



# Help Hope Home

*Helping the Homeless in Southern Nevada*

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## Southern Nevada's Regional Plan to End Homelessness

A Business Case by the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition's Committee on Homelessness

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We believe we can end homelessness in ten years in Southern Nevada.

*Help Hope Home* is Southern Nevada's regional effort to end homelessness. The plan was designed through a collaborative process engaging local governments, community providers, faith based organizations, local businesses and committed individuals who recognized a need to address the issues of homelessness. These planning sessions resulted in Southern Nevada developing a plan that focuses on ending the problem of homelessness, rather than managing it. A focus on housing is a top priority of this plan.

**The Problem:** On any given day there are 11,417 people who are homeless in our community according to a census count conducted in January 2007. For the first time, we have access to locally relevant data about who is homeless in Southern Nevada and why. A snapshot of the data concludes that:

- o 34% were identified in shelter facilities and 66% were unsheltered, and a surprisingly high 73% of survey respondents had been homeless less than one year, indicating higher than typical rates for temporary homeless in Southern Nevada than in other communities across the country.
- o 72% were male and 28% female with African Americans representing 33% of the homeless population, even though they make up only 9% of the general population.
- o Approximately 7% of all survey respondents (sheltered and unsheltered) had children under the age of 18 living with them.
- o 43% of all survey respondents had received their high school diploma or equivalent, and nearly 28% had attended college or held a college degree.
- o 50% of respondents indicated they had some disabling condition, with 24% experiencing some form of physical disability.
- o 35% of respondents reported becoming homeless after losing their job, and 17% reported drug or alcohol abuse as the reason they lost their home.

**Costs of Homelessness:** For many who are interested in solving the problem of homelessness, it may seem that providing persons with shelter is cheaper than providing funds to get them into permanent housing. This is deceptive. The cost of homelessness is staggering – there are incredible costs not only to the affected individuals and families in terms of decreased health and wellness and ability to meet the most basic needs, but also to the community in terms of real dollars. Preventing someone from becoming homeless, or providing a quick and efficient transition into stable permanent housing from homelessness can result in a significant cost savings.

**A Collaborative Approach:** Established in 2004, Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition's Committee on Homelessness drafted and implemented a regional plan to end homelessness. Southern Nevada along with numerous communities across the country, are attempting to address the growing numbers of homeless. Over 300 communities have implemented 10 year plans to end homelessness, and have seen dramatic reductions in the number of homeless on the streets as a result of these initiatives.

**Model for Change:** Southern Nevada, after two years of initial planning and infrastructure building, is now rolling out the first *Help Hope Home* Business Case with an Implementation Schedule and Evaluation Plan to ensure progress is made toward the overarching goal of ending homelessness. We will move forward using local data supported by best practices, with a plan that outlines three key strategies to change, including:

#### 1. Planning for Outcomes:

- o Design a roadmap for change, including objectives, activities and evaluation plans for each of the key strategies that will drive community outcomes.
- o Build the infrastructure that will deliver services, increase access to housing opportunities and support through increased collaboration and strategic alliances across the region.

#### 2. Close the Front Door:

- o Prevent homelessness whenever possible. Improve the availability of prevention programs, expand the types of prevention strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness in preventing homelessness.
- o Provide people at risk for homelessness with wraparound services. Improve access to wraparound mainstream services that link clients to services and community support to keep the client in safe, affordable housing and address health and wellness issues.

#### 3. Open the Back Door:

- o Rapidly re-house people who become homeless. Expand the availability of affordable permanent housing and improve access to sustainable housing options.
- o Implement the transition from the existing tiered shelter system to a system that focuses on providing housing.

**Expected Benefits:** Benefits to the community from implementing a ten year plan include:

- o Significant cost savings in public systems from reduced use by homeless individuals, including hospital emergency rooms, ambulances, and EMT services
- o Cost savings in homeless service systems, including homeless shelters, acute psychiatric services, and corrections programs which result from placement in supportive housing
- o Enhanced quality of life for people experiencing homelessness, as well as those who are at risk for becoming homeless, and an improved sense of community for all Southern Nevadans.

It can be done, and it will take all of us. Homelessness in Southern Nevada can be ended through a strategic and collaborative planning process that focuses on prevention and housing, and leverages the social and intellectual capital of the leaders and stakeholders in our community. We invite you to participate in the change we will create together, as we work to end homelessness in ten years in our community.



## **Help Hope Home** **Southern Nevada's Regional Plan to End Homelessness**

### **Vision**

In ten years, all individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Southern Nevada will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources needed to sustain it.

### **What We Believe**

We believe we can end homelessness in Southern Nevada.

