

# A HOME FOR EVERYONE

A Blueprint To End Homelessness In Washtenaw County





# A Forward

**blue-print** (blu ' print') a photographic print, commonly of a working drawing used during building. The plan is first drawn to scale on special paper or tracing cloth through which light can penetrate...

**T**he plans set here before you belong to you. The people you see before you – without homes, troubled and struggling – also belong to you, to this community. With earnest effort over the years the people of Washtenaw County proved the wisdom of collaboration and the virtue of mutual trust.

The early homelessness Task Forces, the incredible public-private partnership that created the Delonis Center – even this document – all these demonstrate our community's willingness to be accountable.

With our experience in hand, we take this audacious next step: a plan to end

homelessness in Washtenaw County. The cynical among us would have us believe that this will not and can not happen - but would they have guessed that we could come this far? In a recent interview, Philip F. Mangano, Executive Director of the US Inter-agency Council on Homelessness, gave words to the spirit of our agenda:

*"We are not content to manage the crisis, or to maintain the effort, or to accommodate the response. We were called to one goal, one objective, one mission - to abolish homelessness. Now is the time to forward the advocacy, fashion the strategy, and to fulfill that mission."*

A 'Blueprint' is "first drawn to scale on a special paper...through which light can penetrate." We have set these plans on 'special paper' that needs your light. Your support of any aspect of this strategic plan will help bring it to life. This community has reached a tipping point through a mix of hard work, opportunity and political will. Our success will need one more important ingredient: your decision to act.

**Robert E. Guenzel,**  
*Administrator*  
*Washtenaw County*

**John Hieftje,**  
*Mayor*  
*City of Ann Arbor*

**Dick Soble,**  
*Chair of the Board*  
*Washtenaw Housing Alliance*

**Cheryl Farmer,**  
*Mayor*  
*City of Ypsilanti*

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**[CINDY]** *Cindy and her five children moved into their new home on September 13, 2004 - a mobile home in a development outside of Ann Arbor.*

*It has been a long, painful year.*

*The young mother's home and life were shattered when she learned that three of her daughters had become victims of their abusive father - her husband. The State of Michigan's Family Services stepped in and Cindy, now a single Mom of five without an income, would need to learn all about a public and not-for-profit system of care in order to keep her family healthy and together.*

*Through support at and from Interfaith Hospitality Network at Alpha House (IHN), Cindy was able to get connected with the Judson Center, Child Protective Services, CASA, and counselors for everyone in the family. The family's new home needed a lot of repairs – roof, floor, walls, plumbing – and people from IHN's volunteer network of area congregations helped refurbish the home –helping to accommodate, and welcome, a family of six.*

# A Home For Everyone

## *A Blueprint to End Homelessness In Washtenaw County*

**O**n the evening of March 18, 2004, Washtenaw County community agencies conducted a 'Point-In-Time' survey that identified 664 people as homeless.

That survey, among others, helped us form a more accurate picture of the people who are homeless in our community. Other numbers - unemployment numbers; people on fixed income numbers; uninsured patient numbers; emergency room visit numbers; people on public assistance numbers; (and numbers of people forced to come off public assistance) - even numbers at the gasoline pump - are forming a picture of the people who will be homeless in our community. The picture is not getting better.

Faced with these facts, this community has come together as never before to understand systems, aligning them with a new priority: putting an end to homelessness in Washtenaw County. With the information we know, and the projections we can make, four goals will drive this commitment:

**PREVENTION** Keep people in their existing housing. Fiscally for the community, and physically and emotionally for those at risk, national data show that it is far less expensive to keep people housed. It is six times more expensive to shelter someone than it is to provide resources and services that keep them in housing.

**HOUSING WITH SERVICES** Create more permanent, affordable housing with services. A safe, affordable home is crucial to people addressing the issues that contribute to becoming homeless. Supportive services with housing provide stability to keep people housed.

**REFORM THE SYSTEM OF CARE** Use community resources more creatively and efficiently – across all sectors. This includes developing standards, integrating funding and creating an evaluation process to guide progress.

**ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY** Success means shared responsibility across the community. Make it clear that people who are homeless, given the respect, the resources and the options we all would need, are this community's best hope for a different future – a future with a home for everyone.

