelessness initiatives are being funded via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- For 2023-2024, the amount funded via ARPA is \$1,135,000 per year. This is supporting resource navigation, 24/7 shelter, seasonal overflow shelter, emergency weather response, street outreach, the regional data system (HMIS), and general operations via 11 contracts with seven agencies:
 - Northern Colorado Continuum of Care
 - Catholic Charities
 - Crossroads Safehouse
 - Family Housing Network
 - Fort Collins Rescue Mission
 - Homeward Alliance
 - Outreach Fort Collins

Greater Pandemic-Era Resourcing has Led to:

- Increased Street Outreach
 - Outreach Fort Collins expanded into north Fort Collins in November 2021, and expanded again into midtown in September 2022.
 - OFC’s coverage area now includes the College Avenue corridor from Willox to Fossil Creek Parkway, the Foothills Mall, Old Town, Lee Martinez Park, the north Walmart and Home Depot shopping centers, and the south Walmart and Home Depot shopping centers.
 - In comparison, right before their midtown expansion in Q3 of 2022, OFC had a total of 1,800 contacts. The following quarter, Q4 of 2022, those contacts increased to a total of 2,268. This demonstrates a higher level of community outreach due to increased staffing and larger service area.
 - Additionally, OFC can now be dispatched directly from 911 and they work closely with the HOPE team, both of which continue to increase their contacts while decreasing calls to emergency responders for behaviors that are disruptive but not illegal.
- 24/7 Shelter
 - Both Fort Collins Rescue Mission and Catholic Charities moved to a 24/7 shelter model in 2021.
 - While both emergency shelters were previously overnight-only, this change to 24/7 shelter provides myriad documented benefits including higher employment rates among their clients.
 - 24/7 shelter provides people experiencing homelessness with higher levels of stability due to a full-time location to store their belongings, and regular access to showers, meals, technology, and case management.
- Rapid Rehousing
 - For the first time, the City financially supported rapid rehousing programs through both Homeward Alliance and Family Housing Network.

- Rapid rehousing programs support individuals and families who have lower levels of vulnerability and need only short-term support to get housed and restabilized.
- In the second half of 2022, 35 families and 10 individuals were housed and stabilized through these programs.
- **Case Management and Resource Navigation**
 - Case management and resource navigation are critical services offered through the homelessness response system that provide tailored recommendations for individuals and families based on their unique circumstances.
 - Resource navigators support people experiencing homelessness and housing instability by connecting them with appropriate resources and services, ensuring they are receiving as much support as possible on their path to housing.
 - Case managers work closely with clients to ensure they have all necessary documents in order (which can be a long, challenging process) and support them as they navigate housing options and applications.
 - In some cases, case managers may continue to support a client even after they become housed.
 - Since Q4 of 2021:
 - 194 people have been housed via City-funded case management and resource navigation programs.
 - The six-month housing retention rate is 100%.

Compassionate Response: Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (HOPE) Team is an innovative outreach team within Fort Collins Police Services that uses a holistic approach to address homeless-related issues throughout the city.

- The HOPE team prioritizes relationships with unhoused community members to understand the circumstances that contributed to their homelessness.
- Individuals are provided information about the community resources and educated on city-wide ordinances.
 - Outreach Fort Collins is called to respond to individuals who want to get directly connected and resourced. HOPE continues strong partnerships with OFC to provide direct referrals and maintain safety of scenes prior to outreach specialists responding.
 - Since the HOPE team's inception, officers have referred 56 clients to Outreach Fort Collins which has led to 331 total contacts with those clients.
- Recognizing that many of our unhoused individuals may have previously had negative interactions with police, the HOPE Team uses compassion-based policing to understand the needs of unhoused and unsheltered community members and identify gaps.
 - Many unhoused community members have specific needs such as criminal justice support, vehicle repairs, clothing, and assistance with job interviews.
 - HOPE relies on community partners and business owners to help get these individuals' needs met.
- The HOPE team enforces county and municipal ordinances; the most common of which are trespassing, depositing bodily waste, and accumulating rubbish.
- Identify problem areas or "hot spots" through calls for service, Access Fort Collins cases, conversations with business owners, and referrals from other officers and residents.

- The HOPE team encourages solution-based outcomes and works closely with the City Attorney's Office to recommend individuals experiencing homelessness into problem-solving court such as the Right Track.
- The HOPE team facilitates monthly "Coffee with a Splash of HOPE" events to encourage conversation with community members, service providers, and business owners about issues surrounding homelessness and how we need to collaboratively build solutions.
- Enforcement efforts are coordinated among various entities to ensure consistency in approach and messaging, including Parks and Natural Areas Rangers, Code Compliance, and community partners like CSU Police Department.

Challenges

Housing Affordability

- According to the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), development costs per unit went from \$366,000 in 2022 to \$449,999 in 2023.
- Home prices in Fort Collins continue to climb even with increased interest rates.
- The median sales price for the second quarter of 2023 is \$550,000.
- Rents continue to go up, too. HUD's fair market rent published for a one-bedroom apartment in Larimer County went from \$1,143 in 2022 to \$1,232 in 2023.