We envision a homeless service delivery system that ends homelessness rather than manages homelessness. We believe that the collective social, intellectual, and entrepreneurial energy we have in this region will drive social change, literally changing the lives of individuals, families and the community. By taking a business approach to this problem, with a focus on return on investment, and a strong commitment to outcomes and action, we will create change.

It will take all of us from across the region to succeed: the business community, political leadership, community and faith based organizations and leaders, and individual citizens. As we describe in the *Help Hope Home* Plan to End Homelessness, Southern Nevada is ready to take on the challenge. We invite you to participate in this regional collaborative effort to ensure that the men, women and children who tonight will sleep on the streets, in their cars, or in temporary shelters will soon be sleeping in their own beds, in their own homes.

*“In Las Vegas, people genuinely believe that anything is possible. This self confidence is rooted in people’s individual experience and the collective story they tell. There is an unswerving sense of possibility upon which to create the future. As one person told us ‘this is a community that does not know the words: It cannot be done.’”*

-- Rich Harwood, Founder Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

## INTRODUCTION

### **Homelessness Defined**

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the definition of a homeless person is as follows:

1. an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
2. an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including motels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
3. an individual who depends on an institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
4. an individual who uses a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.<sup>1</sup>

### **Who Experiences Homelessness?**

Men, women, and children experience homelessness. America’s veterans, runaway and abandoned youth, senior citizens, and mentally ill persons experience homelessness. People who have alcohol, drug and gambling addictions, those who have left institutions with nowhere to go, and victims of domestic abuse experience homelessness. The unemployed and the working poor, who had jobs and lost them, or who are working but cannot make enough to afford housing experience homelessness. People with inadequate or no medical insurance who suffer a crisis experience homelessness. All of these issues make it real. Many of us know someone who is or has been one crisis away from being homeless, even if that meant sleeping on a friend’s couch or staying with a relative for a while. Across the country, studies have found trends in categories of homelessness that are described below.

### **Transitional Homelessness**

Transitional homelessness generally refers to a single episode of homelessness that is of relatively short duration. Persons who experience transitional homelessness use homeless resources for brief periods in times of economic hardship and temporary housing loss. The majority of families and single adults who become homeless over the course of a year fall into this category. Local research showed that Southern Nevada has shorter terms of homelessness than most other major cities, but has more instances of people without a home throughout the year.



### **Episodic Homelessness**

Episodic homelessness refers to recurrent periods of homelessness. People who experience episodic homelessness are younger and use the shelter system more sporadically than those whose shelter use is chronic. They often have substance addictions, leave shelters when they get income or use them seasonally, and are more resistant to services. Longitudinal research indicates that approximately nine percent of the single adult population fits this pattern of homelessness. These individuals use fewer resources than those whose homelessness is chronic, but are still frequent users of the system, staying for extended periods of time and utilizing approximately 30% of the shelter days over the course of a year.

### **Chronic Homelessness**

A chronically homeless person is defined by HUD as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.<sup>2</sup> For many communities, this definition has been broadened to include families if they are homeless for at least a year or experience four episodes of homelessness within a three year period. According to longitudinal research, people who are chronically homeless are more likely to have a serious mental illness, struggle with drug and/or alcohol addictions, and have a history of incarceration or hospitalization. Data across the country has shown that chronically homeless individuals use more shelter resources than transitional or episodic homeless.

### **Roots of the Homeless Service System**

Several factors have affected the increase in the incidence of homelessness and the growth of the homeless service infrastructure over the last two decades. These factors help explain why, despite the incredible efforts of the homeless service system, communities have not been able to stem the tide of increasing homeless people on the streets. According to the Urban Institute, structural factors in the United States have fueled the problem :

- o Changing housing markets for extremely low-income families and single adults are pricing more and more people out of the market;
- o Dwindling employment opportunities for people with a high school education or less are contributing to the widening gap between rich and poor;
- o The removal of institutional supports for people with severe mental illness, epitomized by drastic reductions in the use of long-term hospitalization for the mentally ill, are leaving many individuals with few housing options;
- o Despite laws against it, racial, ethnic, and class discrimination in housing, along with local zoning restrictions that exclude affordable housing alternatives, persist in many areas; and
- o Affordable housing has become scarce in recent years for those with little money, and earnings from employment have not kept pace with rapidly rising costs. As many struggle to survive, the services that they need to maintain stable lives become ever more difficult for the poorest citizens to afford, resulting in growing pressure on counties and states to service increasing populations in need.<sup>3</sup>

### **What We Know About Homelessness**

Thirty years ago widespread homelessness did not exist in America. Yet tonight, over one million people will be homeless across the United States, despite the creation of a two billion dollar a year infrastructure to manage the problem.<sup>4</sup>

Widespread homelessness emerged in the 1980's when severe cuts in federal low income housing programs and the ousting of mentally ill patients from institutions overwhelmed the homeless service system. Subsequently in the mid 80's, there was a corresponding increase in the number of homeless families, children

and adolescents. In response, Congress signed into law the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, which remains the only piece of federal legislation that provides funding to the direct service of homeless people.

