Responding Effectively as a Region to Unsheltered Homelessness in the Twin Cities Metro Area
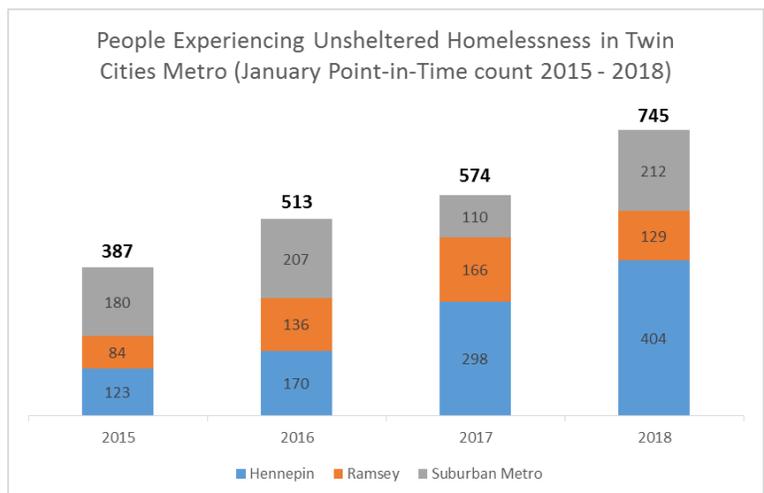
February 11, 2019

Unsheltered homelessness represents a traumatic, life-threatening crisis for those who survive it. It represents a growing and visible lapse in how communities attend to the needs of their most vulnerable members and create conditions where everyone can thrive. Responding effectively to unsheltered homelessness requires urgent, strategic, and coordinated action. Recent experience in the Twin Cities has demonstrated our collective capacity to respond to this problem with commitment, effort, collaboration, and aligned resources.

This document provides background information and recommendations for leaders in the Twin Cities metro area to consider in responding more effectively to unsheltered homelessness on a regional basis. These recommendations were developed and unanimously approved by a Design Team working from August 2018 through February 2019, with support, advice, and guidance from a larger group of advisors locally and nationally. The Design Team's members are listed in Appendix A of this document.

Background and context

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness include anyone sleeping in outdoor locations, in vehicles, on public transit, or otherwise staying in a place not meant for habitation. The annual Point-in-Time count ("PIT count") is a Federally-mandated effort conducted by Continuum of Care (CoC) regions to identify how many people experience homelessness on a single night in January each year. The Twin Cities metro area has three CoCs: Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and the Suburban Metro Area Continuum (SMAC). For all populations, and especially for people who are unsheltered, the PIT count represents a *minimum* estimate – the actual population is almost certainly larger than the number counted. Even prior to the highly visible encampments in Minneapolis and Saint Paul that started last summer, the PIT count showed that unsheltered homelessness in the Twin Cities metro area nearly doubled from 2015 to 2018 (from 387 to 745 people). This increase has occurred at a time when homelessness overall and homelessness among other populations (e.g., families) decreased. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the Twin Cities metro area account for two-thirds of the statewide unsheltered population (1,121 people). The 2019 PIT count also identified a substantial number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the region; preliminary data will be available in the coming weeks.

People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in Twin Cities Metro (January Point-in-Time count 2015 - 2018)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	387	513	574	745
Suburban Metro	180	207	110	212
Ramsey	84	136	166	129
Hennepin	123	170	298	404

The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness at any time throughout a year is likely much greater than the PIT count, since people move in and out of shelter and through different housing settings over time. The PIT count generally does not count people who are living in doubled up or "couch hopping" settings, living situations which are often so precarious that anyone in such an arrangement could – on any given night – face unsheltered homelessness. In that sense, focusing on people who are unsheltered requires focusing on a larger group than those who are unsheltered on any particular night. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness often move between cities and counties in the region seeking resources or using public transit as *de facto* shelter. This mobility argues for considering unsheltered homelessness on a regional basis, rather than only within each jurisdiction.

