

Denver's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is this Plan going to cost?

A: The costs will be \$7.7 million in the first year and \$12.7 million per year thereafter. This is a small fraction of the \$70 million per year that the City & County of Denver currently pays for services to homeless people. And, studies show that providing "supportive housing" (housing coupled with supportive services, like healthcare, mental health and substance abuse counseling and employment training) pays for 90% of the costs associated with providing those services. Implementation of the Plan is the ethical *and* cost effective thing to do.

Q: What is the cost of this Plan on a per-person basis?

A: It currently costs Denver taxpayers over \$40,000 per homeless person per year while the person remains on the streets. Under Denver's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, the most intensive services and housing will cost \$14,512 per person in the first year (the cost of services and rental assistance decrease as the individual is able to return to work).

Q: Who will pay for the Plan and will the Plan require an eventual tax increase proposal to fund the programs?

A: Funding for the Plan will come 50% from the governmental sources, 25% from foundations and 25% from individuals and corporations. We do not have a plan for a new tax at this time.

Q: Is it realistic to think we can actually end homelessness?

A: Americans are able to achieve great things when we strive to do something that was once thought impossible. The same principle applies here -- we can end homelessness as we know it if we first have a vision and a plan. Other cities with similar plans have already reduced homelessness by 75% and are continuing to make significant progress. Denver is a part of this national effort and is committed to helping our nation become a place where all our citizens are treated with dignity.

Q: Will this plan get panhandlers off Denver's streets?

A: Experience shows that cities with combined services and enforcement have seen significant decreases in panhandling. The fastest way to stop panhandling, however, is for people to stop giving money. Panhandlers will get off the streets if you stop giving. We encourage you to give your dollars to the solution and not directly to panhandlers. For this reason, the Plan includes a public education campaign designed to discourage people from giving to panhandlers and to instead support long-term solutions that directly help/serve homeless people. It also includes additional ordinances to make laying in public illegal and to curtail some of the behaviors that occur in our City's downtown areas.

Q: Does this plan ask and expect enough of homeless people?

A: The Plan blends a compassionate "housing first" solution for people in need with a strategy of responsibility and self-reliance. For example, the Plan requires that people hold a job if they are able to work. It also requires that substance abusers enter treatment as a condition of receiving housing and that no person using illegal substances be allowed to stay in housing.

Q: Will the Plan make Denver a "magnet" or sanctuary for homeless persons, attracting them here from other cities?

A: There are over 195 communities across the country currently creating housing plans for homeless people in their community, eliminating the incentive for those individuals to relocate to Denver. Since adopting plans to end homelessness, Philadelphia has seen a 75% reduction in chronic homelessness in the past 7 years and San Francisco a 25% reduction in chronic homelessness in the past 18 months. Further, Denver Human Services is coordinating with neighboring counties through the Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative (MDHI) to implement a regional strategy for ending homelessness in the metro-area. It stands to reason that Denver will see fewer homeless people as the regional homeless population drops.

Q: Will homeless persons who are illegally in the country be provided services under this Plan?

A: Implementation of the Plan will be in accordance with federal immigration laws. It is important to note, however, that the majority of homeless people are not illegal immigrants. Our goal of decreasing homelessness by 75% over 5 years can be achieved without ever extending services to an illegal immigrant.

Q: What does this Plan do for homeless persons who don't want services or refuse to participate in them?

A: There will be consequences based on behavior. Individuals will ultimately be arrested if they continue to live in parks, panhandle aggressively and refuse services.

Q: Will the new housing units for homeless people be massive housing "projects"? Will they put neighborhoods at risk and drive down property values?

A: The era of large government housing "projects" is long over. When the government supports any large developments, they are mixed-use developments that enhance a neighborhood's quality of living for all residents. And, experience tells us that developing facilities for people who were formerly homeless has not hurt property values due in part to intensive monitoring.

Q: As an honest, hard-working, tax-paying citizen of Denver, what does this Plan ask and expect of me?

- Call 2-1-1 and become a volunteer or give to ending homelessness
- Please do NOT give to panhandlers and advise your friends against giving. Give instead to solutions that will have a lasting impact on the lives of homeless people.
- Encourage groups and organizations where you are a member to get involved in mentoring a family that is homeless.
- Consider helping a person permanently exit the streets by offering a job for a person who is working to get off the streets.
- Give to solutions to homelessness through the Community Campaign managed by Mile High United Way visit www.unitewaydenver.org and click on "Donate Now" to donate to programs that will have a lasting impact on the lives of panhandlers and the homeless.