As homeless rates grew in communities across the country for a variety of reasons, the homeless service infrastructure grew to meet demands, but little changed in terms of our ability to significantly impact the problem. Although helpful, the large infrastructure of shelters, soup kitchens, and counseling programs are not designed to solve the root causes of homelessness. As the homeless service delivery system grew, it became painfully evident that the system waoperated to manage, not alleviate homelessness. To provethat point, the number of homeless on the streets continued to grow.

In 1990 though, the tide of public opinion began to change, and counties, cities and states across the country began to create ten year plans to end homelessness, and take on the problem in new ways with new results. This movement has spread now to include 300 ten year plans that are as diverse as the communities they serve and based on best practice research and programs that produce measurable outcomes. Implementation of ten year plans has seen success in reducing homeless numbers by focusing on planning, prevention and housing.

### **How We Got Here and Why We Need to Change**

Considering that one out of every ten poor people in America face homelessness at some time during the average year, it is clear that current policies are not working.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the current system's relative inefficiency in addressing the root causes of homelessness, new social trends — new and easily obtained illegal drugs, more single and teen parent headed households, and thin or nonexistent extended family and support networks — have also contributed to the increase in the incidence of homelessness.<sup>6</sup>

In Southern Nevada, the rapidly expanding business climate and population growth has strained local social service systems, and as housing prices skyrocket, affordable housing is increasingly difficult to obtain. Local government has a role in solving social problems such as homelessness by crafting innovative and collaborative solutions that can fill the gaps in federal support, design systems that more effectively address root causes, and improve outcomes. By educating people about the facts behind the problem and committing to the belief that housing is a human right in a just society, we can cultivate the political will needed to end homelessness.



*“We know what to do, and right now, sitting right here, I can see the end of homelessness.”<sup>7</sup>*

--Philip Mangano, Executive Director of  
the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

The nationwide launch of the ten year plan strategy to end homelessness ushers in a new paradigm of housing and service provision, one in which integration, adaptation and collaboration with all sectors of the community are critical.<sup>8</sup> This proven model has raised public awareness, engaged the private sector in seeking solutions to homelessness, increased philanthropic participation, and encouraged a greater number of local leaders to take notice of and seek constructive solutions for the problems of the homeless.

Research and evaluation has shown that communities across the country have been able to bring even the hardest to serve homeless off the streets and help them to live stable lives if they are supplied with housing. Even clients who have extensive histories of substance abuse have been able to leave the streets when they were given access to permanent housing and supportive services. When costs are analyzed for these clients, the provision of housing compared to the costs of emergency treatment and shelter make this model virtually cost neutral and clearly more effective in improving outcomes for individuals and families.<sup>9</sup>

### The High Cost of Homelessness

For many who are interested in solving the problem of homelessness, it may seem that providing persons with shelter is cheaper than providing funds to get them into permanent housing. This view is deceptive. The cost of homelessness is staggering, not only to the affected individuals and families in terms of decreased health and wellness and the ability to meet the most basic needs, but also to the community in terms of real dollars.

The impact of homelessness on hospitals, prisons, and social services is high. Because homeless persons do not have a stable place to live, they are at risk for a variety of poor outcomes such as health and mental health difficulties, emotional and developmental delays in children, or incarceration. Preventing someone from becoming homeless, or providing a quick and efficient transition into stable permanent housing from homelessness can result in a significant cost savings, both financially and socially.

The following are some of the ways in which homelessness can be costly to the health delivery system alone:

- o \$3,722= average cost of an emergency room visit
- o \$7,444= average costs for emergency room visits by a homeless individual at two visits per year
- o \$214=average cost for transport by ambulance
- o \$4,440=average cost of a three day hospital stay

Those who only access healthcare through the emergency room do not receive follow-up care or services beyond immediate intervention, making them more likely to return to the hospital in the future.<sup>10</sup>

***“We can’t do this alone. We are going to need help, not just with resources, but with ideas.”***

--Gavin Newsom, Mayor of San Francisco  
on the San Francisco Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness

## OUR REGIONAL APPROACH



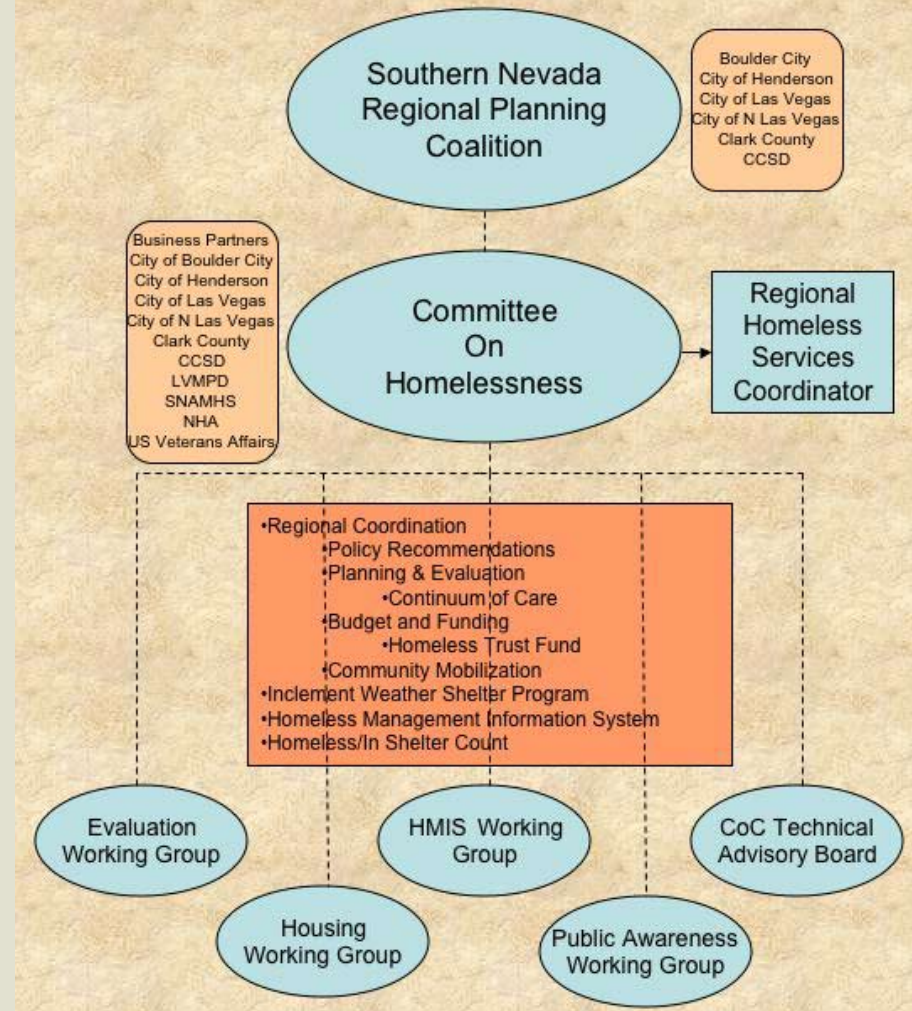
Southern Nevada continues to be one of the nation’s fastest growing regions. The unprecedented growth creates challenges in maintaining basic quality of life elements such as education, health care, the natural environment, public safety, and transportation. Recognizing that these issues transcend governmental jurisdictional boundaries, Clark County, the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and the Clark County School District entered into an interlocal agreement to establish the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC). The Coalition Board is made up of ten members with one to two elected officials appointed by the governing body of each entity.

Understanding the need to comprehensively address homelessness, the SNRPC convened its first committee to address a social problem. Established in 2004, the Committee on Homelessness was tasked with drafting and actualizing a regional plan. The membership of the Committee is appointed by the SNRPC and includes designees from each jurisdiction, the Nevada Homeless Alliance, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services, United States Veterans Affairs and local business.

The Office of the Regional Homeless Services Coordinator was also created in 2004 to support the Committee on Homelessness by coordinating a regional response to homelessness through collaborative efforts among local government entities and nonprofit service providers. This response depends upon input from all, and a structure has been established to demonstrate that commitment.

The following is a diagram which shows the structure of the regional response to homelessness led by the SNRPC and the Committee on Homelessness. Working groups that include designees from the Committee on Homelessness, subject matter experts, and local providers work together to implement policies and decisions to progress in the plan.

## Regional Response to Homelessness



Southern Nevada has been working on its planning strategy to end homelessness for several years, and is now moving forward with the next two steps in the process: the roll out of the Business Case and Implementation Schedule. We have chosen to present our plan as a Business Case, rather than a white paper, so that it can change and evolve with the changing social, political, and physical landscape of our community. Our Implementation Schedule will provide detail on how and when we will act, while the Business Case provides the larger philosophical reasons for change, and why we are engaging in the work of systems change.