The increase in unsheltered homelessness in the Twin Cities fits – but greatly exceeds – a national trend. According to HUD's *Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress,* nationally unsheltered homelessness has increased for each of the past three years by an average of 4.5 percent per year. For the Twin Cities metro area for the same period, unsheltered homelessness increased by 24.7 percent on average each year, more than five times the national rate.

The Twin Cities metro area has also joined a growing number of communities where the magnitude of unsheltered homelessness has achieved public visibility and attention, mainly through large encampments that provide a clear focal point for the public to understand the scale and scope of the issue, which may have been harder to appreciate when distributed in small and often hidden camps. Some communities have been able to avoid this outcome entirely by scaling response systems to meet the need (e.g., either no one is unsheltered or those without shelter remain only a small portion of the total population experiencing homelessness over time). In some communities, growth in unsheltered homelessness has triggered substantial collaborative efforts, innovative approaches, and new investments, which may be able to turn the tide. Other communities have approached unsheltered homelessness with responses that criminalize behaviors needed to sustain life when unsheltered (so-called "livability" crimes), despite recent court decisions that regard these approaches as unconstitutional. Sadly, in a number of communities, responses to unsheltered homelessness have not been successful, resulting in increasingly prolific encampments, coupled with a normalization of the problem, utterly transforming civic landscapes.

In the Twin Cities, our experience thus far is mixed. The emergence of large encampments in Minneapolis and Saint Paul last summer confirms that our communities missed a window of opportunity to truly "get ahead" of the needs that result in large encampments. In Minneapolis, a large collaboration of Tribal governments, Native-led and other nonprofits, the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the State of Minnesota, and philanthropic organizations worked together in unprecedented ways to resolve the Franklin-Hiawatha encampment. Not long after this encampment was described in the press as one of the largest encampments in the country, the camp closed in mid-December, with most camp residents leaving in favor of the new navigation center and other supports created to help people in the encampment transition to permanent housing, including successful housing outcomes for more than 100 residents of the encampment through a State, County, and Tribal collaboration using Housing Supports resources from the State. While it remains uncertain whether these transitions will be successful, and there remains a great deal of work needed to ensure successful housing transitions for everyone at the navigation center, collectively these experiences suggest outcomes possible for our communities in the future, and the necessity for greater alignment regionally.

Unsheltered homelessness also reflects the racial and ethnic disparities seen in homelessness generally, with people of color vastly over-represented compared to the general population or even compared to other low-income populations. In the metro area, the unsheltered population includes 2.7 times as many people of color as would be expected based on the general population in the region. These disparities are even starker for African Americans and Native Americans. African Americans are over-represented in the unsheltered population in the region by a factor of 5.3 and *Native Americans are over-represented in the unsheltered population by a staggering factor of 27,* meaning that 27 times more Native people are among those without shelter than would be expected from their representation in the general population.[1] These facts show that racism and racial inequity are central drivers of homelessness, and motivate the recommendations below to provide options attentive and tailored to the wide disparities in who experiences unsheltered homelessness in the region.

The Design Team and the process for developing the recommendations

Originally convened in August 2018 to help coordinate responses to the growing encampments in Minneapolis and Saint Paul and new efforts for people using Metro Transit in lieu of shelter, the Design Team has grown substantially, and now includes over 100 members including experts with lived experience of homelessness, representatives of city, county, regional and state government agencies, nonprofit leaders, philanthropic organizations, and other advocates. Since September, this group has focused on developing specific recommendations that public and private sector leaders in the region could consider as the most effective and impactful ways to address unsheltered homelessness together. To date, this group has identified and developed over 50 distinct recommendations. These include "quick wins" as well as longer term efforts. They include recommendations that a small number of partners can accomplish, as well as projects that would require coordination among a large number of partners.

