

# A HOME FOR EVERYONE

A Blueprint to End  
Homelessness In  
Washtenaw County



**A Progress Report  
2004-2011**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction .....	6
Prevention .....	6
Housing and Services .....	9
Reform the System of Care .....	15
Engage the Community .....	22
Appendix A We are Homeless in Washtenaw County.....	25
Appendix B Community Outcome Measures.....	26

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2004, the Washtenaw Housing Alliance, along with hundreds of partners in our community from across all sectors (public and private), embarked on a bold new endeavor—to map out the way that we could end homelessness in our community in the next ten years. “A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness” was released to the community with four primary goals: prevention, housing with services (permanent supportive housing), reforming the system of care and engaging the community. Workgroups assessed the current situations, researched best practices, and made change and plans for change to bring Washtenaw County in line with these goals.

Tremendous progress has been made in many areas; in some areas, that change has taken longer to achieve; and in the midst of this heroic community effort, our country was hit with the worst economic calamity since the Great Depression. This review is our report on those efforts and the outcomes we have achieved between 2004 and 2011. We are taking stock of our work, analyzing the impact of the economic and political climate changes that intimately affect our abilities to move forward and will use this opportunity to determine the focus of our work for the next three to five years.

To date, we have successfully accomplished the following:

### PREVENTION:

- ✓ Assisted nearly 3,000 households with eviction prevention and rapid re-housing services. The vast majority of these households were still stably housed six months after receiving the assistance.
- ✓ Implemented a Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program with \$1.3 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars.
- ✓ We are undertaking a complete re-mapping of our housing and homelessness system by creating a single point of entry known as HAWC (Housing Access for Washtenaw County) to better serve people in need.

### HOUSING WITH SERVICES:

- ✓ Our 500 Unit Plan established the framework for the need for additional permanent supportive housing units in our community.
- ✓ Our community has developed 150 new units of permanent supportive housing for a variety of individuals, youth and families experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ We brought in 190 new permanent vouchers from the State targeted at homeless households and 100 new permanent vouchers for veterans experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ A new task force, appointed by the County Board of Commissioners, is tackling the challenging problem of creating a sustainable revenue stream for supportive services attached to housing for households experiencing homelessness.

### REFORMING THE SYSTEM OF CARE:

- ✓ As a result of our unique Blueprint planning process, we have been able to foster significant changes in mainstream services systems which are so crucial to our community's success in ending homelessness.

- ✓ We raised over \$1.25 million dollars from a combination of government, private sector philanthropy, United Way and our local Community Foundation for the Joint Integrated Funding (JIF) process. This money was used to support a variety of supportive housing efforts by five community agencies.
- ✓ “Coordinated Funding”, the natural ‘next step’ to JIF, creates a partnership between funders and community agencies allowing them to work together to establish community outcomes and goals that will ensure that safety net services will receive the funding needed to support those in need. The City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, United Way of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation created a single application and grant making process which provided nearly \$5 million in support for over 37 community human services organizations.
- ✓ Established a new “engagement center” to meet the sheltering needs of individuals who are unable to maintain sufficient sobriety to be served by the Delonis Center (our shelter for individuals who are homeless).
- ✓ As a result of our community conversations about the needs of people with substance abuse recovery and co-occurring disorders our entire service system was realigned to make it more client-centered, provide more case management services, and make it easier for people to gain access to services.
- ✓ Adopted community-wide outcome measures for all of the agencies involved in the housing and homelessness services community. These measures will provide us with bench-marking data from which to analyze our efforts going forward.

#### ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY:

- ✓ Our bi-annual census of those experiencing homelessness in our community (the Point in Time Count) has continued to add agencies and assistance from across a variety of sectors. Law enforcement agencies, as well as smaller volunteer service groups, have assisted us in reaching out into the more rural sections of our county.
- ✓ A newly constituted Advocacy and Education Committee has pulled together staff, volunteers, consumers and Board Members from WHA member agencies along with other concerned members of our religious community to bring attention to issues of concern about our most vulnerable community members.

We are proud of the work we have done and excited about the future. As we plan for the next three to five years, our focus will surely be on assisting more people, shortening the length of time a person stays in a shelter, increasing housing success by doing a better job of matching households with the housing that will best fit their needs, and finding innovative, creative and collaborative ways to provide more housing opportunities for our community.

Please read further to see the details of our “first phase work”. There are too many improvements and successes to list them all in an executive summary; we know you will find this reading truly inspiring. Our collaborative community has proven that when ***we work together, we really can end homelessness.***

## INTRODUCTION

In 2004, the Washtenaw Housing Alliance eagerly assumed oversight responsibility for the implementation of “A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County”, after endorsement of this role by leaders in the public sector. With broad participation from the public, private and non-profit sectors, the WHA created seventeen targeted workgroups, and engaged hundreds of people in the local work to end homelessness. After over a year of work by the original workgroups, much had been accomplished, but some refinement was needed. In a 2006 Blueprint review, workgroups were consolidated; some accomplished their original goals, and thus disbanded; and others’ had their work re-focused. Seven workgroups continued to meet to accomplish the critical work of the Blueprint.

Work continued with many positive outcomes from 2006 until 2008, when the economic crisis dealt a series of significant challenges to our work. The WHA member agencies had to refocus their efforts and energy on meeting the influx in demand for safety net services – at the same time that resources were increasingly scarce. By necessity, community efforts turned from planning how to end homelessness, toward ensuring safety and support to more and more people struggling to remain housed, or move from homelessness to stability.

