

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mayor’s Committee on Homelessness’ plan to impact homelessness, *Welcome Home Billings*, has been designed to increase overall collaborative efforts and resources to assist the most vulnerable population in our community.

There are at least 600 homeless individuals in Billings on any given day; some are veterans, many are disabled, and most are challenged with addictions. Almost 80 families are currently experiencing homelessness locally, and 42% of these families are American Indian. Many of the homeless in Billings are working either part or full time, but cannot maintain housing. Most of the homeless individuals in Billings have lived here at least two years; many have lived here their whole lives.

The costs to serve the homeless are exorbitant. Each homeless person costs over \$15,000 per year in public services. Each chronically homeless individual costs an estimated \$115,000 to serve in a year. **With nearly 2,400 people experiencing homelessness in Billings each year, the costs exceed \$54 million annually.** It is less expensive to house the homeless than to leave them on the streets. *Welcome Home Billings* includes recommendations for cross-cutting strategic goals and outlines programmatic strategic goals and priorities.

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIC GOALS			
COLLABORATION			
Join community partners with resources to address homelessness intervention and prevention efforts and facilitate partnerships to improve collaboration, service array, leveraging and capacity.			
AWARENESS			
Increase advocacy and public knowledge on behalf of the homeless.			
ACCOUNTABILITY			
Ensure innovation, fiscal responsibility and long-term effectiveness for projects and programs.			
SUSTAINABILITY			
Ensure high standards for management, accountability and performance measurement.			
PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIC GOALS & PRIORITIES			
HOUSING	PREVENTION	SERVICES	ASSETS
Increase the city’s supply of affordable housing.	Provide adequate emergency homeless prevention programs.	Expand treatment / service capacity and linkage to essential services.	Increase personal income levels and economic opportunities.

Welcome Home Billings is a plan for our community. Impacting homelessness will require a community-wide effort and must involve: individuals experiencing homelessness, social service providers, community leaders, professionals and business owners. The plan does not report on every service designed to impact homelessness in our community, nor does it attempt to provide direction for all poverty impact services in Billings. This plan has been designed to provide information, data and recommendations to guide overall efforts.

To impact homelessness in Billings over the next ten years, the Mayor’s Committee on Homelessness supports enhancing housing and service solutions that actually work and are sustainable over time. We need more housing, better service coordination, additional work opportunities and responsible discharge planning. We need the community to assist in efforts to serve our neighbors in specific community initiatives, including: the expansion of the social enterprise model; involving businesses in community impact efforts; supporting workforce development and assisting in analyzing the cost-benefits of current services. Collectively, we can make a difference.

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is an issue that affects everyone in our community. From the emotional and physical toll homelessness takes on an individual experiencing it, to the financial toll it takes on everyone else; not one of us is truly sheltered from the effects of homelessness. We may not recognize the face of homelessness in our city, which not only affects chronically homeless individuals making their home on the streets – the most visible members of the homeless population – but it also makes its appearance in our schools, amongst our veterans, working parents and neighbors who are stretched just a little too far by daily expenses or overwhelming circumstances. The need for supportive and preventative services is diverse and growing, and the responsibility rests with the community.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has challenged states and cities nationwide to create ten-year plans to end chronic homelessness. USICH is primarily responsible for providing leadership and facilitation of efforts which are targeted to assist homeless individuals and families. USICH provides planning for federal activities, monitoring assistance for the homeless through federal and local channels, technical assistance for communities, and delivers information on federal resources for the homeless.

The Montana Council on Homelessness is a state-level council appointed by the Governor of Montana under Executive Order. The initial council was appointed in 2004 by Governor Judy Martz after a team of stakeholders attended a 2003 Policy Academy on Chronic Homelessness. The initial Council enlisted over 100 volunteers and crafted a draft ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness and to reduce homelessness overall by 2014. Governor Brian Schweitzer amended the Executive Order and appointed new members in 2007. The 2007 Council has reviewed, revised and adopted the state's ten-year plan. The goals of the Council have included prioritizing and enhancing access to mainstream services and to permanent affordable housing for persons who are homeless, as well as preventing homelessness and strengthening political will. One of the Council's strategies was initiating a relationship with a city, through which state-level technical assistance and resources could work in concert with community-level efforts to address homelessness.