### **WE ARE HOMELESS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY**

**2,756** people will experience homelessness within a year in Washtenaw County

**26%** are families

**41** people will become homeless within any given week in Washtenaw County

**53%** are experiencing homelessness for the first time in the last three years

**46%** of women who are homeless with children reported domestic violence as a primary reason for their homelessness

**51%** of persons needing help from hunger relief agencies are children

**44%** of those interviewed reported moderate to severe addictions

**42%** of those interviewed reported having a mental illness

**34%** are employed, either part or full time

**\$9,500** is the average yearly income—which does not cover the average yearly rent on a two bedroom apartment in Washtenaw County

# A Brief History

**[OTHO]** *Otho Egdor washes dishes and busses tables at Zingermans's Deli in Ann Arbor. He lives in the new Gateway apartments in Ypsilanti.*

*As a kid in Willow Run, Otho had a severe speech impediment and finally dropped out of school in 7th grade when his mother died. He soon started a lifelong*

*addiction to drinking and drugs. He served time in prison and then became homeless for most of 15 years, his physical and mental health deteriorating throughout*

*that time. He credits help from a number of agencies - Public Health, PORT, The Shelter Association and Michigan Ability Partners' WISH program among others, for bringing him back to a point where he can live and work in his community.*

*The picture was taken at a summer outing at his apartment complex. Otho brought deviled eggs.*



Since 1996, this community has made consistent, concerted efforts to understand and to resolve the problems facing homeless people in our community. A Mission Clarity Group and two major task forces comprised of human service providers, housing advocates, governmental representatives, interested neighbors and people who were homeless came together at hundreds of meetings. These people and others gave their time, money and active caring to these issues. Washtenaw County had become a community ready to be accountable for all of its members.

## **MISSION CLARITY GROUP STATEMENT**

**As members of a concerned community, we affirm that homelessness is a shared responsibility and must be addressed collaboratively by all of the institutions, agencies, businesses and individual members in our community.**

Washtenaw Mission  
Clarity Group Report,  
March, 1997

Accountability became commitments and commitments brought about a plan to bring an end to homelessness in Washtenaw County. On January 19, 2000, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners passed Resolution #000-0016 engaging the Washtenaw Housing Alliance with a three-phased plan.

**PHASE ONE** Expand emergency shelter services for families to include Alpha House, in March of 2001. The site for the shelter was contributed by Saint Joseph Mercy Health System. The professional staff of Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN), along with over 2000 volunteers from area religious and civic organizations, work with families to assist them in overcoming whatever barriers they have to successfully finding and maintaining permanent housing.

**PHASE TWO** The construction of a single setting that would consolidate many of the services for homeless individuals, or people at risk of homelessness. Building the Robert J. Delonis Center became a model of public-private partnership. It is owned jointly by Washtenaw County and the Washtenaw Housing Alliance, and is operated by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County. Under one roof, people who are homeless are now able to access physical and mental health care; food and shelter; support to recover from addictions and employment training and outreach. The Delonis Center opened in November of 2003.

**PHASE THREE** A plan to find, create or acquire affordable housing has become this, the more comprehensive "Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County." With its fourfold focus - Prevention, Housing with Services, System Reform and Community Engagement - this plan takes aim at the complexity of homelessness, from changing individual lives to changing community perceptions.

# Prevention

## THE REALITY

Mortgage foreclosures have more than doubled since 2002 in Washtenaw County; evictions within the County increased 10% in one year. Though there are resources available to people at risk of becoming homeless, accessing these resources often requires multiple trips to different agencies. For some resources, tenants cannot receive assistance until served with an eviction notice, adding to costs and risks for both tenants and landlords. Prevention resources have been underfunded, poorly coordinated and poorly communicated across all sectors.

## THE GOAL

*Prevent homelessness through easy, early access to needed resources and services.*

## THE STRATEGIES

- Establish a centralized response system to those at risk of losing housing.
- Centralize and increase dollars for prevention.
- Increase accessibility to legal services support.
- Develop a mortgage foreclosure prevention program.
- Increase supportive services in existing public housing and nonprofit managed housing.