In light of the state and national economies remaining fragile, it is now time to examine our successes; analyze the impact of the economic sea change and determine our focus for the next three to five years. Our strategic planning process begins with this Progress Report. It outlines the achievements our community has made to date and serves as a jumping off point to anchor our future planning conversations.

The foundation guiding our work remains **“A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness”**. **The primary goals of the Blueprint are:**

- Prevention: Keep people in their current homes whenever possible.
- Housing with Services: Create more permanent, affordable housing with services.
- Reform the System of Care: Use community resources more creatively and efficiently—across all sectors.
- Engage the community: Success means shared responsibility across the community.

**PREVENTION: prevent homelessness through easy, early access to needed resources and services.**

### ❖ Barrier Busters

The Washtenaw County Eviction Prevention Program started with a \$100,000 challenge grant by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to form a streamlined solution to eviction prevention and possible homelessness. Together with Washtenaw County, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the City of Ann Arbor, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the James A. and Faith Knight Foundation and the United Way of Washtenaw County all dedicated funds to strengthen and advance the Barrier Busters program. This centralized financial resource is used by designated agencies for quick and

“barrier-free” access to assist households in need of one-time assistance for back due utilities, rent and other similar prevention needs. Not only does Barrier Busters provide easy access to funds, more importantly, it serves as a conduit where over fifty local service providers share strategies and challenges in assisting households in need. It also serves as an on-going professional development opportunity for agency staff, and mandates that all participating agencies commit to cutting through the usual red tape (hence, “Barrier Busters”) within their respective agencies when called upon by each other. The new Single Point of Entry system, Housing Access for Washtenaw County (see Centralized Response), will utilize Barrier Busters as a part of the realignment of services to ensure that the “front door” to services is easy to find.

### The Barrier Busters Un-Met Needs Fund

Barrier Busters has distributed \$1,277,469 to assist 2,426 households from 2004 through December 2010.

- The average amount spent to prevent an eviction was \$529 (households utilize financial assistance from a variety of other systems to cover their full need).

Last year, of those who received Barrier Busters eviction prevention assistance:

- 91% of the households were still housed six months later
- 76% were still current on their housing payments
- 67% were still current on utility payments

### ❖ Centralized Response and Homelessness Prevention

The objective of the centralized response group was to create a system of care that was more responsive and efficient for those persons experiencing a housing crisis in our community.

#### Outcomes

- The group initially developed a long-term strategy and plan to create a “**coordinated response**” for people experiencing a housing crisis. Different from a centralized, one-stop system, this “no wrong door” approach envisioned a community where people in need would receive the same treatment and assistance regardless of what

agency they had contacted. A business plan was created and after two unsuccessful attempts to access funding, the plan was put on hold.

- In late 2008, the Coordinated Response plan became the basis for setting up the local pilot funded by **Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP)** funds as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (\$1.3 million in stimulus dollars over two years). This program began in November 2009 and ran until August 2011. HPRP provided us with the opportunity to try out some new approaches to eviction prevention and rapid re-housing. Case managers were hired to work with households not previously connected to a service agency and financial assistance was targeted in a more intensive and on-going manner to qualifying households (3-6 months of rental assistance for rapid re-housing and up to 3 months back rent for eviction prevention). The Shelter Association of Washtenaw County served as the lead agency of HPRP.

HPRP 2009-2011	
<b>Homelessness Prevention:</b>	583 households received, on average, \$2,483 in financial assistance to prevent their eviction.
<b>Rapid Re-Housing:</b>	191 households received, on average, \$1,898 in financial assistance to get them into new housing.

- Federal policy began to change with the passage of the **HEARTH Act (Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing) in 2009**. This first rewrite of federal homelessness policy and programs in almost 20 years shifted the overall federal emphasis from shelter and housing to homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing. The Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) that were primarily used for shelter operations in Washtenaw County, are now called Emergency *Solutions* Grants and the money moved primarily to prevention activities. Additionally, an expectation for a centralized, one-stop, approach to prevention assistance was articulated.

With the HEARTH Act implementation pending in Washington, our community began to work together to implement a **“single point of entry” in the fall 2010. A truly centralized system**, where we focus our services on those **most in need**, target resources through the use of assessments, make the system easier to navigate, and share data electronically all of which promises greater success in preventing homelessness or minimizing its effects. There are few communities in the state of Michigan with a richer landscape of human services agencies than Washtenaw County. However, our current “system” has been disjointed, confusing and overly cumbersome. Many agencies provide some limited amount of assistance to people in need. This results in a household reaching out to 3, 4, 5, or even 6 agencies to receive **some** relief (and usually *incomplete* assistance). As a result, the systems change needed to implement a single point of entry in Washtenaw County represents a much-needed paradigm shift.



Centralizing key elements of our work, and abiding by a Housing First approach, means that households will be referred to the appropriate housing opportunity for their specific needs more quickly. It will also result in shorter stays in shelters, as well as increase our efforts to divert households from shelter whenever possible. Additionally, our new system will allow us, for the first time, to quantify the un-met need in our community. With a disjointed, multi-door system, it is almost impossible to get unduplicated counts of those in need. This is not easy work, but there is a commitment and openness within our community that points to some exciting outcomes in the near future.

