

DENVER'S TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

2010 ANNUAL UPDATE: YEAR 5



INTRODUCTION

Five years into our Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, Denver's Road Home has made great progress through our vast partnerships in our community. We are indeed on track to ending homelessness as we know it. **But there is much more work to be done.**

In many ways, this plan has exceeded our goals, objectives and outcomes. Five years into our plan, we are better at counting the homeless, targeting our services and maximizing the impact of the funds we allocate via our partnerships with the homeless providers in Denver. We are more focused than ever on sustainability and regional partnerships, and are strategically evaluating where we want to be in the next five years by resetting our benchmarks based on the progress of the first half of the plan.

Five years in, we are frequently asked about how the economy has impacted our initiative. It is clear to our partners that there could never be a more important time to have a plan—to ensure that every man, woman and child has a safe alternative to living life on the streets. In the face of new challenges, Denver's Road Home remains committed to our mission and to the community we serve.

Even in the midst of a recession, we continue to move people out of homelessness. The coordinated response to homelessness in Denver allows organizations, agencies and residents to work together to connect homeless and potentially homeless clients with services, and to house and re-house individuals and families as quickly as possible. With our Commission, we regularly assess each goal and action step from the Ten Year Plan to evaluate outcomes and to adjust strategy and approach where necessary. Denver's Road Home is confident that continued community participation and ownership of this initiative will help us not only reach our ambitious goals, but also to leave a lasting positive impact on what it means to be homeless in Denver.

Together with Mile High United Way, private foundations, the faith community, homeless service providers, the business community and many generous individuals, Denver's Road Home has raised more than \$46.1 million over the first five years to support the initiative. The 5th Annual PJ Day and PJ Party raised a new record of \$860,000 in cash and in-kind donations for Denver's Road Home. This money has been designated to build affordable, supportive housing, to provide shelter, medical, mental health and substance abuse services, to provide education and training, and to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless. Our current fundraising efforts and support remain strong.

We have established a critical partnership with the Denver Housing Authority, which allows us to make strategic investments and decisions, and ensures that our housing production goals become a reality.

CURRENT STATE

In 2005, using a three-year average, it was estimated there were 942 chronically homeless individuals in the City and County of Denver. According to the 2009 Point in Time Survey, conducted by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, the number of chronically homeless individuals in Denver had dropped to 343.¹ These surveys are conducted every two years, with the next survey to be conducted in January of 2011.

While the number of chronically homeless individuals in the city has been reduced, we also know many families and individuals are experiencing homelessness for the first time due to the challenges raised by the state of the economy. With recognition on a national level around this great challenge, Denver was awarded \$3.7 million in stimulus funds to assist with homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing (HPRP) over the next three years. In less than one year, these funds have helped over 550 households.

As of June 30, 2010, 527 persons or 303 households have received Prevention assistance; 333 persons or 270 households have received

Rapid Rehousing assistance. Overall, HPRP has served a total of 836 persons and 551 households to date.²

At Denver's Road Home, we know that moving people off the streets and into housing is not only the right thing to do, it is the fiscally responsible thing to do. People who are homeless access the city's most expensive services: emergency room care, detox services, incarceration and emergency shelters. While Denver used to spend roughly \$70 million a year on these services, or about \$40,000 per individual, people can be moved into housing and receive treatment for only about \$15,000 a year per individual.³ Since the initiative began, we have been tracking homeless individuals who have entered inpatient treatment programs and now after five years, overall detox admissions for those clients who entered the program at the beginning of Denver's Road Home have been reduced by 75 percent.⁴ The Denver community understands there is a better way to give, and with the help of the Downtown Denver Partnership, panhandling along the 16th Street Mall decreased by 83% from 2006-2009.⁵

The Donation Meters and Better Way to Give Campaign provide an easy alternative to giving to panhandlers that instead supports long-term solutions. These donations provide not a hand-out, but a hand-up for those caught in the cycle of homelessness.

GOAL 1: Permanent and Transitional Housing

To date, Denver's Road Home has facilitated the development of 1,961 new units of affordable housing.⁶ In 2005, using a three year average, Denver's Road Home estimated that 942 units of housing were needed for the chronically homeless. In the first five years, 759 units of housing for the chronically homeless have been developed. This number of units represents enough housing for 81% of the chronically homeless that were estimated when the plan began. There are currently nearly 500 units in the housing pipeline; many of which will be completed by or before 2012.⁷

In 2008, the City issued a request for proposal to provide at least 200 units of permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless. Five projects were chosen, and City Council approved Proclamation No. 53, Series of 2008, which supported entering into agreements for the projects for future funding subject to annual Council approval. Significant progress was made on two of the housing developments this year. Fourth Quarter Apartments, at 3150 Downing Street, had a groundbreaking ceremony on May 3, 2010. This is new construction slated to be completed by January 2011. It will have 28 units set aside for Denver's Road Home and will house homeless veterans. Denver Gardens, at 6801 E. Mississippi Street, completed its renovations earlier in the year and had a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 17, 2010. This project provides housing for seniors and has 29 units set aside for Denver's Road Home. The three remaining housing developments are on track for completion over the next two years.