The City of Billings was chosen as a pilot project by the Montana Council on Homelessness to begin a ten-year planning process, with the ultimate goal of creating a replicable plan to end chronic homelessness in Billings. The initiative was dubbed *Welcome Home Billings*. Strategic planning sessions were facilitated in Billings by the Montana Council on Homelessness in November 2005 and March 2006 to coordinate the efforts of over 80 individuals interested in addressing homelessness on a local level.

Staff from the City of Billings' Community Development Division approached Mayor Ron Tussing regarding city support for the initiative and acceptance of the "pilot project" challenge. Mayor Tussing responded with strong support. A resolution was drafted to support the initiative and the Billings City Council appointed twenty committee members to spearhead efforts to develop a ten-year plan in April 2006. The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has been meeting monthly since June 2006 and has been successful in efforts to gather data, implement national best practices, and involve the community in planning efforts.

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness is dedicated to inclusive community participation. Membership of the Committee represent broad stakeholder groups including housing and service providers, civic and business leaders, economic and work force agencies, faith-based organizations, philanthropy groups, homeless individuals (participants), and other interested parties.

Facts about Homelessness

Researching available data brought to light many interesting demographic and characteristic points:

- Almost **one-third of the homeless in Billings are employed** either part-time or full-time.
- Based on service utilization, the **estimated cost for serving one homeless person for one year in Billings is \$15,534.**
- If 2,000 homeless people lived in Billings for one full year, the cost would exceed **\$31 million annually.**
- **Families with children** are among the fastest growing homeless sub-populations in Montana.
- In 2008-2009, Billings School District #2 identified **413 homeless children in Billings**, and the majority were 5 - 8 years old.
- The Billings *Healthcare for the Homeless* program served over **1,000 homeless individuals per year** on average from 2006 through 2008.
- Service providers conservatively estimate over 2,000 homeless individuals and families move through Billings during the course of one year.
- Being homeless can decrease a person's life expectancy by up to **40 years.**
- The death rate for homeless men is **four times** that of the general population.
- Death amongst homeless women aged 18 - 44 is **ten times** more likely than among women in the general population.
- In Billings, **half of the homeless are actively seeking a place to live** and permanent housing is their first choice of housing options.



Photo by Brenda Beckett



Photo courtesy of Interfaith Hospitality Network



Photo by Miranda Dye

Estimating the Number of Homeless Individuals in Billings

The point-in-time survey conducted in Billings documented an average of 600 homeless individuals in the city during the course of a single day. Sixty-three percent of the individuals surveyed met the HUD definition of homelessness, which excludes those living with others or in motels. Although survey data suggests a downward trend in the number of homeless people surveyed through recent years, Healthcare for the Homeless staff report over a thousand different people received services on average over the past three years (2006 through 2008) and conservatively estimate 2,000 homeless individuals are in Billings each year. Staff members at a local drop-in center, The HUB, agree with this estimate.

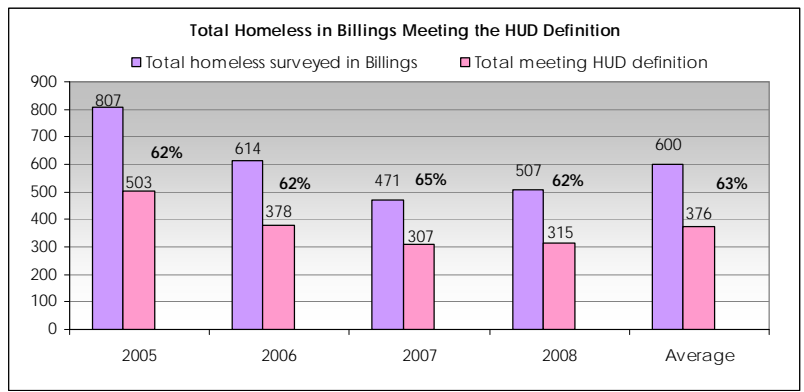
The Corporation for Supportive Housing has issued a tool to assist communities in estimating the need for supportive housing units utilizing point-in-time estimates. As the count in Billings is conducted in January, inclement weather plays a factor in the ability to gain an accurate count throughout Montana. To estimate the number of homeless individuals in Billings for the purposes of ten-year planning, projecting to an annual estimate sans personal information is a viable estimating tool. Multipliers for point-in-time survey to annual projections range from 2.39 to 6.12. In the example below, Billings is utilizing 3.99, which is in the lower range for projections.