While these recommendations demonstrate the complexity of the issue and the breadth of the effort needed to solve it, the Design Team also recognizes the need for and benefit of priorities to guide our collective focus. Accordingly, this document identifies the most critical, immediate steps that leaders can take in the region.

To organize these recommendations, the Design Team identified the components needed in an approach that would respond effectively to unsheltered homelessness in the region. These components help us establish and be explicit about how we define success in responding to unsheltered homelessness. We have also provided a brief description of our current state for each of these components (e.g., current availability of outreach for people who are unsheltered).

While the Design Team believes that the priorities it has identified will have a profound and lasting impact on unsheltered homelessness in the Twin Cities, it comes as no surprise that these urgent, prioritized actions alone will not be sufficient to prevent and end all unsheltered homelessness. Appendix B to this memo contains the larger list of recommendations established by the Design Team, with the hope that our collective, initial focus on (and success with!) the highest priority recommendations will also yield additional capacity to focus on other impactful recommendations identified by the group.

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[1] *HUD CoC Analysis Tool: Race and Ethnicity*, retrieved on February 7, 2019 from https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5787/coc-analysis-tool-race-and-ethnicity/

Components of a regional approach

An architectural view of the components of the proposed regional approach to respond to unsheltered homelessness is as follows:

Sufficient and coordinated outreach	Sufficient shelter and crisis response with few or no barriers	Direct access to permanent, affordable housing	Consistent processes and protocols	System Components
Unified governance and accountability				Foundational Components
Political will and public awareness				

As this diagram implies, the Design Team identified two **Foundational Components** (in blue) needed for a regional approach to succeed. Recognizing the critical role that public sector systems and agencies must play in creating an effective response, political will and public awareness represent the most foundational component for an effective regional approach. In addition, specific responses to unsheltered homelessness must be supported by a unified approach to overseeing and maintaining accountability for these efforts regionally over time. Built on this foundation, the Design Team identified four **System Components** (in green) that define the system capacity needed to respond effectively. The following table describes each of these system components in more detail.

System component	Success for this component means…	Currently our region has…
Sufficient and coordinated outreach. Outreach serves the critical function of connecting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to resources that can resolve their housing crisis, which they may not be aware of or able to access on their own. Outreach workers build trusting rapport with people experiencing homelessness so that when these resources are available, they are able to be used effectively. Outreach also serves a vital function of providing information about changing dynamics or issues emerging for people who are unsheltered, especially those who are not otherwise connected to support.	• 24/7 coverage to adequately address need at any point in time. • Full geographic coverage of the region across all populations and jurisdictions. • Easy access to outreach workers for anyone experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including a single point of contact (e.g., 211). • Coordination across all outreach efforts, including ability to share needed data. • Outreach workers can provide or broker immediate access to what people need (housing, benefits, etc.) with appropriate transportation available. • Outreach capacity responsive to the needs and preferences of people who are unsheltered (e.g., includes culturally-specific teams and/or workers). • Designed to help people connect with informal or natural supports. • Well-supported outreach workforce, paid livable wages, offered access to training and professional development, including recruitment of people with lived experience of homelessness.	Capacity and coordination of outreach efforts is a continuing challenge for workers serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is unclear how many outreach workers currently serve the region, with most workers concentrated in the central cities. Youth outreach is coordinated through Streetworks and the Youth Services Network. Beyond that, no central access exists for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness to connect with outreach workers. The vast majority of outreach workers (both adult and youth) are staffed during daytime hours, with few (if any) evening hours and no consistent overnight access. Because funding sources require different outcome and enrollment criteria, the ability to effectively move between programs to serve people can also be difficult, with workers limited in their ability to match needs to the individuals they are working with. Outreach programs report that the amount of funding to respond to emergencies is very limited.