Our partners at the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) received 140 VASH vouchers in September 2009. The program is a cooperative partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program that provides long-term case management, supportive services and permanent housing support for homeless veterans.

The program was designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable homeless veterans. To be eligible for this program, veterans must be VA Health Care eligible, homeless and participate in case management services in order to obtain and sustain permanent independent community housing.

DHA has worked with Denver's Road Home and the Denver VA Hospital to implement and administer the new program. A unique collaboration was formed among the three organizations to serve the chronically homeless veterans who were identified from the Vulnerability Index (VI) survey conducted in Denver in February 2010 (more about the VI can be found under Goal 5). The majority of these men had been homeless for years, several over 10 years. Denver's Road Home worked with the Street Outreach teams to locate the men for referral to the VA, and then a priority was established by the VA for eligibility determination and by DHA to process their applications.

As of June 30, 2010, DHA had received 115 applications from the VA: 87 had been approved (includes 15 of the veterans identified by the VI), 75 had been issued vouchers and 33 of those had found housing and leased units (includes 6 of veterans identified from the VI).

The Faith Community has continued to support Denver's Road Home and through the Family and Senior Homeless Initiative (FSHI), 720 families and seniors have been mentored out of homelessness. Through these efforts, 89% of clients served have remained in permanent housing one year later.⁸

GOAL 2: Shelter System

Denver's Road Home, along with the Homeless Commission, is constantly monitoring the needs of the homeless community. We will continue to coordinate emergency cold weather shelters during winter months and to collaborate with our community to address gaps in the number of shelter beds year round. We are working together to ensure our community needs are being met and to effectively focus long-term efforts and goals.

GOAL 3: Prevention

Alongside our provider partners, Denver's Road Home has helped prevent more than 5,500 individuals and households from becoming homeless by connecting those in need to eviction and utility assistance.⁹ The Denver Human Services Homeless Outreach Benefits Teams and Veteran Services Office provide critical eviction and utility assistance to individuals and families in need. Additionally, each year the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) funds community organizations to provide critical prevention services. The RAC includes members from the private, public and foundation sectors as well as individuals who are currently or previously homeless and is responsible for guiding the request for proposals process, reviewing applications for funding and allocating funding to nonprofit agencies that provide services that respond specifically to the goals, objectives and outcomes of the Plan.

As discussed earlier in this report, federal stimulus dollars have also been tremendously helpful in providing prevention and rapid rehousing services to those at risk of becoming or staying homeless. Denver Human Services awarded \$3.4 million of the HPRP funds to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) as the sub grantee. CCH is working with nine sub recipients to carry out a variety of services with the results tracked in HMIS. Eligible services include rental assistance, security and utility deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, motel and hotel vouchers, case management, outreach and engagement, housing search and placement, legal services and credit repair.

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GOAL 4: Services

In the past 12 months, the Denver Human Services Homeless Benefits Teams and Veteran Services Office provided 313 households with first month's rent and deposit assistance and processed 1,884 food assistance applications.¹⁰

Even more, in May 2010, 900 volunteers gathered at Coors Field to help 808 clients connect with services at Project Homeless Connect 9 (PHC), our bi-annual event to connect the homeless to services and resources. To date, more than 6,000 clients have received assistance, information and resources at a PHC event.¹¹ It is estimated that close to \$2 million of services have been provided thus far during Denver's PHC events.¹²

GOAL 5: Public Safety and Outreach

Denver is part of the nationwide “100,000 Homes Campaign” whose goal is to identify and house the most vulnerable and long term homeless over the next three years. The campaign was launched in July 2010 by Common Ground at the Annual Conference of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The project calls for action to restore a sense of urgency about homelessness and join in a national movement to rapidly identify and house the most vulnerable.