Identifier	Definitions	Number
A	PIT count of currently homeless people, including adults and children	600*
B	Number of adults and children who were counted in shelters	172*
C	Average LOS for emergency shelter	28**
D	Correction factor, more than 1 shelter stay in 12 month period	0.20*
Formula: $A + ((B * 365 / C) * (1 - D)) = \text{Annual Estimate}$		
$600 + ((172 * 365 / 28) * (1 - 0.20)) = 2,394$ Homeless Individuals in Billings in One Year		

*Point-In-Time Survey, averaged over the past four years
 **As reported by the homeless, 2007 Billings Addendum

The average multiplier for point-in-time to annual calculations noted in the Corporation for Supportive Housing study is 4.16, which would indicate Billings has an estimated 2,496 homeless individuals per year. For the purposes of this ten-year plan, the more conservative 2,394 figure will be utilized to estimate the costs and impact of homelessness in Billings.

Roughly 63% of the individuals identified in the survey meet the HUD definition of homelessness. Using the more conservative estimate above, this would equate to 1,508 individuals meeting the HUD homeless definition in Billings per year, making them eligible for HUD-funded housing and service opportunities.



**Cost to Serve the Homeless:
Billings Addendum to the Survey of the Homeless - 2007**

The cost of homelessness can be quite high for those experiencing homelessness and for taxpayers subsidizing public systems. During the course of a year, a chronically homeless individual often cycles through public systems including shelters, jail, addiction/mental health treatment facilities, and emergency medical centers.

The *Billings Addendum*, a supplemental survey administered in tandem with the Montana Continuum of Care point-in-time survey (January 2007, see appendices), gave respondents an opportunity to report on service usage for the year 2006. The survey asked homeless individuals the number of days services were utilized, including transitional shelter, emergency shelter, chemical dependency treatment, mental health treatment, medical treatment and jail/prison.

Homelessness takes a great physical, emotional, and financial toll on the community.

It costs over **\$15,000** to serve a homeless individual for one year.

According to the individuals surveyed, it costs an average of \$15,534 to serve one individual experiencing homelessness in Billings for one year. Estimated annual costs reported via the *Billings Addendum* are exorbitant. If 2,394 individuals stayed in Billings for the average length of residency (as determined by the overall population), the costs to serve these individuals exceeds \$26 million.

The *Billings Addendum* was completed by homeless individuals who may not be able to provide accurate data regarding length of stay and services utilized. Discrepancies in length of stay and utilization frequency exist between what the homeless report and the experience of social service providers.

The Community Crisis Center, a service provider created to provide an alternative to emergency room admission for those suffering from mental health or substance abuse related crises, recently concluded data analysis on several individuals who have been identified as chronically homeless. Public costs to serve the chronically homeless are roughly seven times the costs of serving the overall homeless population.

<i>Estimated Costs to Serve the Chronically Homeless in 2008</i>			
Service	Cost	Client A	Client B
Crisis Center Visit	\$294 / Visit	44 Visits = \$12,936	54 Visits = \$15,876
Ambulance	\$900 / Ride	15 Rides = \$13,500	20 Rides = \$18,000
Emergency Room	\$1,500 / Visit	35 Visits = \$52,500	40 Visits = \$60,000
Psychiatric Hospital	\$2,200 / Day	18 Days = \$39,600	N / A
Jail & Psychotropic Medications	\$80 / Day	85 Days = \$6,800	N / A
Jail Without Psychotropic Medications	\$60 / Day	N / A	30 Days = \$1,800
Chemical Dependency - Outpatient	\$70 / Day	N / A	3 Days = \$210
Shelter Care	\$38 / Day	N / A	241 Days = \$9,158
TOTAL ANNUAL PUBLIC COST:		\$126,336	\$105,044

Averaging the above estimates, it costs the taxpayers \$115,690 to serve one chronically homeless person for one year. The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness conservatively estimates there are 2,394 homeless people in Billings over the course of a year, and if 12% are chronically homeless, there are an estimated 287 chronically homeless people in Billings utilizing

\$33,203,030 in public services each year. Since the majority of the chronically homeless have resided in the Billings area for more than a year (87%), pro-rating the costs to serve the chronically homeless only reduce the total amount by a small amount (\$30,946,784).