SOS Community Services has agreed to take on the challenge of serving as the **“Housing Access for Washtenaw County”** (our new central point of entry system) and they are working hand-in-hand with the COC (WHA) the other shelter organizations, housing providers and agencies that provide assistance to ensure a seamless and smooth transition to this new community-wide system. While SOS has received some additional resources through MSHDA and the Office of Community and Economic Development to implement this innovative model, they should be commended for demonstrating leadership by committing their staff and internal resources to this crucial effort to improve our efficacy in preventing and ending homelessness. The Housing Access for Washtenaw County went “live” October 3.

## **HOUSING AND SERVICES: ensure permanent affordable housing along with reliable funding for services that are central to ending homelessness.**

### **❖ The 500 Unit Plan**

There is one thing that all people who experience homelessness have in common—a lack of permanent, affordable housing. With that in mind, the Blueprint established as its “core commitment, the establishment of a sufficient number of affordable, ‘housing plus services’ opportunities to move persons experiencing homelessness (or at immediate risk of homelessness) rapidly into stable, safe, and decent permanent housing.” In the initial analysis, the community had identified a long-range goal of up to 1,700 additional units needed to address this critical objective—including a need for as many as 800 units of “permanent supportive housing” for persons facing significant long-term housing challenges and needs.

In the spring of 2006, the Board of Directors of the WHA appointed a committee of staff, Board and knowledgeable community members to map out a strategy for advancing this goal. Its report—“A Plan for 500 Units of Housing”—established a first stage goal of 500 new supportive housing opportunities and outlined a general framework for community investment to be targeted to persons experiencing homelessness, populations with incomes at or below 30% of the “area median income (AMI)”, and/or households with no incomes at all.

In 2008, the “Action Plan for Increasing Access to Supportive Housing Opportunities” offered more specific steps and strategies for implementing the original plan. As stated in that report: **“While clearly a challenge, achieving an initial goal of creating access to 500 new units of housing with supports should be seen only as a necessary ‘down payment’ on eliminating homelessness in the coming decade.”** The report laid out a four-phase approach to this challenge. The successes have been impressive though the need remains daunting. While we have made significant progress, the economic crisis of the last five years had a negative impact on our ability to develop more housing.

**Between 2004 and the present, the following new housing has been developed as a result of the planning and implementation process undertaken by the Blueprint to End Homelessness.** Of particular significance was the effort to preserve low-income housing originally developed by Washtenaw Affordable Housing Corporation (WAHC). The integration of this housing into Avalon Housing’s stock has had a significant impact on our community and affordable housing. Not only did this preserve a large number of units that almost certainly would have been lost, it has also allowed those units to be developed into **Permanent Supportive Housing** from merely “affordable housing”.

At the end of the day, we have developed 150 new units of Permanent Supportive Housing during this period. Given the impact of the economic recession, we are proud of this accomplishment and realize that there is much work ahead of us.

- **Partners developed Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** for homeless individuals, youth and families:

<u>Permanent Supportive Housing 2004-2011</u>	
▪ Single Adults	41
▪ Youth	7
▪ Families and/or Mixed Housing	88 (4 for DV)
TOTAL	136
▪ Mixed Use Under Development (and expected to be on-line in 2012)	14
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>150</b>

- **Carrot Way Apartments** by Avalon Housing: 30 units new construction of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units.
- **Pear Street Apartments** by Avalon Housing: 20 units acquisition and rehab of 1 bedroom apartments (6 targeted for chronically homeless adults).
- **Maple View Apartments** by Michigan Ability Partners (MAP): 10 units new construction of 1 bedroom apartments.
- **South First Street Apartments** by Avalon and Ozone House: 7 units acquisition and rehab of 1 bedroom apartments.

- **Third Street Apartments** by Avalon with PORT: 6 units acquisition and rehab for chronically homeless individuals.
- **Whispering Creek** by MAP for individuals: 5 units by acquisition and rehabilitation of permanent supportive housing (6 Transitional Housing units also included).
- **PSH for survivors of domestic violence** by Avalon with SafeHouse Center: 4 units acquisition and rehab.
- **Pauline Apartments (32 units)** in Ann Arbor: Former WAHC property integrated into Avalon Housing with a redevelopment plan in process. Final funding approval was received in July 2011. This site will be completely redeveloped as a 32-unit family supportive housing project.
- **701 Miller (22 units)** in Ann Arbor: Former WAHC property integrated into Avalon Housing is going to undergo extensive rehab in the next year. Has become permanent supportive housing.

➤ **Voucher-based permanent housing** has grown dramatically within our community thanks to our ability to leverage our use of best practices with good effect with MSHDA under the Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP). While these initiatives do not represent an increase in the number of, *supportive housing units*, they do expand access to affordable housing in our community and are sufficient to keep many households from re-experiencing homelessness. One hundred and ninety (190) households were housed with short-term supportive services through HARP. Under the HARP program, agencies who “sponsor” households for vouchers commit to provide supportive services for six months and then remain “available” to assist the households when needed. Additionally, the new focus on veterans who are experiencing homelessness has brought in over 100 permanent housing vouchers (VASH) aimed at this population through the Veterans’ Affairs Administration. These vouchers also come with supportive services provided by the VA for up to two years.

Permanent Vouchers

- HARP Vouchers 190
- VASH Vouchers 100

➤ **Voucher-based temporary housing** is not a primary focus of the Blueprint. ***Our focus will always be on permanent, affordable housing.*** But the opportunity to provide vouchers to households ***and supportive services*** for even a limited amount of time is something we know to be helpful to some households. The MSHDA Housing First Pilot Program provided us with sixty-five two-year vouchers for various household configurations. The hope for this program was that with two years of support, the households could develop the income and skills to manage fair market rent. Unfortunately, this program’s launch occurred almost simultaneously with the economic collapse, so most households were not able to find the kind of employment that would support fair market rent on their own. The vast majority of these households were able to secure a permanent voucher before their two-year, temporary, voucher expired. In addition to these MSHDA-issued short-term vouchers, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) provided funding for short-term vouchers for people returning to our community from prison through the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative of Washtenaw Co. (MPRI). With the support of the Joint Integrated Funding Initiative, (see

JIF page 19) we were able to provide supportive services to many of the households who received these vouchers for two years.

