



City of Ketchum

October 17, 2022

Mayor Bradshaw and City Councilors
City of Ketchum
Ketchum, Idaho

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RECOMMENDATION TO FUND EMERGENCY HOUSING

Recommendation and Summary

City staff, in conjunction with valley non-profit partners, will provide an overview of the current situation. Staff is seeking direction from the City Council regarding the level of support to address emergency housing needs.

The reasons for the recommendation are as follows:

- With the need to act as quickly as possible to secure housing before winter, staff discretion could make the difference between committing to what is available before it is lost to the market.
- This investment increases the likelihood that families and children survive the winter and provides a sense of stability, which increases children's school participation and worker productivity.
- The city currently has adequate funds for this from FY22 expense savings and revenue performance.

Introduction and History

The Ketchum Housing Action Plan outlines the following related objectives:

Goal 3: Expand + Improve Services to Create Housing Stability

Action 8: Identify and support physical housing options for unhoused and at-risk households:

- *Conduct inventory of existing potential housing/sites for permanent supportive housing and/or emergency shelter/temporary crisis housing. Assess location and specifics with service providers. Also supports Goal 1.*
- *"Build or buy" strategy for dedicated supportive housing units. Also supports Goal 1.*
- *Explore purchasing RV's and pre-fabricated homes for transitional purposes.*

A cross section of agencies in the County are seeing a growing need of emergency housing for individuals that are experiencing homelessness in our community; Agencies such as the Blaine County Charitable Fund, Blaine County School District, the Hunger Coalition, St. Luke's Center for Community Health, and the Crisis Hotline, to name a few. We have adults and children that are currently living outside, in cars, under stairs and in sheds. These service partners estimate about 20-40 new homeless families who are living outside. In addition, there are 100+ new families who are on couches or renting overcrowded homes – situations which are meant to be temporary and could change any minute. This surge is on top of the 1% of the county's population estimated

to be experiencing homelessness last winter and who may need transitional housing this winter: These households were quickly evicted or asked to leave their housing situations and found themselves in need of short stay until they can find another bed or couch.

The service partners have evaluated the following options to address the situation: hosts, existing buildings for shelter, reserve a block of hotel rooms through the winter, and land to locate low-cost pre-fabricated housing options. This life saving help is a critical step towards safely housing community members while we pursue more permanent solutions. Staff and contractor, Carter Cox, are working with community partners, such as the Hunger Coalition and Blaine County Charitable Fund on a fundraising strategy. In the meantime, actions must be taken to secure housing before night-time temperatures put community members at risk.

Staff requests direction on pursuing these housing options. In addition, staff requests access to \$250,000 for emergency transitional housing. Once the budget is established, staff can then use it for actions such as booking hotel rooms, purchasing pre-fabricated housing, and preparing sites for placement of that housing.

Potential impact

\$250,000 could mean housing 16 families in hotel rooms through the winter or about 3 families in new park model homes (more if used). Investing in housing stability saves public funding in the long run.

National crisis

Many towns and cities throughout the country are experiencing a surge in homelessness. One factor is that those households who opened their homes to friends and family are already overcrowded. Households newly experiencing homelessness have far fewer homeowners opening their homes.

Generally, these households newly experiencing homelessness have no alternative locations, nor adequate savings to cover relocation. Twin Falls, Boise and New York City are experiencing such a surge. Their shelters are at capacity. New York City's Mayor has declared an emergency, granting access to state and federal funds for emergency housing.

Local challenges

For many months, the Hunger Coalition and other agencies at front line have been experiencing the increase in new families moving into our community. A group of these agencies gathered to share what each were seeing and experiencing, this included BCSD, Alliance of Idaho, St. Luke's, our staff, and the Hunger Coalition staff to name some. The stories were sad and plentiful about everything from health issues, documents taken away, unsafe living conditions, lack of proper clothing, and more. Below are some of examples of what just one agency collected in stories:

Male 14 yo student

"My mother and I were living with my aunt in her house but a week later more people came into the house and we were too many, so we were told to sleep outside in their car. At night we sleep outside, and she lets us use the bathroom in the morning. My mom works a few hours and helps another lady clean houses. We cannot use the kitchen, so we buy food, but we share it, so we don't spend the little money my mom gets."