The estimated cost to serve the chronically homeless with public services in Billings is nearly **\$31 million**

To obtain a more accurate cost to serve the homeless in Billings, the population should be adjusted by both "overall" and "chronically homeless" categories. The overall annual homeless population, not including the chronically homeless, is estimated at 2,107 individuals. This figure should be multiplied by \$15,534, the average cost of serving one homeless person for a year. The totals are then adjusted by length of stay, which would total \$23,345,185. Adding this figure to the total cost to serve the chronically homeless, adjusted for length of stay, totals \$54,291,969. If the population in Billings is 102,000, each citizen in Billings is contributing an estimated \$532 each year to support the needs of the homeless in our community.

The annual cost to serve the homeless in Billings is estimated to exceed **\$54 million**

What may be true for Billings is evident across the nation. The Wichita / Sedgwick County Task Force to End Chronic Homelessness reports the cost of serving the homeless is from \$28,045 to \$42,075. The National Alliance to End Homelessness reports homeless individuals with serious mental illness utilized over \$40,000 annually in publicly-funded services.

Recent studies suggest homeless families cost as much in public services as the chronically homeless. Many national studies have demonstrated the cost effectiveness of housing individuals and families in lieu of expensive public systems. Permanent housing arrangements would not only be financially beneficial to the city, and a majority (58%) of the homeless surveyed in Billings indicated that permanent or permanent supportive housing would be their first choice for living arrangements. Respondents also indicated that rental and utility assistance, employment and transportation are the services that are most needed in order to end homelessness for them.

Communities across the nation have joined forces to implement housing and service solutions and efforts have been supported by existing data regarding the cost-effectiveness of implementing ten-year plans to impact homelessness.

Panhandling

There has been great concern throughout the City of Billings regarding panhandling. Some citizens give generously to panhandlers, hoping to help someone in need. Others express anger and frustration about the effect panhandling has on the city and its business owners. For many, panhandling and homelessness are equated.

The two issues are, of course, related, but perhaps not as closely as one might think. Homelessness is an extremely complex issue, and the vast majority of the homeless population are neither visible on the streets, nor are they amongst those who panhandle.



Photo by Julia Guarino

Researchers at the University of Toronto conducted a survey of the panhandling population in the downtown areas of Toronto. Individuals surveyed reported earning a median income of \$300 per month from panhandling; approximately half of their total monthly income (including other sources) reported. **Twenty-four percent of those surveyed reported that they were not homeless**, while 65% reported living in a shelter or on the street. Food was the number one reported expense, followed by tobacco, and alcohol / illicit drugs.

Researchers acknowledge that their findings differ from other sources, including the work of John Stackhouse, “a journalist who briefly lived on the street in Toronto working as a panhandler and who reported that panhandlers can earn more than \$200 per day and typically spend ‘almost all their begging money on their addictions’ and very little on food.” They conclude that this disparity may be explained by the assumption that panhandlers with higher earnings were less likely to participate in the study. It must also be acknowledged that self-reported earnings and spending may not be completely accurate.

Table 3: Income and spending among panhandlers in Toronto

Income or spending	Median (interquartile range), \$
Hourly income from panhandling	8 (4.25–15)
Daily income from panhandling*	30 (15–50)
Monthly income from panhandling	300 (150–600)
Monthly income from all other sources†	200 (20–568)
Total monthly income	638 (350–1179)
Monthly spending	
Food	200 (80–400)
Housing‡	0 (0–400)
Tobacco	112 (32–160)
Alcohol and/or illicit drugs	80 (0–600)
All other items§	120 (22–335)

*Median time spent panhandling per day was 6.3 h (interquartile range 4.0–8.3 h).
 †Includes welfare, disability and other government payments (n = 23), selling newspapers or other items on the street, busking and/or wages from jobs (n = 14), receiving money from friends or family (n = 13) and other sources of income (n = 3).
 ‡Among the 24 subjects who reported any spending on rent or housing in the past month, median monthly spending for housing was \$400 (interquartile range \$183–488).
 §Includes transportation, clothing and laundry, personal care items and money given to friends.

CMAJ. 2002 September 3; 167(5): 477–479

Michael Scott, Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, writes that reported earnings range from \$20 per day to as much as \$300 per day. Although some money panhandled is used for food and other necessities, much of money earned goes toward alcohol, drugs and tobacco. An article by John Tierney of the New York Times reporting on the work of the Times Square Consortium for the Homeless echoes this sentiment, claiming that data indicates 80% of panhandlers’ abuse drugs and alcohol, and 30% are mentally ill.