<u>Temporary Vouchers</u> (no longer in use)	
Families	37 (2 yrs of support services only)
Youth	5 (2 yrs of support services only)
Single Adults	23 (2 yrs of support services only)
Returning Citizens	20 six month vouchers with supports

- **Preserving the Existing Stock of Affordable Housing** became another important focus for our work. Three complexes were identified as immediately “at-risk” and have had positive outcomes:
- **Eagle Point (144 units)** in Scio Township: privately owned; is now under new management and its affordability standards have been preserved (there are no supportive services connected with this housing).
  - **Pauline Apartments (48 units)** in Ann Arbor: has been integrated into the Avalon Housing stock (from Washtenaw Affordable Housing Corporation) and a redevelopment plan is in process. This site will be completely re-developed as a 32 unit family supportive housing project (see previous discussion on page 11).
  - **Parkview (144 units)** in Ypsilanti: has been preserved after a series of lawsuits brought on behalf of tenants due to the poor upkeep of the property. After the courts ordered HUD to stop plans to relocate the tenants, a settlement was reached that transfers ownership of this complex to the Ypsilanti Housing Commission, gives Section 8 vouchers to the remaining tenants and provides substantial funding for re-development.

Additionally, two other apartment complexes were identified as “at-risk” and were preserved as a part of Avalon’s management of WAHC properties.

- **701 Miller (23 units)** in Ann Arbor: purchased from WAHC by Avalon Housing to avert foreclosure. Significant rehabilitation is underway and Avalon has secured at least five site-based vouchers for formerly homeless persons.
- **Gateway Apartments (43 units)** in Ypsilanti Township has been sold to a private developer. These units have been preserved until 2012 as low-income. There are on-going conversations with the joint City and County Office of Community Economic Development about how to extend the affordability period.

### ❖ Preservation of the Ann Arbor YMCA Housing

At the time of the writing of the Blueprint, the old YMCA had 100 single room occupancy units in downtown Ann Arbor. These housing units were an essential part of the overall housing configuration for our community. The residents of the Y came from a number of different places. Some had lived there very successfully for many years. Their success could be attributed in large part to the fact that there was a front-desk “gate keeper” who could keep out people who would prey on vulnerable residents, and who could help point residents to resources in the community as needed. Local housing agencies had designated slots in which to put clients who had no other place to go. Ozone House, the VA, Michigan Ability Partners (MAP), and the Project Outreach Team (PORT) all had units used for emergency housing for homeless clients who needed to build their income in order to afford market rate housing. When the 500 Unit Plan of the Blueprint was written, these units were considered to be in place (we did not know at that time that they were threatened). After the Ann Arbor YMCA moved to their newly-built facility which had no units of housing, the City of Ann Arbor invoked its right of first refusal and took over ownership of the building expressly stating the commitment to preserve these valuable housing units. In 2004, the City released an RFP for 80-100 efficiency units of permanently affordable, supportive housing to be developed. The first attempt to contract with a developer failed when the developer defaulted. Since that time, the site has been turned into a parking lot and planning conversations have taken other directions.

In 2008, Ann Arbor City Council charged the City’s Housing & Human Services Advisory Board (HHSAB) to research and recommend potential locations and models for replacement of the former YMCA units. The HHSAB report recommended that a minimum of 60 units be located within a single site within the downtown, with a front desk, and on-site supports. City Council received this report in 2009. Council has expressed support and provided funding for the development of additional supportive housing units, but none thus far as recommended by the HHSAB. This means that seven years after the Blueprint was written, the community has 100 fewer units than when we completed the original count. The need for these housing units remains acute, particularly in light of the increase in unemployment after the Great Recession. The WHA needs to take action to ensure that the need for these types of units continues to be part of the conversation about downtown development.

### ❖ New Housing for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Along with the new administration in Washington has come a new emphasis on ending homelessness for veterans who are currently in our communities and for those returning from our current military struggles. Along with the vouchers reported earlier in this report (VASH page 11), two new projects have also started.

- The Salvation Army began offering safe housing and supportive services to eleven veterans in collaboration with the VA Healthcare Center in a transitional housing program (Veterans’ Haven of Hope).
- MAP dedicated 6 units of their Whispering Creek project to transitional housing for veterans.

## ❖ Secure Reliable Funding Sources for Supportive Services

The Washtenaw Housing Alliance is committed to working with private and public sector partners, as well as local funders, to secure the funding needed to maintain supportive housing and to fund new supportive housing initiatives. To this end, the Alliance worked with the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to identify a blue ribbon task force of community leaders to discuss and recommend the best way to find a sustainable revenue stream for the housing support services needed to effectively implement the 500 unit plan, and beyond. Though not *easy* to secure, we continue to find that funding for “bricks and mortar” are more readily available. However, while there is clear research and evidence-based best practices supporting the efficacy of Permanent Supportive Housing, *and* HUD enthusiastically endorses the program, it is harder to obtain funds to pay for the supportive services that so many households need to stay successfully housed.