System component	Success for this component means…	Currently our region has…
Sufficient shelter and crisis response with few or no barriers. For people who are unsheltered, sufficient supply of and access to appropriate crisis response and shelter that imposes few or no barriers and that is responsive to people's needs, culture, and preferences is essential because these resources can end unsheltered homelessness.	• Direct connections and coordination between shelter access and other systems (e.g., Emergency Assistance, Housing Supports, and other benefit programs), including systems that respond to higher levels of acuity in health needs. • Consistent standards of practice and accountability. • Greater coordination of existing shelter capacity. • Well-supported shelter and crisis response workforce, paid livable wages, offered access to training and professional development, and including recruitment of people with lived experience of homelessness. • Shared ownership of the solution throughout the region, including a regional approach to financing and managing access to available capacity. • Continuous availability of 24/7 shelter with little or no barriers to entry. • Shelters are focused on successful housing outcomes and making experiences of homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. • Diversity in shelter models and approaches that offer options to welcome everyone who needs it, culturally-specific options, and a focus on safety, comfort, and healing. • Crisis response includes more than shelter (e.g., emergency economic assistance, landlord mediation, parent and family conflict resolution, etc.).	HUD data identifies 3,109 year-round emergency shelter beds in the region, plus 168 additional beds available in winter months only. (Hennepin County has 1,954 year-round and 50 winter beds; Ramsey County has 859 year-round and 68 winter beds; and SMAC has 296 year-round and 50 winter beds.) As with outreach, the region's shelter capacity does not meet the region's need. County staff report turning away dozens of people daily due to a lack of beds. Challenges exist in collaboration between systems for those experiencing homelessness: discharge processes from correctional settings or residential care often result in people moving directly into homelessness. While there is significant variation across shelter settings, in general individuals or families accessing shelter receive few resources to help them obtain permanent housing. The extent to which shelters operate as low barrier varies across the region, with a number of shelters imposing sobriety or contribution requirements, which present high barriers for the unsheltered population. Most shelters in the region also impose geographic or jurisdictional eligibility requirements to access shelter.

System component	Success for this component means…	Currently our region has…
Direct access to permanent, affordable housing. In a coordinated and effective regional system, people experiencing homelessness can move quickly to permanent housing, whenever possible directly from an unsheltered situation. Permanent housing must be affordable and include supports when needed to maintain stable housing for the long term.	• Adequate supply of and variety of unit sizes, from SROs to several bedrooms in all communities across the region. • System that focuses on maintaining housing stability. • Regional financial commitment from the public sector to meet supportive housing need. • Access to housing with little or no barriers. • Housing providers that are trained and competent in working with and supporting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. • Culturally appropriate housing choices for a variety of cultural backgrounds. • Flexible housing models that meet the needs of the person rather than the needs of the funding. • Adequate supply of supportive services staff, on site and off. • Housing available in the private market as well as public market. • A person-centered, trauma-informed, and Housing First orientation in access to housing.	The Twin Cities housing market contains variety of permanent housing options that can work for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including affordable unsubsidized rental units, units subsidized to remain affordable based on a tenant, and permanent supportive housing (PSH). Unfortunately, these options are scarce. In 2015, the Twin Cities region had 102,100 extremely low income households but only 34,000 units affordable and available. PSH and other units with eligibility tied to homelessness are accessed through the Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) operated by CoCs. CES priority lists demonstrate how the low capacity for these affordable and supportive housing units impacts people seeking housing: presently, two new people are added to these priority list for every one person referred to a housing option. Low vacancy rates have also enabled property owners and managers to raise rents and tighten eligibility requirements around income, rental history, and criminal history, reducing access for many people who are unsheltered.