Panhandling in Billings may not primarily support food and other necessities, as there are a large number of resources in Billings for those in need. Fifteen providers make food assistance available to their clients, 13 provide sack lunches; food and assistance for other necessities are available in abundance.

The Downtown Billings Business Improvement District (BID) spearheaded a response to solicitation through city ordinance to address the panhandling situation in Billings. The Aggressive Solicitation Ordinance bans aggressive solicitation and restricts commercial solicitation, including placing limits on the locations and hours of the day in which an individual is permitted to panhandle.

Officer Shane Winden, a Billings bicycle police officer, has become familiar with the homeless and panhandling population in the downtown area. Officer Winden has been trained in crisis-intervention and works to assist people he encounters to access services. He is also responsible for ordinance enforcement in the downtown area, and reports an estimated 90% of the individuals he encounters panhandling utilize the money they receive to purchase alcohol, tobacco or drugs. He also reports that about half of the individuals panhandling in downtown Billings are not homeless, although some may have been asked to leave by family members who cannot bear their addictions. With Officer Winden's presence and the passage of a Panhandling Ordinance, incidences of panhandling downtown have reduced dramatically. Unfortunately, panhandling still takes place in the western areas of the city.

The BID has also taken the lead in implementing an effective awareness and fundraising campaign in the fall of 2005, *Spare Change for Real Change*. This program aims to provide an alternative to citizens who give to panhandlers. Donations benefit service providers and donation boxes have been distributed to local participating businesses. The BID expects to unveil a set of recycled parking meters as donation meters throughout the City of Billings in the fall of 2009.

One-Way Tickets Home - Floating the Homeless

Providing transportation funding as a way to impact homelessness generates strong reactions from city governments attempting to address the countless issues that come with serving the homeless. Local social service providers note that homeless individuals and families certainly come to Billings from other cities; they provide assistance with transportation to other cities within the state and across the nation.

In Bozeman, an article written by David Nolt regarding "floating" the homeless was published in *New West Bozeman* (2007). Mr. Nolt writes in his article, *Bozeman's Lack of Homeless Shelter Strains Nearby Cities*, "It is not often a discussed fact that Bozeman has a history of escorting - or 'floating' - transients and the homeless out-of-town, most commonly via the Greyhound bus to proxy shelters in the nearby cities of Butte and Helena". Since this article was published, a shelter was opened in Bozeman to serve the homeless. Local service providers report the "traveling homeless" know what cities in Montana, and across the nation, provide the best services.

Other cities have implemented the "one way ticket home" model. The City of New York has paid for over 500 families to leave the city since 2007. This program sends people all over the world, offering assistance in obtaining passports, visas and other legal paperwork. The State of Hawaii recently responded to the mainland "floating" of the homeless to the islands with proposed legislation, H.B. 1187 in early 2009. The intent of the bill was supported by the Hawaii Public Housing Authority for this "return-to-home" program. This legislation was not passed in primarily due to cost.

While returning individuals and families to their home communities may provide relief for some cities, supporting "floating" practices without providing necessary resources and supports for individual and family success is counter-productive to resolving the homeless crisis across the nation.

Recommendations

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness supports assisting individuals return to their home communities if they so desire, but only if adequate supports and planning are completed to provide needed services upon their arrival.

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness recommends the expansion of the *Spare Change for Real Change* program as an effective marketing and fundraising campaign directly impacting panhandling across the city. Target areas include King Avenue and 24th Street West. The campaign should include signage that can be viewed by vehicle and should be located in front of businesses experiencing high solicitation traffic. This largely commercialized area is frequented by travelers from neighboring states who may not have experience witnessing repeated claims made by panhandlers "trying to get to Oklahoma" for several consecutive years.

SECTION FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Ten-Year Plan to Impact Homelessness is an overarching framework that outlines community progress required to achieve the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in our community. This framework will serve to guide the development of bi-annual (two-year) Action Plans, in which the responsible parties and funding sources for each goal will be identified, and more detailed action steps will be developed.

Performance Measurements

The ten-year plan is based on data gathering, research and analysis to determine the types of homeless services needed in the community in addition to facilitation of plan implementation. A completed housing project at the end of the three-year period would also be a mid-term goal. Long term goals can be measured by the decreasing number of homeless individuals in our community.