Adult Female – Mother

"My daughter and I were living with my cousins in a small closet, but I had to move to another lady's house because there were too many men and one of them tried to hurt my 8 yo daughter. Where I live

now is only temporary because part of the family is out of state at the moment. I'm afraid to live out in the cold."

Female 14 yo student

"My mother and my 4yo brother live with family but we sleep in the garage because there are 10 people living in my uncle's house. Sometimes I don't shower because he says we waste too much water, and the bill is high. My brother and I eat at school but when we get home sometimes there is no food left because there is a lot of people."

16 yo male Student

"My dad and I live in our car, I eat food at my school, we go to twin on Sundays to rent a hotel to sleep comfortable and shower and rest well because there are no available here. My dad works hard, I want to learn English to work and help him also. I miss my mother and little sister, they were separated from us."

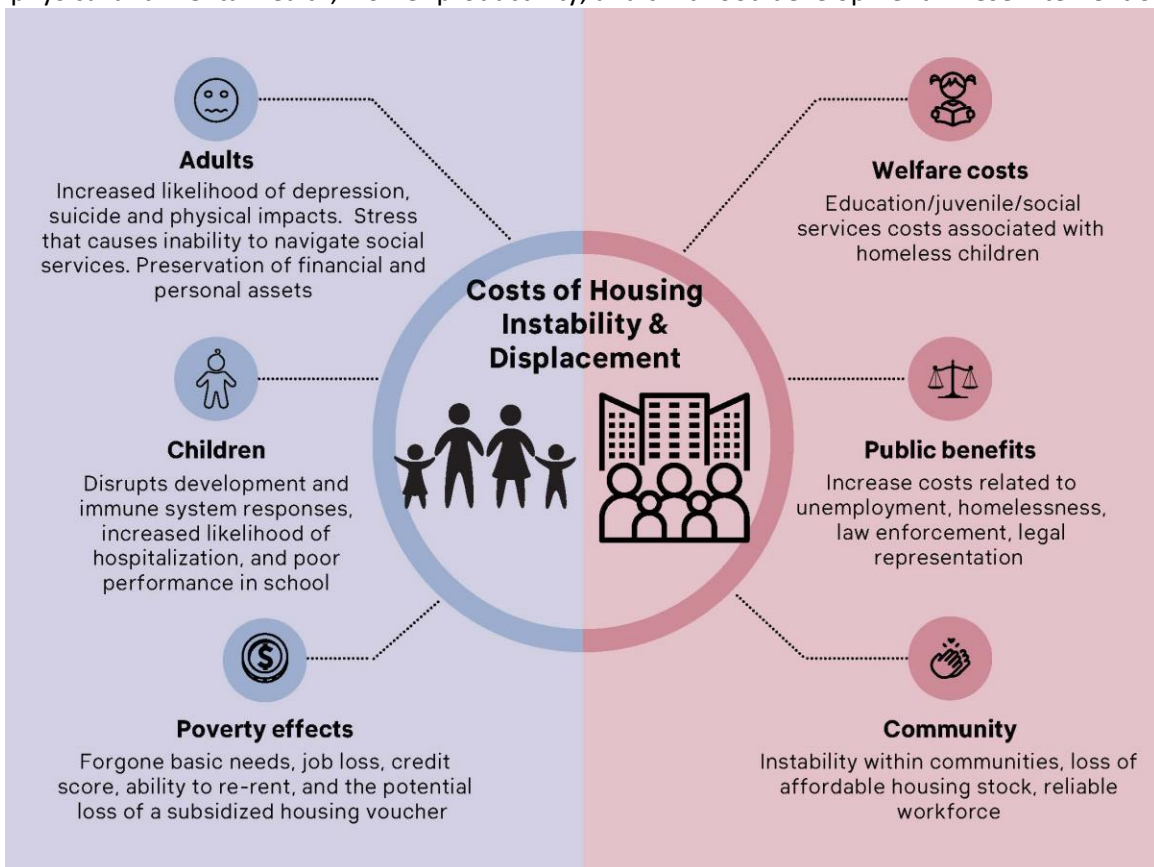
Male adult

"I sleep in my car because I have no family here and there is no apartments available."