System component	Success for this component means…	Currently our region has…
Consistent practices and protocols among law enforcement, land management, outreach, and crisis response agencies when interacting with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Police, public transit workers and outreach teams are often the first interaction people experiencing unsheltered homelessness have on the path to permanent housing. These interactions can set the stage for success or can lead to distrust and trauma. People in crisis deserve to be treated with respect and their humanity acknowledged by everyone with whom they come into contact.	• Racially and culturally diverse staff in leadership and decision-making roles as well as roles that interact with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. • Training for staff interacting with the unsheltered homeless population on Housing First and trauma-informed care. • Basic requirements of living while unsheltered are not criminalized, and enforcement options of other ordinances don't have a disparate impact on people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. • Multi-disciplinary teams link enforcement agencies and first responders with outreach. • Consistent, nuanced and person-centered analysis of encampment decisions. • Awareness and support for legal rights of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. • Shared ownership of and communication about the problem of unsheltered homelessness.	Across the seven-county metro area, authority for these practices and protocols is divided among multiple levels of government (city, county, regional, and state), resulting in wide variation and inconsistency across the region and across systems. In many cases, the absence of specific protocols even within a single jurisdiction means that someone's experience may depend on which particular system representative (e.g., a public safety officer or county emergency assistance financial worker) they encounter. Two regional bodies operate to help align policy and practice (the Metropolitan Council and a regional collaboration of county human service agencies operating under a joint-powers agreement), both of which have at least a partial connection to practices and protocols for serving people who are unsheltered but neither of which presently has the authority, jurisdiction, or mandate to harmonize policies across the region for law enforcement, land management, or crisis response policy. Jurisdictions also vary widely in whether and how critical aspects of living without shelter are criminalized or enforced.

Prioritized recommendations for each component

This section presents the prioritized recommendations of the Design Team for responding effectively to unsheltered homelessness on a regional basis in the Twin Cities metro area. The recommendations include three recommendations for the Foundational Components and 17 recommendations for the four System Components (i.e., a total of 20 high-priority recommendations).

The Design Team's first, and most foundational, recommendation is for leaders in the region to:

1. Commit to the goal of ending unsheltered homelessness as quickly as possible, and set an assertive timetable for doing so. This commitment would recognize the immediate, life-threatening peril of unsheltered homelessness and demonstrate that the prevalence of unsheltered homelessness does not reflect the region's values and must be swiftly ended by connecting people experiencing it with housing and shelter. The increasing visibility of unsheltered homelessness, especially on public transit and in recent encampments, can serve as focal points for garnering public support behind this commitment.

Two other more specific recommendations related to the Foundational Components are for public sector leaders to:

2. Task a small group representing each public sector entity to determine a viable path for managing efforts to end unsheltered homelessness regionally on an ongoing basis. This team could explore existing structures (e.g., the Regional Metro Committee's Joint Powers Agreement, the Metropolitan Council), multi-jurisdictional authorities developed in other communities (e.g., the Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority or the Seattle / King County Homelessness System Redesign), or other solutions needed to provide ongoing ownership, leadership, staffing and accountability for responding to unsheltered homelessness across the region.

3. Develop and use clear, shared messages that promote public awareness of unsheltered homelessness and its solutions in ways that include a nuanced social, historical, and racial narrative. Given the imperative of public support for making additional investments to respond to unsheltered homelessness – and the widely-held but mistaken view that homelessness is an intractable problem – clear and frequent communication with a variety of audiences will be necessary to sustain these efforts over time. The varied platforms and audiences that members of the public sector leadership team can reach with their existing communications vehicles (e.g., speeches, newsletters, hearings, proceedings) can help shift public understanding. In addition, the dramatic racial and ethnic disparities in who experiences homelessness in Minnesota confirm that homelessness is an equity issue. To reinforce the need for equity and racial justice to be central to the response to homelessness, the messages delivered by public sector leaders must be grounded in and help our communities grasp this understanding of the issue. A first step would be to convene appropriate representatives from the agencies (e.g. communications staff) to develop shared messages.