Impact will be measured by the number of initiative participants and organizations, amount of secured and leveraged funding to support various initiatives, the number of grants obtained to secure housing and other homeless services, and the number of homeless individuals and families served with projects. Addressing homelessness in a large-scale, cooperative, and inclusive manner furthers the mission of the Community Development Division and the Billings community. This mission includes reducing service duplication, increasing service coordination, identifying and prioritizing gaps in services, and increasing leveraging opportunities for funding.

Plan Development

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness' report, *A New Vision: What is in Community Plans to End Homelessness?*, most plans target all homeless people including high-cost cohorts such as the chronically homeless and families. Only one-third of plans exclusively target the chronically homeless.

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has completed data analysis on a wide range of cohorts to better understand the different populations utilizing services in Billings. Strategies identified, including the development of specific housing types, can be generally applied to most cohorts.

The ten essential strategies published by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (*Ten Essentials to Ending Homelessness*) include:

- Creating a ten-year plan
- Creating a data system to monitor trends
- Emergency Prevention Programs
- Streamlining mainstream programs to prevent homelessness
- Street Outreach

EXCERPTS FROM WELCOME HOME BILLINGS FOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

- Shortening the time people spend homeless and decreasing the number of times they are homeless
- Rapid re-housing strategies
- Treatment and supportive services
- Ensuring an adequate supply of permanent housing
- Assisting the homeless in securing employment and/or benefits

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness' ten-year plan includes the above strategies, based on the needs of the community as identified through data gathering and participation efforts. Concepts may require additional planning efforts in the future, especially for Safe Haven housing or other types of "low-demand" housing.

Strategic Framework Overview

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has developed a set of overarching strategic goals that will guide the Committee and its partners in designing and implementing two-year action plans and related initiatives. These *cross-cutting strategic goals* were developed in consideration for the committee's vision; no one in Billings has to be homeless:

- **Collaboration:** Join community partners with resources to address homelessness intervention and prevention efforts and facilitate partnerships to improve collaboration, service array, leveraging and capacity.
- **Awareness:** Increase advocacy and public knowledge on behalf of the homeless.
- **Accountability:** Ensure high standards for management, accountability and performance measurement.
- **Sustainability:** Ensure innovation, fiscal responsibility and long-term effectiveness for projects and programs.

The Committee has also developed a set up *programmatic strategic goals and priorities*, for the further development of resources and programs to address the needs of the homeless / near-homeless. These goals / priorities are:

- **Housing:** Increase the city's supply of decent, affordable housing.
- **Prevention:** Provide adequate emergency homeless prevention programs.
- **Services:** Expand treatment / service capacity and linkage to essential services.
- **Assets:** Increase personal income levels and economic opportunities.

WELCOME HOME BILLINGS

Strategic Framework

Ten-year Plan to Impact Homelessness

Vision: No one in Billings has to be homeless. Everyone in Billings has access to tools and opportunities for safe, appropriate and affordable housing.

Mission: The Mayor’s Committee on Homelessness has partnered with local organizations and community members to develop and implement a comprehensive ten-year plan in the pursuit of ending chronic homelessness in the Billings community.

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIC GOALS

COLLABORATION	A: Join community partners with resources to address homelessness intervention and prevention efforts and facilitate partnerships to improve collaboration, service array, leveraging and capacity.	
	A1:	Develop resources for funding homeless initiatives and coordinate grant efforts.
	A2:	Support Project Homeless Connect as an annual event.
	A3:	Support the Billings Area Resource Network as a working homeless services / advisory body for the Mayor’s Committee on Homelessness.
	A4:	Support the Business Consortium for Social Change to involve businesses in impacting the homeless / near-homeless.
	A5:	Create modes of communication between partnering organizations to facilitate coordination, avoid duplication, and increase collaboration to maximize resources.
AWARENESS	B: Increase advocacy and public knowledge on behalf of the homeless.	
	B1:	Utilize the ten-year plan to provide guidance regarding homeless policy for local, state, and federal entities.
	B2:	Increase understanding of the causes and economic realities of homelessness through targeted public awareness campaigns for homeless projects and service events.
	B3:	Promote understanding and respect for all people experiencing homelessness.
	B4:	Provide venues for those experiencing homelessness to have their ideas and concerns heard.
ACCOUNTABILITY	C: Ensure innovation, fiscal responsibility and long-term effectiveness for projects and programs.	
	C1:	Support both prevention and intervention modalities for projects and programs.
	C2:	Closely monitor trends in the needs of the homeless and near-homeless in Billings in order to respond to community need.
	C3:	Research innovation in homeless services and facilitate capacity-building with local service providers and community organizations to implement improved services.
	C4:	Support education efforts for case management, mentoring and services.
SUSTAINABILITY	D: Ensure high standards for management, accountability and performance measurement.	
	D1:	Embrace public involvement, comment and input for ten-year planning and project development efforts.
	D2:	Ensure performance measurements are implemented with each project and data is gathered and analyzed on a routine basis.
	D3:	Evaluate projects for long-term sustainability as part of the routine processes prior to endorsement or facilitation.
	D4:	Evaluate cost-effectiveness, essential services, and long-term business resource planning for all projects.
	D5:	Embrace public involvement, comment and input for ten-year planning and project development efforts.