## ACTION NOW

### ■ “Eviction Prevention Program”

On September 1, 2004, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners allocated \$100,000 as a challenge grant to form a streamlined solution to avoidable eviction and possible homelessness. The Family Independence

Agency is investing in prevention through this fund, as are local property management firms. Developed through the Human Services Collaborative Council’s ‘Barrier Busters’, the program enables:

- People in a financial crisis to make one initial contact to secure assistance;
- Access to services that will address the causes that have led to the housing crisis.
- Establishment of a centralized response system, coordinated with 2-1-1, that links people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to needed services and housing.



**[DIANE]** *Diane Kramer grew up in Chelsea, working all of her adult life. A few years after a divorce, she decided to start her own business, accounting - doing the books for small businesses, non-profits and helping new*

*start-ups get started.*

*The business was doing well at the beginning, but before she was able to afford health insurance for herself, Diane started to get sick. She says she didn't want to go to the doctor until she had health insurance set. When she heard about the Washtenaw*

*Health Plan she applied right away. As soon as she was enrolled, she saw her provider at the Packard Clinic -who informed her, after days in the hospital, that she had cancer.*

*Concerned, her daughter in Colorado tried to get help for her mother. The Housing Bureau for Seniors helped pull together the \$4,000 Diane owed in back rent at the place she's lived for eight years. Her health, and her ability to stay in her home, are still precarious, as she lives month to month on about \$500 and the kind works of a lot of good people, she says, "who I really don't even know."*

# Housing AND Services

## THE REALITY

Washtenaw County has more than 2,500 people on waiting lists for affordable housing. People requesting affordable housing vouchers have an average wait of 28 months. On average, 8 families are added to the waiting list for emergency shelter every week in our community. The average yearly income for a person on disability is \$6,624; the average yearly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Washtenaw County is \$9,500. Such disparity, without plans to create more affordable housing, puts a significant number of our neighbors at risk of becoming homeless.

In the 2004 community-wide interviews of homeless people, 44% reported moderate to severe addictions and 42% reported having a mental illness. Yet on more than 153 days in 2003, people seeking treatment for drug and alcohol addictions had to be turned away due to funding shortages. 42% were looking for employment and those who were employed earned less than 1/5 of the area's median household income.

Without additional permanently affordable housing with easy access to supportive services, there is little hope for people to change their circumstances. For them, and for the community at large, homelessness is inextricably tied to hopelessness. Today, we have a chance to end both.

## THE GOAL

*Ensure permanent affordable housing along with reliable funding for services that are central to ending homelessness.*

## THE STRATEGIES

- Secure at least **500 units** of permanently affordable supportive housing for chronically homeless persons in our community. This housing can be secured in two ways:
  - Increase the number of permanently affordable apartments developed and managed by non-profit agencies;
  - Secure use of existing, privately owned apartments combined with supportive housing services.
- Ensure a match in sustainable service dollars and adequate funds dedicated to keep properties maintained in a manner that develops tenant and neighborhood pride.
- Increase the number of affordable supportive housing units for young adults.
- Increase the availability of emergency shelter for families.
- Increase services to people who suffer from addictions by increasing numbers of 'detox' beds, access to follow-up treatment services and transitional housing units. Secure access to the full range of treatment services for people with co-occurring disorders.



**[TYRON]** *Tyron Johnson served time in Ohio for gang related drug offenses. He developed diabetes during his four years in custody. Upon release, had two weeks worth of insulin, no money and no place to live except for the family home and neighborhood in gang territory.*

*Wanting to get away from prior friends and behavior, he came to live in Ypsilanti with his brother and roommates. When rent wasn't paid, the group was evicted and Tyron lost his job at Farmer Jacks. No*

*home and no income, Tyron lived in a tent under a bridge in Ann Arbor, trying to keep his insulin cold by asking for ice from local restaurants.*

*In and out of St. Joseph's Hospital for dangerously high sugar levels, Tyron hooked up with PORT, the men's shelter and then the Delonis Center, and the WISH program. After 18 months on a waitlist, Tyron was able to get a Section 8 voucher and is living in an apartment in Ann Arbor. Tyron now works part time for the County through a special program with CSTS.*

*His diabetes is finally under control, and he has not been hospitalized for 11 months.*

## ACTION NOW

■ **Carrot Way Apartments** – Avalon Housing, as a result of collaboration with Food Gatherers, is building Carrot Way Apartments, 30 units of affordable housing on Dhu Varren Road in Ann Arbor. These 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments will be permanently affordable to tenants with access to individualized supportive housing services provided by Catholic Social Services.