For the System Components, the Design Team's recommendations include short-term (i.e., within the next six months) and longer-term (i.e., within the next two years) recommendations and include options for increasing the impact of existing assets and resources ("Do Better") and recommendations where significant additional resources are needed ("Do More"). The specific recommendations under each of these components are:

Component	Do Better	Do More
Sufficient and coordinated outreach	**Within the next six months,** convene funders and providers of outreach to determine how services can be better coordinated, to identify options for making flexible funding available to outreach teams, to develop common understanding of the benefits of improved coordination, to analyze where outreach is needed, and to determine / assign responsibility for outreach coordination. **Within the next two years,** develop an approach for providing expedited (e.g., presumptive eligibility for) access to county-administered benefits (GA, SSI, EA, etc.).	**Within the next six months,** create consistent availability of mobile assessments for coordinated entry throughout the region. **Within the next two years,** develop a funding model for and begin to implement 24/7 outreach with immediate access to flexible funds and other resources across the region.
Sufficient shelter and crisis response with few or no barriers	**Within the next six months,** convene shelter funders and providers to establish shared values and standards of care across all shelter operations, anticipating growth. **Within the next two years,** establish incentives for higher credentials, training, experience, wages and lower caseloads in competitive processes to award shelter funding, to prepare for shelter expansion, mitigate staff turnover, facilitate recruitment, and support more qualified shelter staff.	**Within the next six months,** commit to and develop cost estimates, budgets, and plans for creating a net increase of 300 – 600 person capacity in housing-focused crisis, navigation, medical respite, and housing stabilization beds in small, welcoming and inclusive settings across the region specifically focused on engaging unsheltered people, improving geographic distribution of and financial responsibility for shelter, and providing options for culturally-specific and culturally-responsive shelter. Implementation of this recommendation should attend to the anticipated loss of "winter" shelter beds, which would result in reduced capacity and a larger required expansion of capacity. **Within the next two years,** expand bed capacity by the amount committed.

Component	Do Better	Do More
Direct access to permanent, affordable housing	**Within the next six months**, deepen engagement and collaboration with and create incentives for property owners to provide housing options for those coming out of homelessness. **Within the next two years,** set aside or prioritize a portion of rental assistance allocated by PHAs to unsheltered populations.	**Within the next six months,** identify start-up funding for providers needed to leverage the DHS Housing Supports program to create additional supportive housing capacity. **Within the next two years,** identify and implement options to secure access to more units including improving how vacancies are targeted, lowering barriers created by tenant selection and screening processes, and conveying clearer expectations about lowering barriers to access to housing through contract renewals, new funding opportunities, and program compliance expectations.

Component	Do Better	Do More
Consistent practices and protocols	**Immediately,** commit to and work expeditiously toward decriminalizing homelessness in the region, meaning that ordinances that criminalize requirements of living in public spaces (e.g., sleeping) would be repealed and no longer enforced. [2] **Within the next six months,** through a collaborative partnership between law enforcement agencies and social service providers, expand the skill sets and capacities of both entities so they are able to utilize a cohesive and collaborative approach when serving those experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This collaboration may include training to ensure officers are equipped to address individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness using a social services perspective (harm reduction, housing first, person-centered, trauma informed, services based) rather than a law enforcement approach (citations, arrest, justice-system involvement) and/or the creation of collaborative law-enforcement teams specifically designated to work with individuals experiencing homelessness, which include social, mental health and/or outreach workers. **Within the next two years,** get agreement of authorities responsible for public property (e.g., MnDOT, cities, park services) to use a best-practices template and coordinated approach for responding to encampments.	**Within the next six months,** develop an approach for protecting people's personal property during encampment clean-up. **Within the next two years,** create court systems that work with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness throughout the region.

The full list of recommendations from the Design Team are included in Appendix B of this document.

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[2] Recent court decisions suggest that such ordinances are unconstitutional. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, "on September 4, 2018, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that the state may not 'criminalize conduct that is an unavoidable consequence of being homeless… when there are more homeless persons than available shelter beds or in the absence of other adequate alternatives.'" Cf., *Martin v. City of Boise*.