The Task Force met between January and Sept 2008 and developed and submitted a report to the Board of Commissioners with recommendations about how to proceed.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners accepted these recommendations and appointed a Task Force on a Sustainable Revenue Stream for Supportive Services. Membership of the Task Force include strong representation from the private sector with Robert Chapman, President and CEO of United Bank and Trust as the chair, members of the Board of Commissioners, Housing Alliance Board members, the Mayors of Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor and other community leaders. Before the economic collapse brought their work to a temporary stop, they developed a public education campaign; created the outlines of an endowment campaign; and had started conversations about a possible county-wide millage for supportive housing services. The Task Force has now re-grouped, has some new members and are researching alternative funding streams. In addition, on September 25, 2011, Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (SJMHS) announced their gift of \$1million for an endowment for supportive services for housing named in honor of one of the Blueprint’s most staunch champions, Sister Yvonne Gellise.

### The Goals of the Task Force on Sustainable Revenue for Supportive Services for Housing

- Promote Funding for Supportive Housing in Washtenaw County
- Educate the Public
- Re-Allocate Existing Funding of Mainstream Resources
- Explore Millage Funding
- Explore Endowment Funding

## **REFORM THE SYSTEM OF CARE: provide a system of care that delivers compassionate, effective and efficient support for people who are homeless or precariously housed.**

Over the course of the years of work on the Blueprint, the over-arching theme that emerged for this goal can be best summarized this way:

“Use community resources more efficiently and creatively across all sectors. This includes developing standards for care, integrating funding streams and creating an evaluation process to guide our progress.”

We have made great gains in this area.

### **❖ Substance Abuse Services and Co –Occurring Disorders**

The objectives of these two groups, which were eventually merged into one, were to increase services to people who suffer from addictions and ensure access to the full range of treatment services for people with co-occurring disorders. The committee consisted of service providers, the Washtenaw Community Health Organization Executive Director, Homeless Court judges and the Director of the Substance Abuse coordinating agency.

#### Outcomes:

- **Transformation to a Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC):** The community model from the substance abuse workgroup focused on including the recovery community in planning, developing and implementing substance abuse treatment programs that would work with an individual's readiness for change. The Coordinating Agency expanded upon the committee's recommendations and adopted the ROSC, which maximizes resources, services and provider flexibility. This system enables people to receive recovery-based services upon demand. With this system, there is no waiting list, and services are provided within a few days. The ROSC transformation has solidified cross service system coordination and partnerships as exemplified through the Blueprint group.
- Under the leadership of Judge Elizabeth Hines, the workgroup also sponsored the development of **Street Outreach Court** which began operation in October 2005. The Street Outreach Court (SOC) hears civil infractions and non-violent misdemeanor cases, including warrants, for those who are homeless or at the risk of homelessness. The SOC is intended to remove barriers to housing and employment and reduce or avoid jail stays. In the most basic sense, the SOC was designed to provide people experiencing homelessness with a more welcoming court system and a way for them to get a helping hand. The defendant must demonstrate a commitment to work on a treatment plan with a service provider who documents progress to the court. Clients are assisted in accessing treatment resources and other human services, such as housing and employment training. If the defendant voluntarily complies with his/her “Action Plan”, the court, with the consent of prosecuting officials, can dismiss or close open cases, and give the defendant

“credit” for time in treatment rather than paying fines and costs. The court has been able to address issues from all of the district courts and has closed 479 cases and cleared 88 bench warrants since its inception. **This intervention has saved the community 3,656 “jail days” (days people would have had to spend in jail if they were unable to pay their fines). This is equivalent to \$310,760 in court fines.** All of this is done without any additional funding and is the only court of its kind in the Midwest.

- **Engagement Center:** The group developed a proposal for a recovery access center, to meet the shelter needs of individuals who are unable to maintain sufficient sobriety to be served at the Delonis Center or its warming center and as an alternative to inappropriate use of hospital Emergency Room care, in-patient psychiatric care and criminal justice services. The sub-committee reviewed models which combined a harm reduction approach with an ongoing, consistent, recovery message. The “Home of New Vision Hamilton House Engagement Center” (EC) began operating in 2008. The EC has become a hub for peers and case managers to help engage with clients and essentially manage clients in crisis. It is a program that creates an environment of support to encourage people to enter into treatment, have a safe place to sleep and find the support to change their lives. The philosophy of the EC is that it provides a safe, clean, welcoming environment where clients can sober up, have a meal, take a shower and talk to caring staff and volunteers about their situation. Staff conducts an individualized needs/risk assessment and helps clients develop a recovery plan. The plan addresses their substance use and other needs like housing, food, clothing and medical and mental health care. The intended length of stay is 23 hours, although there are times that clients are maintained for a longer period in order to allow a “warm” handoff to another program or place to stay opportunity.

**Home of New Vision Hamilton House  
Engagement Center  
December 2008 - October 2010**

- 965 unduplicated persons were served
- 51% were referred for treatment in the first year
- 29% were referred for treatment in the second year (due to a drop in funding for treatment).
- 27 secured permanent housing
- 27 secured transitional housing

- **Case Management:** The group identified a need for a recovery focused community-based case management system. A pilot team was funded under the Home of New Vision, with local funds through the Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency in 2007. Other funding was sought and two grants were awarded, totaling \$1.4 Million over 3 years. Both programs served 400 homeless individuals with substance use and co-occurring disorders.



