

New Article Series: Homelessness and Supportive Housing

Below is the final article in a series of three that addresses issues related to the housing and real estate industry. GHAR has recently formed a task force that is focused on strengthening our relationship to the Greater Hartford community. Part of this initiative is educating our membership about topics like supportive housing so that we, as a REALTOR® Association, can work together to make a difference.

Part 3 of 3: Homelessness Back in the News

Article contributed by Thomas Burr, REALTOR® and GHAR member

The last two articles detailed some of the common causes of Homelessness, as well as the way to *END* Homelessness through Supportive Housing. I have defined Supportive Housing and explained how it works. The various types of Supportive Housing has also been discussed, as well as some of the Common Myths and Misconceptions surrounding Supportive Housing. In this final installment, Hartford County's "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness" will be explained along with why you should care and what you can do to help.

Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez initiated the development of a plan to end chronic homelessness in the Hartford region by first: convening a Project Team in June 2004 to conduct research and lay the foundation for the process, and then in December 2004 he appointed his commission to end chronic homelessness. This Commission was lead by Co-Chairs Archbishop Henry Mansell and Susan Rottner, President of Bank of America, and consisted of key stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sectors¹.

The stated "vision" of Hartford's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness is simply this: "*By 2015, all persons facing chronic homelessness in the Hartford region will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources and supports needed to sustain it.*" The "Hartford's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness" Commission Report identified seven critical areas of strategic planning, along with specific recommendations, specifically²:

1. Supportive and Affordable Housing Recommendations:

- Support Reaching Home's goal of developing 2,133 units of supportive housing in the Capitol Region over the next ten years, of which 1,293 will serve long-term homeless individuals and families. Of the 1,293 supportive housing units to be developed for the long-term homeless population in the Capitol Region over the next ten years, 632 will be developed in Hartford. By supporting Reaching Home's regional goal, the City of Hartford is affirming that chronic homelessness has no borders. Hartford must work together with its neighboring towns in order to be successful in ending chronic homelessness.
- Increase the availability of affordable housing and invest in the improvement of low income housing stock.

2. Economic Stability Through Job/Vocational Training and Placement Recommendation:

- Assist chronically homeless individuals with job/vocational training and job placement opportunities to attain income and self-sufficiency.

3. Discharge Planning Recommendation:

- Support better discharge planning policies in preparing a person in an institution for re-entry to community.

1 www.journeyhomect.org/resources.html

2 Hartford's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness by 2015, Commission Report: www.journeyhomect.org/Htfd_End_Homelessness.pdf

4. **Support Services Recommendation:**

- Provide services and supports that prevent chronic homelessness from occurring and aid those who are chronically homeless in becoming self-sufficient.

5. **Data Collection Recommendation:**

- Enhance data collection and implementation of best practices that further the goal of ending chronic homelessness in the Hartford region by 2015.

6. **Political Will – A Regional Approach to Chronic Homelessness Recommendation:**

- Support a regional approach to ending chronic homelessness in Connecticut. This regional approach should be implemented through the cooperative action of the following community partners: the Capitol Region Council of Governments and its member municipalities; the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness; the Partnership for Strong Communities and its Reaching Home Campaign; the Corporation for Supportive Housing; the non-profit housing development community; the Hartford Capitol Region; the federal and state Departments of Veterans' Affairs; the Greater Hartford philanthropic community; the former homeless population; the faith community; and other community partners that may be identified in the future.

7. **Implementation Vehicle Recommendation:**

- Convene an implementation team and charge it to prepare a detailed action plan to guide implementation of those Commission recommendations accepted by the Mayor.

Why You Should Care, and What You Can Do to Help.

As you can imagine, none of this will happen without the involvement of concerned citizens and other stakeholders within the communities involved. This is how you can help:

At a minimum, support your local politicians who understand the importance of Supportive Housing and ending homelessness, and are committed to implementing the Hartford County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Understand that this isn't just "a city problem", but one that affects every town in the State of CT.

Be Aware that the price of the "status quo" is MORE expensive than the solution, not to mention the human cost in wasted lives.

Advocate! You can provide testimony in favor of Supportive Housing at Public Hearings held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Speak at Public Hearings at your local Town Hall. For information on how to be an effective advocate, contact Natalie Matthews, Assistant Director, CT Coalition to End Homelessness, at (860) 721-7876.

Financially support any of the following organizations that are working to end homelessness: the United Way of CT, the Partnership for Strong Communities Reaching Home Campaign, Journey Home, the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, the National Alliance on Mental Illness – Connecticut (NAMI – CT), as well as any of your local community Homeless Shelters.

Volunteer, or Donate money/food/clothes at any of your local community Homeless Shelters, Soup Kitchens or Food Pantries.

With your help, we CAN end homelessness in Connecticut! Thank you. ●