Male Adult

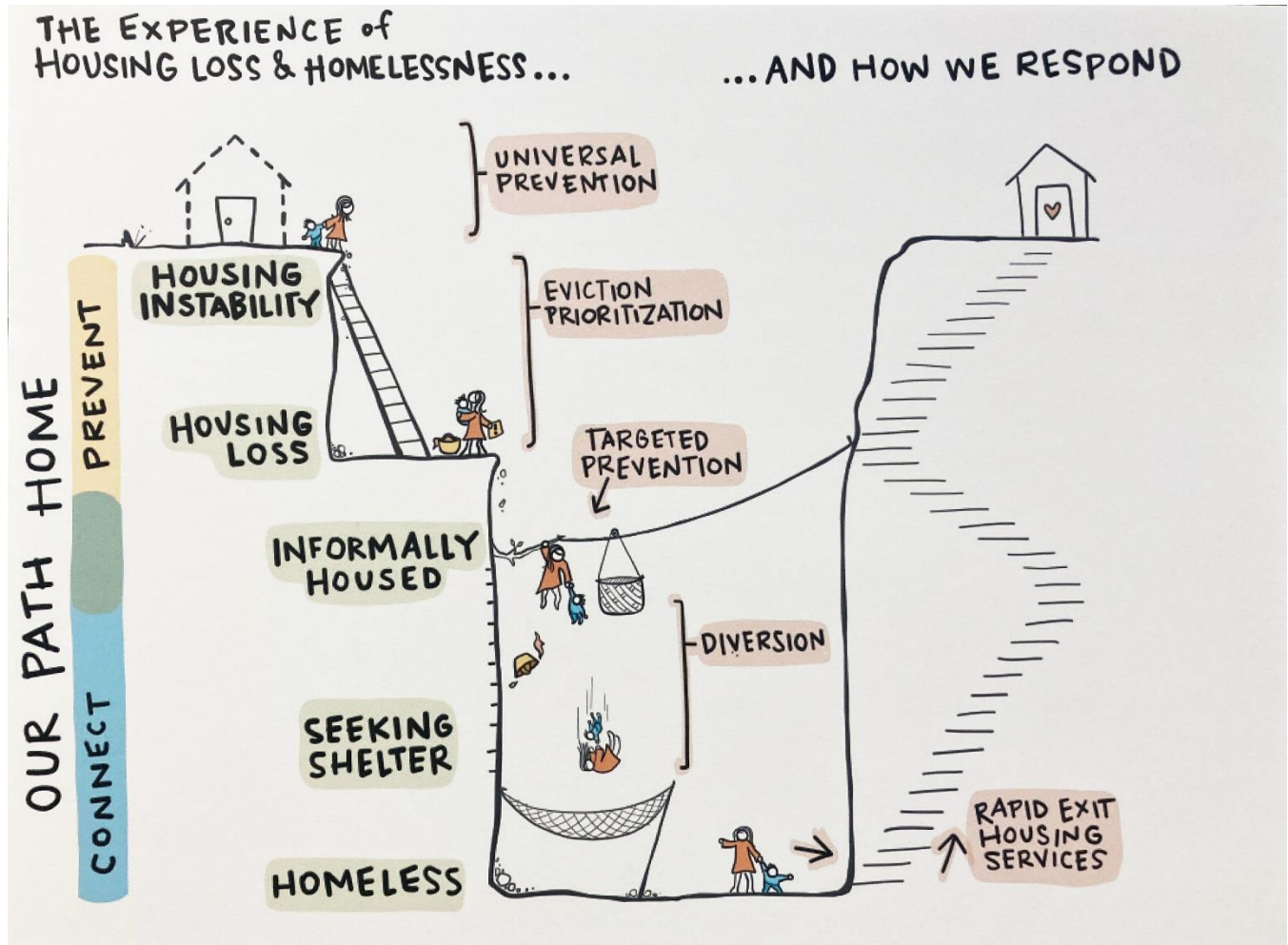
"My wife and I sleep in an old RV that has no heat. We have no winter clothes, and this will be our first winter here."

The adults in these families work countywide. The stress of homelessness and of living in the elements risks families physical and mental health, worker productivity, and childhood development. These interventions are a



temporary stopgap as we move forward with other housing initiatives, such as preserving and creating new rental and ownership opportunities.