- ❖ **Education and Employment Services:** The objective of the Education and Employment Services work group was to develop an integrated strategy for education and employment services for people who experience homelessness. The group examined various innovative strategies including employment and training for ex-offenders, and youth construction training programs. Many struggling with homelessness face multiple challenges to employment, and traditional workforce development efforts are not sufficient to overcome these challenges. Most Workforce Development Board dollars (state funding) are designed to reach particular outcomes which focus on re-training those who have lost jobs due to shifts in manufacturing or specific employment sectors. This creates a situation where the people struggling with housing stability do not get adequate opportunities to improve their job readiness. Advocacy to change this situation is needed now more than ever. In spite of these systemic challenges, some notable successes were achieved.

### Outcomes

- Food Gatherers, in conjunction with the Community Kitchen at the Delonis Center, and Ozone House, developed a **Culinary training program/employment development initiative for homeless youth, and those aging out of foster care.** Since 2005, this apprenticeship program has graduated about 110 students with an overall success rate of 88% either working or in school and provided 43 internships.
- The work group also secured funding to support a **Job Developer for those experiencing homelessness** as a part of the community-wide Housing First Pilot Program. Funds were provided by the County’s Employment Training and Community Services office (ETCS) to assist people experiencing homelessness to learn job seeking skills, expand the range of potential jobs available to those with little work history, as well as to assist them in securing jobs.

**Housing First Employment Program  
April 2008 to mid-February 2010**

- Over 225 citizens of Washtenaw County participated in these services.
- 40 participants were placed in either full or part-time employment situations with an average wage of \$9.17 per hour.
- 14 participants reached a 90-day benchmark of job retention.
- Over 130 additional persons participated in workshops designed to increase their job-seeking skills.

## ❖ Common Standards

The objective of this workgroup was to develop a common set of service and administrative standards that would ensure a high quality of service provision in our community; utilize agreed upon best practices; and ensure that services were provided to those in need in an efficient, client-centered manner.

### Outcomes

- The group developed **community service standards** in 2008 which were eventually adopted by all of the community organizations who are a part of the WHA. Within one year, they all had successfully completed this internal evaluation between the Executive Directors and their Boards and were in compliance. These standards address how work is done in shelters, permanent supportive housing, outreach efforts and prevention work, as well as administrative standards such as audits, strategic plans, and non-discrimination. The review is repeated every three years.

These services standards, developed by the WHA, were subsequently adopted, with modifications, by the City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County joint Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) as a part of their human services funding process, expanding the reach of these standards to over 40 community agencies. Most recently, the standards were integrated into the new Coordinated Funding process undertaken by OCED, the United Way of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

- Working in partnership with the Office of Community and Economic Development and representatives from the member agencies, the Alliance developed a set of **shared “Outcome Measures”** to allow us to benchmark our achievements and provide parameters from which to report on the impact of our work. With greater attention to outcomes coming from all sectors (HUD, MSHDA, and other funders) this was seen as a critical next step. Outcomes have been developed and implemented for Eviction Prevention, Outreach and Engagement, Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. There are now program-specific outcomes that are shared by our community of agencies within each program area, as well as community-wide outcome measures from which we will judge the totality of the work. These standards have also been adopted by the Coordinated Funders as a part of their funding requirements for housing and homelessness. See Appendix B for our Community Shared Outcome Measures.

## HOMELESS ASSISTANCE COMMUNITY OUTCOME MEASURES 2011

- Reduce the number of people who become homeless in Washtenaw County;
- Reduce the average length of stay in emergency shelter;
- Increase the percentage of households who are homeless who obtain permanent housing;
- Increase the percentage of formerly homeless households who remain permanently housed for at least twelve months;
- Reduce the percentage of formerly homeless households who re-enter the homelessness assistance system looking for new housing.

### ❖ **Joint Integrated Funding (JIF)**

The objective of this work group was to establish an integrated funding structure and process that would provide efficiencies in funding streams, reduce competition between agencies, and ensure that funding was being done in accordance with the community-supported priorities identified in the Blueprint to End Homelessness.

The group researched models of community funding structures from around the country. A model and implementation plan was developed over the course of three years. The model included decision-making based on a highly integrated collaboration between funders and providers in the context of common standards and outcomes defined by the Blueprint.

#### Outcomes

- This work group was the first time the City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County worked in tandem with the United Way of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation to plan an integrated approach to funding for housing and homelessness. While also receiving input from providers of services, a pilot process was initiated.

The first round of the **Joint Integrated Funding process (JIF)** pulled together funding from 5 community funders to support the work done by several community agencies providing supportive services to formerly homeless households who were participating in a Housing First Pilot program in our community. The agencies had secured funding to pay for the housing but were challenged by the state (MSHDA) to find their own funding for *required* supportive services.

A Funding Review Team (FRT) was established consisting of funders, Continuum of Care Board members, and agencies that were *not* eligible for the funding. This group established a process for considering specific funding proposals. They also developed conflict of interest principles, linkages to other community processes,

and a strategy for engaging the support of key leaders in Washtenaw County's funding community.

By pulling funding together from the four entities, as well as some key private philanthropists, two rounds of funding were successfully implemented and over \$1.25 million in funding was distributed for supportive services over two years. Unfortunately, the system experienced challenging implementation problems that were exacerbated by the economic crisis and funders could not continue this commitment.