Funding

- According to Community Solutions, which NoCO CoC works with through their Built for Zero framework, people experiencing homelessness are more likely to utilize emergency health services that can add up to an average of \$35,000 per person per year.
- Some estimates put these costs, including shelters and supportive services, as high as \$95,000 per person per year.
- The estimated cost of (affordable) housing is \$13,716 - \$25,716 per person per year (one bedroom apartment), plus supportive services, is generally lower than costs required for someone who is unhoused and accessing emergency services.
- Funding gaps, as well as housing availability gaps, are well-documented national challenges in address homelessness.

ARPA Funding Cliff

- As evidenced in the funding chart above, funding for homelessness initiatives has increased manifold with recovery dollars since 2020.
- Pre-pandemic, \$398,000 in general fund dollars were allocated to support the homeless response system, and during the largest funding influx in 2020, that number reached more than \$2.5 million.
- The current homeless initiatives budget of approximately \$1.2 million has positively impacted community programs and allowed agencies to provide critical services to people who are unhoused or unstably housed.
- With the final spenddown of ARPA funds projected for December 31, 2024, reassessing community gaps, needs, and priorities will be vital to the next two-year Budgeting for Outcomes (BFO) process.
- As ARPA funds are spent in full, communities across the nation, including Fort Collins, will have the challenge of managing and sustaining programming with decreased homelessness funding into 2025 and beyond.

What the Data Misses

- A heavy focus on data can dehumanize the data and trends and create difficulty in seeing each number as an individual person. One consequence of this is engaging with solutions that get at the overarching trends without considering the importance of each individual's unique needs.
- Data largely shows who is engaged in services and misses those who are not.
 - For example, families that are doubled up or people from the LGBTQIA+ community who may feel unsafe accessing shelter or other services.
- While the data strongly demonstrates disparities across nearly every historically excluded group, it is up to each community to go beyond the data and build equitable solutions that decrease racism, prejudice, and bias in their own homeless response system.

Direct Resourcing

- For a growing unsheltered population, one of the most effective tools can be direct resourcing (i.e., meeting them, literally, where they are).
- An example of direct resourcing is street outreach, which is currently led by Outreach Fort Collins.
- During direct resourcing, barriers to accessing services are lowered as people who are unhoused do not have an added burden of individually identifying appropriate resources or finding/paying for transportation to access those services.
- Although direct resourcing efforts have grown exponentially over the past couple years, due to the expansion of Outreach Fort Collins and creation of the HOPE team, these efforts are still small enough that regular Citywide engagement with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness is not possible.

Emerging Needs and Priorities

Non-Shelter Alternatives

- Shelter is only one component along the spectrum of interventions.
- The spectrum includes prevention, diversion, emergency shelter, housing, and supportive services.
- The more options people are given, the more likely they are to find the right fit on their path out of homelessness.
- Along with congregate shelter, having additional service options in the community for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness could be a critical step forward in providing right-sized options for all.
- These alternatives can include non-congregate shelter, single-room occupancy units, converted hotels, tiny home communities, pallet homes, safe outdoor spaces, and other creative options.

Safe Parking

- Safe Parking is currently being explored as a potential non-shelter alternative for people in Fort Collins experiencing vehicular homelessness.
- There are currently 14 Safe Lots in Colorado, a majority of which are managed by the Colorado Safe Parking Initiative in partnership with nonprofit and faith organizations. Twelve of these programs are located in church parking lots.
- Homeward Alliance has agreed to serve as the operator for a pilot safe parking program, and the search for an appropriate parking lot is underway.

Family and LGBTQIA+ Homelessness

Families

- A few organizations in town serve families experiencing homelessness, and all report increases in families seeking services.
- Since moving to a 24/7 shelter model in August 2021, Catholic Charities did not turn away a single individual seeking shelter until July 2023, when two families were turned away due to a lack of capacity. An additional three families were turned away in late August.
- Family homelessness can be difficult to track since families are more likely to sleep in vehicles or double up with another family.
- Families require unique accommodations (like single stall restrooms) that can be more difficult for shelters/agencies with limited space to offer.

LGBTQIA+

- Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are more likely to become homeless and stay homeless, and experience housing instability and housing discrimination.
- HUD estimates that between 20-40% of homeless youth identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Shelters and services tailored to people who identify as LGBTQIA+ can lead to more positive outcomes, reduce chronicity, and increase housing rates among this population.
- There are currently no shelters in Fort Collins specifically for people who identify as LGBTQIA+, who may have unique needs difficult to meet in a traditional shelter setting.

Strategic Planning

- As mentioned above, there is not currently a County-wide strategic plan with buy-in and alignment from stakeholders across the county.
- While many agencies are part of the homeless response system, goals, outcomes, and priorities may not always align.
- Homeward Alliance received transformational grant funding from the state of Colorado to lead a county-wide strategic planning effort over the next 24 months, including hiring an outside consultant to coordinate the process.
- Initial strategic planning partners engaged in these efforts include City of Fort Collins, City of Loveland, United Way of Larimer County, Larimer County, and the NoCO CoC.

NEXT STEPS

- Seasonal Overflow Shelter will begin on November 1. A neighborhood meeting was held on August 30. Similar to last year, consideration to approve 117 N. Mason as this year's SOS location will be brought before Council in late September.
- Fort Collins Rescue Mission will enter into development review for their future 24/7 shelter in Q4 of 2023.
- Staff will continue exploring opportunities for a pilot Safe Parking Program.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Homeward2020 Final Report
2. The Case for Housing First Research
3. Point In Time Count Report and Disparities Analysis
4. Presentation