The visual below describes where the households we are targeting are at in the experience of housing loss and homelessness. These families are at the bottom.



Housing Actions

The working group strategizing and campaigning for emergency/transitional housing includes the Hunger Coalition, Blaine County Charitable Fund, City of Ketchum and city-contractor Nested Strategies.

1. *Finding host families.* We asked the generous homeowners who offered their homes to Limelight victims if they would extend such offers to other community members in crisis and did not receive a response. We will work with our partners to amplify this request throughout the community.
2. *Emergency shelter.* Emergency shelter requires substantial building space and 24/7 trained, paid staff. We have identified a couple of office buildings throughout the Valley that could potentially house a few families without rehabilitation. All others considered would require rehabilitation (which takes time and money).

Our service partners are working beyond capacity and would be unable to staff such an operation. We are not optimistic about bringing in staff from outside.

One intervention that doesn't require the same staffing capacity as a shelter because it would operate on a smaller scale, is converting underused buildings, such as office buildings, to temporary shelter. One such building has been identified in Ketchum, and one in Hailey. For the unoccupied Ketchum building, staff are reviewing code and minor rehabilitation needs to ensure temporary habitability.

3. *Hotel rooms and rentals.* The coalition of service partners and city staff are working to identify hotels and rentals available to book and then re-lease to qualified households. We met with Visit Sun Valley's Lodging Association, requesting consideration of booking rooms through the winter. This practice is common nationwide. One property manager offered to speak with some of their owners. So far, none of the hotels on the call offered assistance. Staff will pursue one-on-one meetings with hotel owners.

One motel owner who was not on the call, allows long-term bookings and has five rooms available starting the end of October. That commitment would run about \$10,300 per month or \$61,800 from November to April, including tenant payments estimated at \$800 per month. In addition, there are a two to three park model homes available to lease. This would mean a commitment of up to \$3,000 per month or \$18,000 from November to April.

The Blaine County Charitable Fund places unhoused community members in hotel rooms for a short period of time. Given their experience in this, they would manage placement of these families. If hotels become available, they could develop a tenant agreement that clearly outlines requirements and expectations.

4. *Purchase park models (tiny homes).* Last Council meeting we discussed potentially two RV ordinances. One is the emergency ordinance allowing people to live in a RV on a privately owned lot. Staff are exploring the possibility of safe parking of RVs through the winter and might propose an interim or permanent ordinance to that affect. The second ordinance would be an emergency administrative use permit for transitional housing on city-owned property. This would allow the use of tiny homes for six months.

In order for the second ordinance to be effective, it would need to be enacted as quickly as possible. City staff are exploring acquiring park models (tiny homes) which range from \$50,000 (used) to about \$130,000 (new), including delivery and hookup. This form of transitional housing is an investment that could be used and relocated, or sold, if the need no longer exists.

Some other actions in progress

- Collection of clothing, sleeping bags, etc. (Blaine County School District – for kids - & the Hunger Coalition)
- Increased partner participation (the Hunger Coalition)
- Getting asylum cases going for those who can apply (The Alliance)
- Create resource events in safe spaces such as schools (Blaine County School District & Neighbors Helping Neighbors)

Funding City staff scanned our funding opportunity database and discussed with Idaho Housing and Finance Association and found that state and federal deadlines have passed for transitional or emergency housing. City staff are working with service partners to determine the best fundraising strategy, including private philanthropy, and identify other granting opportunities. Staff will apply to Spur Community Foundation at the end of the month. If approved, those funds should be available by the end of the year.

One challenge with formal granting opportunities is the time it takes to review and disperse the funds, which is why access to funds immediately would have a huge impact. Nested Strategies is doing specific grant research to identify emergency or transitional housing funding opportunities. The working group will pursue opportunities as they arise, since the need continues to grow. Individual donations and local government funds are likely to be the best opportunity for funds needed with such a short timeline.

Blaine County Charitable Fund has been administering the Emergency Rental Assistance Program for Blaine County, which covers up to 60 days in a hotel room, for up to \$150 per night. Unfortunately, the Idaho Housing and Finance Association just announced that the program will not be available after October 14th.

Sustainability impact

Ability to house employees and community participants locally decreases commuter vehicular trips.

Financial Impact

Funds will come from FY22 budget expense savings and revenues performing stronger than forecasted.