- JIF helped to pave the way for more significant funding reform. In 2008 the City of Arbor, Washtenaw County, and Washtenaw Urban County utilized the Office of Community and Economic Development to integrate their human services funding into one streamlined process. In 2010, in large part because of the work undertaken to create the JIF pilot, the United Way and Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation agreed to explore a more comprehensive integrated system of funding human services. In 2011, after twelve months of hard work, a new system of funding was introduced to the community. ***"Coordinated Funding"*** is an effort by the Office of Community and Economic Development (representing the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and the Washtenaw Urban County), the United Way of Washtenaw County, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation to better coordinate the funding of human services programs in our community. The process includes better sharing of information among the funders, closer work with local non-profits to establish common community goals, and increased cooperation in the funding decisions. ***In the spring of 2011 over \$1,587,858 was distributed to 15 agencies and 17 programs providing support to people in our community experiencing homelessness or at risk of through the Coordinated Funding process.***

Under this system, the Washtenaw Housing Alliance was asked to serve as the lead planning and coordination entity providing leadership to the Housing and Homelessness Programs area. We are honored to be given this responsibility which includes engaging providers; identifying needs and gaps using data and provider expertise; identifying and encouraging best practices; developing and evaluating shared outcomes; and providing consultation to the funders about future priorities and investments.

#### ❖ Data Collection and Management

The objective of this work group was to fully implement and utilize a data management system, utilizing a platform mandated by HUD. This Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) includes all housing and homelessness providers, allows for sharing data to build efficiencies into the system, and provides useful, accurate information to the community about the work being done by housing and homelessness services agencies.

## Outcomes

- The number of agencies utilizing this system has grown from four to fourteen, and Washtenaw County has joined the state-wide implementation of the system to improve efficiency, technical support and data management for local users.
- Two housing assessment tools were created by our users and published to HMIS (a self-sufficiency matrix and a housing risk assessment) which allows for ease of electronic tracking of the outcomes.
- After many years of conversation, we recently implemented a policy change whereby all agencies are sharing data across the system with careful attention to the privacy rights of our consumers. This advancement increases efficiencies and facilitates our being able to use the more sophisticated aspects of HMIS including electronic referrals. In addition, it provides a less intrusive response to households seeking help by allowing them to provide their personal information only one time.

### ❖ **Hospital Discharge Planning**

The objective was to develop an intervention for people who are experiencing homelessness or may become homeless during their hospital stay, to prevent discharge from health care systems to the street.

This group of shelter providers, along-side hospital administrators and social workers, developed a discharge planning protocol that was agreed upon by all parties and has been implemented at both St. Joseph Mercy Health System and the University of Michigan Health System.

### ❖ **Research**

The objective of this work group was to develop an evaluative research model that allows the community to identify what types of housing, services and access works best to help keep people stably housed.

The Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan worked with the WHA to develop a research project to address outcomes and cost-effectiveness of different approaches to housing and services. After a year-long process of developing the parameters of the research and examining the available data in our current HMIS system, it was determined that we did not have sufficient scope or volume of data to allow this kind of study to go forward.

## ❖ **Agency Consolidation**

While not specifically spelled out in the original Blueprint document, efforts have been made to begin conversations amongst agencies about consolidating their services and/or some of their operations to form more streamlined and efficient organizations. After the impact of the economic collapse was experienced by these agencies, and after seeing the hard and successful work that was undertaken by the funders to create a more cohesive approach to funding, it became clear that housing and homelessness agencies needed to look at a similar response to our changed world.

A small group of providers and board members have started conversations about consolidation and what this could look like. The WHA is seeking funding to support the research into models, best practices and facilitation.

## **ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY: Success means shared responsibility across the community.**

“We hope to create an engaged community where people—in their homes, their school, their places of work and places of worship—understand the moral and practical sense to strategies that will end homelessness in Washtenaw County.

We must make it clear that people who are homeless, given the respect, the resources, and the options we all would need, are this community’s best hope for a different future...a future with a home for everyone.”

### The Strategies:

- Advocate vigorously on issues related to homelessness at local, state and federal levels.
- Communicate the measureable effectiveness of our strategies to end homelessness to the entire community.
- Align community education campaigns within a strategic framework.

## ❖ **Point in Time Count**

Every two years since 2004, our community has worked together to get an accurate “count” of those experiencing homelessness on a particular day during the winter. This effort, involving dozens of community-based agencies, puts people “on the streets” to find individuals and households who are living outside and in shelters in order to perform a kind of unduplicated “census”. We gather demographic information as well as information about what caused their homelessness, how long they have been homeless and whether they are in need of any services. Agency staff, along with community volunteers, goes out to community meal sites, encampments, places where people are known to congregate (under bridges, in campgrounds, or in abandoned buildings) and perform this census activity. Law

enforcement agencies and the Project Outreach Team of CSTS (PORT) have been particularly important in this effort as they are able to identify locations we may not be aware of.

This effort allows us to have a benchmark of the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in our community. See Appendix A

### ❖ **Advocacy and Education**

The WHA has created an Advocacy and Education Committee made up of staff, volunteers, and Board Members of our collaborative agencies along with other community organizations and religious congregations who are concerned about ending homelessness. To date, the efforts of this committee have been focused on budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels.

- Letters were written to members of the Michigan Legislature outlining objections to proposed legislation to cut the Earned Income Tax Credit for elderly and low income citizens.
- Personal contact was made with staff of the Michigan Department of Human Services and Michigan State Housing Development Authority addressing concerns about planned legislation that would create a forty-eight month limit on cash assistance to those households living in poverty.
- Personal contact was made with members of the US House of Representatives and the US Senate concerning a number of budget proposals that would have had a negative impact on housing for low income people.
- Individuals appeared and spoke at public hearings on the proposed budget reductions under consideration by both the City of Ann Arbor and the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners urging no cuts in human services funding. After this advocacy, the City of Ann Arbor reversed a decision to cut \$85,000 from human services funding.