In February 2010, Denver’s Road Home, in partnership with Common Ground, collaborated with homeless street outreach workers from the Denver Street Outreach Collaborative (St. Francis Center, Urban Peak, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless) and other volunteers from the community to create a name-by-name list of all those sleeping on the streets of Denver. The Vulnerability Index, used by cities that are part of the 100,000 Homes Campaign, identifies our most vulnerable homeless individuals based on various health risk factors. Over three nights, a team of 50 people encountered 219 people sleeping on the streets of Denver and 92 in cold weather emergency shelters. Of the 311, that we encountered, 276 agreed to participate in the survey.¹³

The Denver Street Outreach Collaborative (DSOC) is a critical component of Denver’s Road Home. Since 2007, DSOC has housed 1,330 men, women and youth through their street outreach efforts. Between January and June 2010, the DSOC housed 260 adults and youth. Of these, 100 were classified as chronic or highly vulnerable (as identified by the Vulnerability Index). Denver’s Road Home has targeted and prioritized the chronic and highly vulnerable homeless population for services throughout its plan.¹⁴

GOAL 6: Education, Training and Employment

The Denver’s Road Home Employment Subcommittee is comprised of 55 organizations related to helping homeless job seekers become employed and self-sufficient. Job seekers receive case management to assist with employment goals. Services include skills assessment, training, resume building, clothes, transportation and job search support. Job seekers working with collaborating Denver’s Road Home agencies have an employment retention rate of 73% over a nine-month period. Since the initiative began in 2005, 5,253 individuals have been placed in full or part-time jobs permanent jobs.¹⁵

GOAL 7: Community Awareness and Coordinated Response

Community participation and ownership of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homeless remains strong. Project Homeless Connect and the Donation Meter Project are two key ways we engage the community and raise awareness around issues of homelessness. There are 86 donation meters around downtown Denver and at Denver International Airport that raise awareness and have raised nearly \$100,000 per year through donations and sponsorships.¹⁶

Denver has been working with regional partners to address the issue of homelessness on a regional basis and has been engaged in efforts towards developing a regional plan.

Part of Denver’s Road Home success has been due to strong neighborhood dialogues between our providers and nearby residents. Because of the work these individuals and organizations do on a daily basis, collaboration around homeless needs in our community continues to remain strong thanks to strong communication and understanding.

GOAL 8: Zoning, Urban Design and Land Use

On June 21, 2010 the Denver City Council approved a new zoning code for Denver. This followed five years of work in which Denver's Road Home participated by engaging housing developers, funding agencies and affordable housing advocates in a comprehensive review of Denver's Zoning, building and housing codes to recommend changes in order to reduce the barriers to increasing affordable housing.¹⁷

Denver's \$15 million Transit Oriented Development Fund (TOD) has been created to support creation and preservation of over 1,000 affordable housing units through these strategic property acquisitions. Universal Lending Corporation and Enterprise Communities partner to raise and deploy capital for strategic property acquisitions. The first loan was closed in May 2010 to purchase the 36-unit Dahlia Street Apartments.¹⁸

LOOKING FORWARD

At the five-year mark, Denver's Road Home continues to be a national leader. Last spring, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) named Denver a national model for helping people who are homeless access benefits and services.

And yet we know that the most challenging work lies ahead. As we look towards the future, addressing the sustainability of this effort, particularly in these challenging economic times, remains a top priority. We are excited to meet this challenge head on by engaging in a new level of evaluation and continuing to engage in critical conversations with community leaders around sustainability to guide Denver's Road Home through and beyond the next five years.

Our regional partnerships will be refined over the coming year, and we continue to engage in national best practices. Denver's Road Home will look at aligning certain practices with the recently released national plan, Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.

Denver's Road Home has become a critical component in the fabric of the Denver community. At the halfway mark in Denver's mission to end homelessness, we are proud to be more than an initiative. Denver's efforts have solidified as the "way we do business." With strong leadership partners at the Denver Housing Authority and the Mile High United Way, we are more committed than ever to ending homelessness and restoring hope. And we thank you for your continued support!

For more information or updates, please visit www.DenversRoadHome.org.

SOURCES

- ¹ MDHI Point in Time Survey 2009
- ² Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- ³ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
- ⁴ Denver CARES
- ⁵ Downtown Denver Partnership
- ⁶ Denver Housing Authority
- ⁷ Denver Housing Authority
- ⁸ Family and Senior Homeless Initiative
- ⁹ Denver Human Services
- ¹⁰ Denver Human Services
- ¹¹ Denver's Road Home
- ¹² Lewis, Melanie. "A Valuation of Project Homeless Connect." Master's Thesis, University of Colorado at Denver, December 2009
- ¹³ Vulnerability Index Study
- ¹⁴ Denver Street Outreach Collaborative
- ¹⁵ Denver's Road Home Employment Subcommittee
- ¹⁶ Mile High United Way
- ¹⁷ Denver City Council
- ¹⁸ Denver Housing Authority

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