



Executive Summary: Year Four

When Denver's Road Home was started four years ago, the Homeless Commission could never have anticipated a year like we just had. Who could ever imagine that our economy would shift into a global recession unlike anything we have ever experienced? And yet, in the midst of unparalleled economic shifts, there comes great opportunity. We believe that there has never been a more important time for Denver to have a plan... a plan to end homelessness as we know it.

During the past year our homeless plan has been tested and we expect the coming year will continue to pose new challenges for us. Housing foreclosures, unemployment and funding cutbacks will continue to place new demands on our ten-year plan to end homelessness. As a result, we asked the Homeless Commission to update our plan so we can respond swiftly and efficiently to the changing needs of our homeless community. As we move into Year Five of Denver's Road Home, our community must now, more than ever, work together to ensure that every homeless man, woman and child has an alternative to living life on the streets.

We have been asked lately if the economy is going to impact the progress we are making to end homelessness as we know it in ten years. To this we say that we have never been more determined to move this initiative forward. Just look at the numbers:

- In the past four years in partnership with this community we have developed over 1,500 new units of housing for the homeless.
- We have prevented over 2,232 families from becoming homeless and 3,278 homeless people have obtained employment.
- The faith community continues to stand by our side, and four years later, we can proudly say that we have mentored 564 families out of homelessness in partnership with one another.
- In partnership with the Mile High United Way we have achieved our aggressive fundraising goal of \$46.1 million dollars in the first four years of the plan.
- And, in the midst of one of our most challenging economic climates, we have 500 new units of affordable housing in the pipeline that will be developed over the next two years!

Indeed, it has been a challenging year, but one with great victories and promise for the future of this important community initiative. As a result of significant cost savings to the community through Denver's Road Home, Denver City Council responded and passed a proclamation supporting the development of 482 new units of affordable housing.

And what an exciting opportunity it was for us to showcase our success during the Democratic National Convention, putting the national spotlight on the work we have done to create new housing and services for the homeless men, women and children of this community.

These are just a handful of reasons that we are urging the Denver community to continue to embrace Denver's Road Home and remain focused on housing, services and prevention. Denver has a plan, and in Year Five it is critical that we move this plan forward to end homelessness as we know it.

Background

Denver's Road Home (www.denversroadhome.org) began in October 2003 in response to an increasing rise in homeless persons in the City & County of Denver and a mounting increase in public safety concerns. At that time, Mayor Hickenlooper convened a commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive plan seeking to address the root causes of homelessness and bring an end to homelessness for the Denver community. This plan is unique in its approach to not just serve the chronically homeless, but to offer opportunities and hope to all persons living on the street, in shelters or doubled up with friends and family in Denver, with a singular emphasis on persons and families whose incomes are at or below 30% area median income (those most in need and hardest to serve).

Forty-one commissioners and 350 community volunteers conducted a comprehensive research and planning process over the course of 18 months to develop a plan with eight primary goals focused on:

- Permanent and transitional housing
- Emergency shelter systems
- Prevention
- Services
- Public Safety and Outreach
- Education, Training & Employment
- Community Awareness & Coordinated Responses
- Zoning, Urban Design & Land Use

The plan was approved by Denver City Council and Mayor Hickenlooper in 2005 and was implemented in July 2005. For this plan to be successful, it is imperative that the community (public and private sectors, the foundation community, faith-based organizations, service delivery providers, community members and service recipients) own this initiative and continue to mobilize resources in order to achieve the ambitious goals affect systemic change.

From the beginning the citizens of Denver were promised a plan with achievable and sustainable goals with measurable action steps, as well as a plan that emphasizes collaborative efforts and accountability from all people of the Denver community. To this end, national evaluators specializing in research and assessment in the field of homeless issues have agreed to oversee the evaluation. Moreover, Denver is now part of a Model Cities program funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to study best practices across the nation.

We believe the end result has both compassion and accountability. We worked to create a balance of service delivery such as housing, treatment services and job training with the expectation of responsibility and self-reliance from those who receive services (for example, participants must participate in social service programs and pay 30% of their income for housing).

Four Ways to Help: Visit Our Website at www.DenversRoadHome.org and...

1. Sponsor a Project Homeless Connect
2. Write a check or make an online donation
3. Mentor a family
4. Sponsor a meter or Participate in PJ Day!

Contact for Denver's Road Home: *Jamie Van Leeuwen*, Executive Director; 1200 Federal Boulevard, Denver, Colorado 80204; Phone: 720-944-2506; Fax: 720-944-1346; jamie.vanleeuwen@denvergov.org; www.denversroadhome.org