## **SUMMARY**

As you read this we are sure you were struck by the incredible capacity of this community to care enough to get involved, create innovation, change our systems, and support people who are among those who are most vulnerable in our community. The changes we have made, the impact we have had on people's lives is indeed something to be celebrated. ***We thank you for your piece in this work and for caring enough to read this report.***

***There is so much more that needs to be done.*** We have learned much and the tremendous changes economically and politically that we have experienced leaves us at an important crossroads in this critical work of ending homelessness. We must take stock, re-focus and rededicate our efforts to accomplish our goal of a "Home for Everyone".

In the next six months, the WHA will be sponsoring a series of community forums to provide a deepening perspective on our shifting world and its impact on our work. We will be able to gain valuable insights from national experts, collect feedback from our own community and our consumers and review best practices. From the feedback and input we receive, we will engage stakeholders in discussions about our priorities and strategies for the future. We hope you will join us in these endeavors.

If you have any questions about the information in this report, or you would like to get more involved in our efforts to end homelessness, please contact Julie Steiner, Executive Director of the Washtenaw Housing Alliance at:

[steinerj@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:steinerj@ewashtenaw.org) or call 734/222-3575  
[whalliance.org](http://whalliance.org)



## APPENDIX A

### WE ARE HOMELESS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

#### IN 2004

**2,756** people experienced homelessness within the year in Washtenaw County

**26%** were households with children (families)

**53%** experienced homelessness for the first time overall

**44%** of those interviewed reported moderate to severe addictions which contributed to their homelessness

**42%** of those interviewed reported having a mental illness that contributed to their homelessness

**34%** were employed either full or part-time.

#### IN 2010

**4,738** people experienced homelessness within the year in Washtenaw County

**23%** were households with children (families)

**55%** experienced homelessness for the first time

- **56%** of families
- **43%** of individuals adults
- **66%** of unaccompanied youth

**21% of Households with Children, and 35% of Individuals** reported struggling with an addiction which contributed to their homelessness.

**26% of Households with Children, and 33% of Individuals** reported having a mental illness that contributed to their homelessness.

**77% of Adults in Households with Children, and 62% of Individuals** reported that they were unemployed in addition to being homeless.

This data was taken from our community-wide Point in Time Count which is a biennial “census” of people experiencing homelessness. Community volunteers and mental health staff fan out across the community in the winter to interview people who are living on the streets and in shelters to capture important information about our community’s experience with homelessness. It is also taken from our Homeless Management Information System.

## APPENDIX B: HOMELESS ASSISTANCE SYSTEM OUTCOME MEASURES – February 2011

Program Type	Program Outcome—Current Year (to include program participants who enter program in current reporting period only)	Program Outcome—Past Year (to include participants who enter program in immediate past reporting period only)	Community Outcomes (to include aggregate data obtained from HMIS)
Eviction Prevention	% of participants whose eviction is prevented after receiving direct financial assistance for housing-related payments and/or housing stabilization services.	% of participants who maintain housing for at least 6 months after receiving direct financial assistance for housing-related payments and/or housing stabilization services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Reduce Number of People Who Become Homeless in Washtenaw County</b></li> <li><b>2. Reduce the Average Length of Stay in Emergency Shelter</b></li> <li><b>3. Increase Percent of Homeless People who Obtain Permanent Housing</b></li> <li><b>4. Increase Percentage of Formerly Homeless People who Remain Permanently Housed for at Least 12 Months</b></li> <li><b>5. Increase the Percentage of Formerly Homeless People who Remain in Permanent Housing with Supports for at least 24 Months</b></li> <li><b>6. Reduce the Percentage of Formerly Homeless People who Re-Enter the Homeless Assistance System Seeking Housing Assistance</b></li> </ol>
Outreach & Engagement	% of participants who become engaged in a service relationship as a result of support from outreach and engagement programs.	% of participants placed into housing as a result of engagement efforts by outreach and engagement programs.	
Emergency Shelter	% of participants who obtain a positive housing outcome at program exit.	<b>% of participants who maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months following exit.</b>	
	% of participants who obtain permanent housing at program exit.	% of participants who exit and do not return to emergency shelter in a 12-month period.	
		% change in average length of stay in emergency shelter [compare immediate past reporting period to prior reporting period].	
Transitional Housing	% of participants who obtain permanent housing at program exit.	<b>% of participants who maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months.</b>	
		% of participants who maintain or increase their income within 12 months of program entry.	
		% of participants who show aggregate gains in self-sufficiency within 12 months of program entry, as measured by the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (i.e. an increase in total score).	
Permanent Housing with Supports	% of participants who maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months.	% of participants who maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months.	
		% of participants who maintain or increase their income within 12 months of program entry.	
		% of participants who show aggregate gains in self-sufficiency within 12 months of program entry, as measured by the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (i.e. an increase in total score).	

We are grateful for the help of these partners who are working alongside the WHA to implement the Blueprint to End Homelessness



United Way  
of Washtenaw County



Office of Community and Economic Development



## Visit [www.whalliance.org](http://www.whalliance.org)

- Learn more about how you can help end homelessness in our community
- Find a copy of the complete “A Home for Everyone: A Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County”
- Get statistics about homelessness in our community
- Read about current activities and action alerts



P.O. Box 7993

Ann Arbor, MI

48107

(734) 222-3575

[wha-info@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:wha-info@ewashtenaw.org)