Cross-Cutting Strategic Goals

GOAL A: COLLABORATION - *Join community partners with resources to address homelessness intervention and prevention efforts and facilitate partnerships to improve collaboration, service array, leveraging and capacity.*

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has successfully implemented and supported several initiatives it considers essential to effectively addressing homelessness in the Billings community. Project Homeless Connect, a national best practice, is a one-stop one-day event where providers from across the city come together in one location. The committee successfully implemented this event for three consecutive years, and has now decided to support the BARN in taking on the event.

The BARN was successfully established by the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness and now functions independently to address direct needs and take action on behalf of service providers in the city, while communication between the two entities is maintained through duplicated membership.

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has additionally identified the need to involve local businesses interested in social impact, and is planning to support the development of a Business Consortium for Social Change through capacity building efforts facilitated by the Billings Metro VISTA Project (MVP).

GOAL B: AWARENESS - *Increase advocacy and public knowledge on behalf of the homeless.*

As an essential component to successful implementation of projects and initiatives taken on by the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness, the committee acknowledges the need for a concerted effort to educate the public in order to garner support for the work of the committee and for the end goal, of ending homelessness in our community. This will be the special work of the Public Relations sub-committee, but will be considered in the entire committee's every effort.

GOAL C: ACCOUNTABILITY - *Ensure high standards for management, accountability and performance measurement.*

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness is dedicated to responsible, transparent development and implementation of all initiatives undertaken and supported by the group. To this end, the committee holds public meetings and continually researches best practices nationwide as measures for evaluation and suggestion for project development.

GOAL D: SUSTAINABILITY - *Ensure innovation, fiscal responsibility and long-term effectiveness for projects and programs.*

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness undertakes all efforts with the expectation that they will act as a catalyst for long-term change in the community; therefore, the committee has organized conferences and discussions, and members continue to research and inform one another about best practices developed across the nation for addressing homelessness. The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness will continue to incorporate knowledge gained into projects and initiatives they undertake, while sharing knowledge with the rest of the community. Additionally, the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness is determined to ensure effectiveness of every initiative in addressing the specific needs of the Billings community being served.

WELCOME HOME BILLINGS

Strategic Framework

Ten-year Plan to Impact Homelessness

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIC GOALS & PRIORITIES

HOUSING		PREVENTION		SERVICES		ASSETS	
E: Increase the city's supply of decent, affordable housing.		F: Provide adequate emergency homeless prevention programs.		G: Expand treatment /service capacity and linkage to essential services.		H: Increase personal income levels and economic opportunities.	
E1:	Increase supportive housing units, permanent rentals, transitional housing units, veterans housing, emergency shelter beds, housing for those returning from prison and those in recovery.	F1:	Increase funding dedicated to rent, utilities and mortgage assistance.	G1:	Expand coordinated intensive case management and street outreach services for the homeless.	H1:	Increase access to social service and income benefits by ensuring assistance is provided to complete applications.
E2:	Seek federal, state and local funding sources to support affordable housing development for households with very low income (0 - 30% Area Median Income).	F2:	Support incentive programs for landlords to rent to the homeless or those at risk for homelessness, and increase service provider capacity to engage in long-term leasing and / or rental ownership.	G2:	Increase assistance to complete applications and facilitate application streamlining to access services, transportation, employment and housing.	H2:	Support asset development, education, job training, and employment opportunities serving the homeless (and those at risk of homelessness) throughout the community.
E3:	Build local service provider capacity for affordable housing development, management and housing rehabilitation.	F3:	Support pre-release / discharge planning education and intervention for all institutional services including foster care, prison, jail and behavioral health facilities.	G3:	Increase availability and capacity of health care, mental health, substance abuse services, medication assistance and access to legal assistance to the very low income / uninsured.	H3:	Establish mentoring support systems, life skills training, and childcare assistance to the homeless (and those at risk of homelessness) currently in the workforce.
E4:	Provide Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) capacity-building opportunities through the City's Community Development Division.	F4:	Utilize <i>housing first</i> and <i>rapid re-housing</i> philosophies in developing housing options to shorten homelessness.	G4:	Support increases in capacity for day center operations across the city.	H4:	Support the expansion of financial fitness and credit assistance programs.
E5:	Decrease barriers to obtaining existing housing units and refine housing placement services and coordination.	F5:	Support case management efforts to transition occupants from shelter care to permanent supportive housing.	G5:	Support expansion of community-based, criminal justice diversion programs.	H5:	Promote fair wage rates and competitive bidding through the expansion of social enterprise efforts.
E6:	Facilitate collaborative grant and loan applications for affordable housing development to serve the homeless.	F6:	Support landlord-tenant intervention to prevent eviction.	G6:	Establish one-stop shop to access all services for the homeless.	H6:	Increase financial management services for those in need.