Values and Guiding Principles

Just as important as *what* is included in our regional approach is *how* that approach is implemented. The Design Team recommends that this approach must be grounded in the following values and guiding principles:

- **Regionally aligned policies and practices** that provide consistency from one community to the next in access to resources yet are nimble enough to work with specific circumstances or populations, *because people experiencing homelessness move regularly across boundaries, especially to access resources.*
- **A harm-reduction, Housing First response** to promote the fastest access to housing possible and to focus on mitigating the impacts of being without shelter, *because unsheltered homelessness poses significant, life-threatening risks.*
- **A person-centered, equity-informed focus** to respond to each person's homelessness and journey back to housing and healing as being individualized, and to be informed by the social issues that impede access to housing for some people *because homelessness varies greatly and is entwined with other social, cultural and historical issues.*
- **Strategic investments that maximize and leverage existing systems and resources** and communicate best practices across municipal boundaries**,** allowing for local adaptability and flexibility while maintaining a shared regional focus *because those experiencing homelessness are best served when the individual parts of the system work together as a whole.*
- **A region-wide commitment of new financial resources** to fill gaps in addressing the needs of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness while doing no harm to existing efforts for other populations, *because unsheltered homelessness impacts everyone in the region and resources have not kept pace with the problem.*
- **Engagement with private and philanthropic partners** in addressing the needs of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, *because addressing unsheltered homelessness requires public/private partnership.*

Next steps

On the one hand, this document represents hundreds of person-hours of contributions informed by hundreds of years, cumulatively, of wisdom and experience with homelessness, and on the other hand, the beginning of a conversation with community leaders about how our region can position itself to be more effective, compassionate, and wise in its response to unsheltered homelessness. The Design Team's hope is that these recommendations serve as a platform for a new, collective trajectory and even better ideas and opportunities in the future, which help us create a community where no one is without housing or shelter.

Appendix A: Design Team Members

The following individuals participated in some capacity in the development of these recommendations and the work of the Design Team between August 2018 and February 2019.

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Appendix B: Recommendations for System Components

For each system component, the Design Team has identified the following recommendations:

Component	Do Better	Do More
Sufficient and coordinated outreach	• Determine or assign responsibility for outreach coordination. • Measure actual outreach capacity within the region at least annually (e.g., tied with the PIT count). • Analyze where and when outreach capacity can be most effectively deployed and align with how existing outreach capacity is deployed. • Explore options for linking with law enforcement to provide 24/7 outreach response. • Develop an approach for providing expedited (e.g., presumptive eligibility for) access to county-administered benefits (GA, SSI, EA, etc.). • Establish a coordinated rating system for evaluating encampments throughout the region, used by all authorities responsible for public spaces. • Convene funders and providers of outreach to determine how services can be better coordinated.	• Develop a funding model needed to provide 24/7 outreach across the region. • Maximize Healthcare for the Homeless funding to grow regional 24/7 outreach capacity, including access to specialists like psychiatric nurses. • Create an easy (e.g., toll-free number or app) way for anyone needing outreach to connect with an outreach worker. • Set minimal expectations, reporting standards, and outcome measures for outreach capacity across the region (e.g., each person would be contacted within X hours.) • Provide public reporting of progress toward meeting minimal outreach capacity expectations. • Sustain / grow the Metro Transit Police' Homeless Action Team as needed to cover the region. • Enable financial workers to remotely determine eligibility for economic assistance. • Make consistent availability of mobile assessments for coordinated entry throughout the region. • Create linkages between emergency room triage and 24/7 outreach capacity.
Sufficient shelter and crisis response	• Establish mobile financial workers to connect shelter residents with benefits.	• Commit to an initial investment to create 300 – 600 additional shelter beds in small, welcoming and inclusive settings across the region specifically