■ **Maple View** - 10 units of affordable, single bedroom permanent housing, located in Ypsilanti is being launched in 2005 by Michigan Ability Partners.

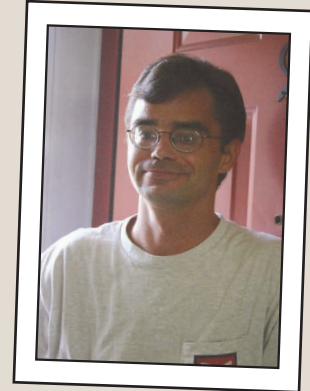
■ **SOLO** - Ozone House and Avalon Housing will collaborate as service provider and property developer to secure 8-10 units of affordable supportive housing for independent youth ages 17-20. Ozone calls the lack of affordable housing with services the biggest gap in the continuum of care for young adults, including teen parents. The apartments help bridge that gap for teens -especially for the growing number who have aged out of foster care, to independent living

■ **Transformation of the Ann Arbor YMCA** - Currently 100 single room occupancy units with no cooking facilities, this housing has rents that far exceed 1/3 of most tenants' incomes. The City of Ann Arbor is developing an RFP for 80-100 efficiency units of permanently affordable, supportive housing. Supportive services will be available to these tenants many of whom have been chronically homeless. It has been recommended that twenty units be reserved for transitional uses by agencies for shorter-term emergency stays.

■ **A Jail Diversion program** for adults with co-occurring disorders is being proposed through the Criminal Justice Collaborative Council to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners in October of 2004.

■ **Veterans' Haven of Hope** will offer safe housing for 11 veterans with services provided by the Salvation Army in collaboration with the VA Healthcare Center and claims and benefits support from the County's Veterans Services.

■ **The Washtenaw Housing Alliance** is committed to working with other private sector partners and local funders to help secure service funding for the County's upcoming permanent supportive housing units. Additionally, WHA board members in conjunction with County and City staff, will develop recommendations on the best options for a dedicated revenue stream for supportive housing services in Washtenaw County.



**[STEVEN]** *Steven Briggs has always been a little uncomfortable around people. It was in his late twenties though, when things got harder. Steve presented a therapist with a history of more than 30 jobs in ten years when he was finally diagnosed with a severe anxiety disorder.*

*During that time - for eight years - he lived mainly out of his truck, staying now and then in the homes of relatives who never knew he was homeless. Through the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) he was able to get State disability, then Social security disability. With a different number of agency services along the way, Steven now lives in an Ann Arbor apartment owned by Avalon Housing. He is in therapy and is working part time for a janitorial service in the evenings for a large company in Saline.*

# Reform the System of Care

## THE REALITY

Essential services for people who are homeless exist in multiple agencies and innumerable programs in dispersed locations. Because of the nature of this structure, seeking help is anything but efficient, and in many ways lacking compassion. At the community level, assessing needs, setting priorities and seeking funding has often been insular and fragmented. Funders have had difficulty making well-informed decisions without access to reliable system-wide data and an assessment of the community's highest priority needs. Also, there has been no set of agreed-upon standards for administration and service delivery among providers or within the community.

## THE GOAL

Provide a system of care that delivers compassionate, effective and efficient support for people who are homeless or precariously housed.

## THE STRATEGIES

- Develop common administrative and service standards and outcome measures across agencies.
- Develop an integrated funding process across all sectors based on community-supported priorities.
- Develop and maintain an integrated, countywide Homeless Management Information System to help the community assess needs, coordinate care and evaluate effectiveness of programs - in real-time.

## ACTION NOW

- The Common Standards & Evaluation Team has been launched by the Washtenaw Housing Alliance in partnership with Health Services of Washtenaw County to develop common standards across providers. Experts from the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University Schools of Social Work, Business and Public Policy will support this team.
- The Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan will research the outcomes and cost effectiveness of different housing and services approaches. This information will support providers in making service improvements and funders in making data driven decisions.