Programmatic Strategic Goals & Priorities

GOAL E: HOUSING - Expand available decent, affordable housing.

The Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has identified housing as the greatest need and the most powerful tool for ending homelessness in the Billings community. Housing is needed to serve all homeless sub-populations including individuals and families with varying degrees of case management and services. Barriers preventing housing access must be addressed, and local service provider capacity and resources to build housing can be increased to expand housing options.

GOAL F: PREVENTION - Provide adequate emergency homeless prevention programs.

Assisting individuals and families with rent, utilities and mortgage assistance is less expensive than assisting them through emergency services after they become homeless. Welcome Home Billings proposes to strengthen prevention efforts that prevent homelessness in an immediate manner.

GOAL G: SERVICES - Expand treatment / service capacity and linkage to ensure essential services are readily available for those in need.

Many individuals require differing levels of support and case management. Mental health and substance abuse were identified by Billings Addendum survey participants as the most common disabilities faced by the homeless community. Supporting the expansion of treatment and social services is crucial to the success of Welcome Home Billings.

GOAL H: ASSETS - Increase personal income levels and economic opportunities for individuals at risk of homelessness and currently experiencing homelessness.

Increasing access to mainstream resources such as food stamps, veteran's benefits and general financial assistance will ultimately result in more available resources to sustain housing and stability. Financial management services, financial fitness, credit repair assistance and access to education and employment will improve success rates for those assisted.

Policy Recommendations

- Local data on the homeless gathered through the Montana Continuum of Care's Survey of the Homeless, while helpful for general inquiries, should be made available in comprehensive spreadsheet form for local manipulation in order to better determine the local demographics of the population in ongoing demographic analyses efforts. Current downloads should not be linked to specific queries, which eliminate possible cross-referencing and further examination of data.
- Include the following questions on the Montana Continuum of Care Survey:
 - Panhandling as a possible source of income
 - Previously placed in foster care
 - Suffered abuse / neglect
 - What brought people to their current location? A large percentage of the people experiencing temporary homelessness are not from Billings.
- Create an authoritative governing body with standard operating policies, procedures, and values in order to ensure long-term consistency during the Continuum of Care process.

EXCERPTS FROM WELCOME HOME BILLINGS FOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

- A more objective state-wide Continuum of Care process should be developed with applicants presenting projects for funding and decisions being made by another group.
- Include consideration for new projects in the state-wide Continuum of Care process, geographic considerations for funding equality and a provision for capacity-building funding to build new facilities and programs. Programs receiving funding for operations year after year should be expected to become more self-sustaining in order to make funding available for new programs.
- Include provisions and technical assistance / coordination for eastern Montana communities that have never received Continuum of Care funding as a way to generate or support ongoing projects.
- Facilitate all Continuum of Care meetings through a video-conferencing system to ensure open participation in communities across Montana.
- Local service providers would benefit from additional community support and facilitation to adequately survey the number of homeless individuals and families in Billings.
- Service providers report a critical need for psychiatrists and therapists. Reciprocal licensing agreements to support mental health professionals from other states working in Montana would be beneficial.
- Student loan reimbursement programs for mental health / substance abuse professionals choosing to work with the homeless would assist in recruitment / retention efforts.
- Case management and service rates should meet the costs of providing services through health care plans supported by the State of Montana.