Component	Do Better	Do More
with few or no barriers	• Establish a process to monitor and support shelters to increase housing outcomes and provide additional housing assistance. • Implement Foundational Service Practices to improve access to benefits for shelter residents. • Convene shelter funders and providers to establish shared values and standards of care across all shelter operations. • Conduct a systemic assessment of current shelter operations fidelity to standards of practice. • Establish incentives for higher credentials, experience, and wages and lower caseloads in competitive processes to award shelter funding, to mitigate staff turnover, facilitate recruitment, and support more qualified shelter staff. • Establish inclusionary definitions of family when determining access to shelter for family groups, inclusive of LGBTQ families and extended family arrangements.	focused on engaging unsheltered people, improving geographic distribution of and financial responsibility for shelter, and providing options for culturally-specific and culturally-responsive shelter. • Task a regional workgroup to recommend options for replicating or scaling up Hennepin County's Adult Shelter Connect across the region. • Develop a financial model for equitable distribution of shelter capacity and funding throughout the region. • Commit to moving toward equitable funding of shelter. • Use public platforms and communication vehicles to convey the need for greater shelter capacity in the region. • Develop a model for what would be needed to provide consistent availability of shelter. • Organize community-level efforts to provide basic amenities for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including free storage, day sites for meeting hygiene needs and providing warmth, and delivering other resources.
Direct access to permanent, affordable housing	• Set-aside or prioritize a portion of rental assistance allocated by PHAs to unsheltered populations • Engage with private landlords to eliminate screening criteria unrelated to tenancy • Require entities that accept public funding to accept clients with housing barriers	• Identify start-up funding needed to leverage the DHS Housing Supports program to create additional supportive housing capacity • Create incentives with public funds for developing housing with few or no barriers by increasing competitive advantages for including 15% AMI

Component	Do Better	Do More
	• Waiving shelter requirements for accessing supportive housing • Develop/identify fidelity standards for Housing First Model. • Require publically funded providers to train on and demonstrate use of Housing First Model. • Engage and train landlords in how to best partner with agencies providing services for those coming out of homelessness. • RFPs include incentives for projects that include culturally specific services • RFPs include incentives for projects that center equity in their outcome measures. • Eliminate occupancy laws based on gender of children (Section 8) or align the rules among housing authorities • Clarify/improve options for using rental assistance in living situations with roommates. • Develop a standard/best practice around staff to guest ratio. • Remove financial disincentives for accessing housing programs. • Evaluate potential changes to coordinated entry that would prioritize or expedite access to housing options for people who are unsheltered.	income targets, homeless designated units and low screening criteria. • Innovative housing for people with the highest barriers – quad units with flexible supports and few barriers to entry. • Work with PHAs to provide next-step housing for people in LTH housing. • Increased access to onsite mental health/chemical health professional hours at all SH sites • Utilize Medicaid to increase access to services onsite • Increase resources for landlord risk mitigation funds to encourage landlords to rent to people with perceived housing barriers (UDs, citations, etc.)
Consistent practices and protocols	• Provide guidance to jurisdictions about recent court rulings about unsheltered homelessness • Educate law enforcement agencies about options when identifying people without shelter. • Train Law Enforcement Officers on how to work with People Experiencing	• Maintain Hennepin County HOMES Court and replicate in other jurisdictions • Provide legal rights training for people experiencing homelessness

Component	Do Better	Do More
	Homelessness with a Person-Centered Lens • Decriminalize offenses most affecting those experiencing homelessness ("livability crimes") • Across the metro area, establish compassionate, coordinated, and consistent systems for law enforcement, public land management, and outreach teams to collaborate on determining encampment resolutions, communicating about encampment removals, and mitigating the impact of land management and enforcement decisions so collectively they minimize trauma, forced relocations, loss of possessions, or additional housing barriers created for people without shelter. The ultimate goal of these systems is to reduce the number of encampments as additional shelter and housing options are developed so persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness have realistic alternatives to encampments. Creating a nuanced response (such as a tiered-coding system to prioritize removals) to avoid abrupt removals and ensuring outreach teams have sufficient time for meaningful engagement prior to removals, whenever possible, will be key for these systems.	