**[LINDA]** *Linda Jackson has worked all her life, since she was a teenager, but clinical depression finally caused her to lose her job at Washtenaw Community College, and shortly thereafter, her apartment. She says that all she did or wanted to do was sleep during that dark time, and when anyone asks her anything about 2002 - all she can remember about it is crying.*

*After hospitalization, Linda went straight to the Women's Shelter on Felch Street in Ann Arbor. She had never been homeless before. With help from the PORT staff and staff at the shelter, Linda got help from a number of different therapies to battle the depression. She found a home to share in Ann Arbor through the HomeShare program.*

*Drawn by the idea of helping others "in the same boat," Linda now works full time with Washtenaw County's Community Support & Treatment Services.*

# Engage the Community

## THE REALITY

The people of Washtenaw County have demonstrated their willingness to let go of stereotypes and partisanship to understand and find workable, measurable solutions to serious social affliction. A present, the compelling, emotional stories of our neighbors are not matched with compelling data - real numbers. Without such outcome-oriented data, members of this community will find it hard to perceive their role in helping to prevent people from becoming homeless. Without the ability to measure success from failure, this community will continue to be caught in ad hoc, well-meaning, but ultimately failed policy.

## THE GOAL

An engaged community where people - in their homes, their schools, their places of work and places of worship - understand the moral and practical sense to strategies that will end homelessness in Washtenaw County.

## THE STRATEGIES

- Advocate vigorously on issues related to homelessness at local, state and federal levels.
- Communicate the measurable effectiveness of our strategies to end homelessness to the entire community.
- Align community education “campaigns” within a strategic framework.

## ACTION NOW

- A Point-In-Time survey was conducted in March of 2004, giving an unduplicated count as a baseline for future data collection and analysis. Individuals from the University of Michigan’s Ford School of Public Policy have agreed to work with these and other data to help measure progress of our efforts.
- Community Presentations on the ‘Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County’ reached nearly 1000 persons from April through September of 2004. These conversations took place with business and neighborhood groups, service organizations, communities of faith and governmental bodies, among others.
- “A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County” forum on September 21st, 2004, is a powerful community engagement vehicle, reiterating the goals and ‘next steps’ to ending homelessness.
- “SERVICES TO END LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS ACT” (SELHA) introduced in US Congress July 28, 2004, by a bipartisan coalition, calling for funding for health and mental health services, substance abuse treatment, health education, money management, and other services to help end chronic homelessness for individuals and families. States, cities, public or nonprofit entities would be eligible to apply for the grants. A Senate version of SELHA should be introduced before this year’s elections.

**[DEBORAH]** *Deborah would prefer to be called DeBorah, instead of Deborah, but not many people do. She says it's OK, but she'd really*

*rather that they accent the middle syllable.*

*That's her name.*

*She's 15 and living in a family shelter*

*with her mother,*

*her two little sisters and her mother's boyfriend Tony. They've been there for about two months.*

*Tony is working at a local supermarket, and is trying to get a second job so that he can get the family back into an apartment.*

*DeBorah's mother Ethel, on social security disability, can be easily overwhelmed by life and has often needed psychiatric care. DeBorah has just started another new high school and she's been looking forward to her sophomore year.*

*She's told them her name is DeBorah.*





## What you know about ending homelessness in Washtenaw County

As you are reading this, you know that:

- There are people presently housed who will soon lose their housing and develop more problems and more needs...
- There are people working in our community who cannot afford to live here, nor afford the commute to keep working here...
- There are people who, with some amount of help, could stay housed...
- There are people living in the streets, unaware of help, or confused by a system of care that is often fragmented and complex...

But you also know that:

The people who make up this community have demonstrated consistently through the years a capacity for caring enough to get involved, innovate, change systems – in short, the capacity to understand the nature of community. As a member of this community – as a citizen or provider of services – the very fact that you are reading these words is a case in point.

To take your caring to the next level – if you have ideas, resources or time to give to this effort to end homelessness please contact Diane Davidson, Executive Director of the Washtenaw Housing Alliance at [davidsond@washtenaw.org](mailto:davidsond@washtenaw.org) or call the Alliance at (734) 222-6553.

To see the complete ‘Blueprint’ document, please go to <http://www.ahomeforeveryone.org>

Or, to receive a printed copy of the full 90-plus-page document, please send a note to Washtenaw Housing Alliance, at 110 North Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

We have the goals and the strategies to achieve them.

Now we need us.





WASHTENAW  
HOUSING  
ALLIANCE

**"A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County"**

Washtenaw County Government / City of Ann Arbor / City of Ypsilanti / Washtenaw Housing Alliance