We believe that ending homelessness is the right thing to do—for individuals, families, and the community. We will show that ending homelessness makes financial and social sense for our community, and that it truly costs more to do nothing about the problem. We invite people throughout our region to participate in the implementation of *Help Hope Home*, and the design of a system that can end homelessness in ten years in Southern Nevada.

### Gaps Analysis

The Gaps Analysis conducted in Southern Nevada in 2004 provides us with locally relevant data that drives the implementation of strategies and initiatives. Illustrating the problem are data such as this: In 2003, according to the Southern Nevada Community Assessment, 31,863 Clark County households had incomes less than \$15,000 per year.<sup>11</sup> “A minimum wage worker has to work 107 hours a week to afford a two bedroom unit at the fair market rate rent, or 147 hours to afford a three bedroom unit. There are 168 hours in a seven-day week.”<sup>12</sup>

It became apparent that those who were employed and working over 40 hours could not afford housing in Clark County, surely those individuals and families homeless and/or on the verge of homelessness

would not be able to afford housing. Alternatives to permanent housing and housing stock in Clark County became a significant issue. Federally funded Section 8 housing, developer incentives, master leases and numerous other opportunities were considered. At the conclusion of this effort, it was decided that a committee be formed to address this massive issue of housing in Clark County.

The Gaps Analysis led to the development of a regional plan to illustrate the social impacts of homelessness in this community. Lack of affordable and attainable housing, limited homeless services, non-profit capacity and few prevention services redefined this community “at risk”.

### Southern Nevada Regional Homeless and Housing 10 Point Plan

Over 150 diverse stakeholders participated in planning and focus groups over a ten month period to provide input on gaps in services to the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness. Stakeholders included the homeless, homeless service providers, representatives from the business community, and neighborhood organizations. The gaps analysis identified over 105 gaps in service that were grouped under 10 priority areas. In June, 2005 the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition and its Committee on Homelessness approved the following ten original points, which became the Southern Nevada Regional Homeless and Housing 10 Point Plan:

- o Enhance coordination between non-profit organizations and government
- o Prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless
- o Provide seamless client services through effective partnerships
- o Foster self-sufficiency through access to education, training and employment opportunities
- o Increase the availability of stable and affordable housing
- o Facilitate the transition from homelessness through intensive case management
- o Ensure the availability of basic needs services
- o Increase access to medical, dental and vision care services
- o Improve the availability of mental health services
- o Improve the availability of substance abuse treatment programs.<sup>13</sup>

### How Many People Are Homeless in Southern Nevada?

Like most major urban areas, people living in Southern Nevada are looking for prospects of employment, a better life, retirement, and warmer weather. For many, Clark County is the land of opportunity, but for a growing number of individuals and families the prospect of being homeless is a constant worry.



According to the 2007 United Way Community Assessment, affordable housing, financial stability, health care and mental health are major concerns of planners and citizens alike. Their findings about the difficulties families have affording housing help us to understand that many families are at risk for homelessness in an environment defined by skyrocketing land and home prices, a decline in affordable apartments, and a lack of subsidized housing for those who need assistance.<sup>14</sup>

### **2007 Southern Nevada Homeless Census**

In order to design a plan to end homelessness that actually solves local problems, we needed local data that could tell us who was experiencing homelessness in Southern Nevada. In collaboration with Applied Survey Research, the SNRPC Committee on Homelessness conducted a point in time (two day) homeless census on January 30 and 31, 2007. Of the 11,417 homeless people identified in the census:

- o 34% were in shelter facilities and 66% were unsheltered.
- o At least 33% are considered “hidden” homeless: people who are homeless in jails, hospitals, rehab facilities, or doubled up with friends or family.
- o Nearly 73% of survey respondents had been homeless less than one year.
- o Approximately 7% of all survey respondents (sheltered and unsheltered) had children under the age of 18 living with them.
- o Demographically, the homeless population was diverse, though African Americans were significantly over-represented at 33% of the homeless population, while making up less than 9% of the general population.
- o 56% of all respondents were between 31-50 years old. 2% of the survey respondents were unaccompanied youth.
- o 19% of respondents indicated they had children in foster care.
- o 72% of respondents were male, 28% were female.
- o 71% of all survey respondents had their high school diploma or equivalent and nearly 28% of those had attended some college or had a college degree.
- o 50% of respondents indicated they had some disabling condition; 24% experience some form of physical disability.
- o Of the 65% of survey respondents who indicated they have been living in Southern Nevada at the time they became homeless, the majority of respondents (52%) had been living in Southern Nevada for 3 or more years before they became homeless.<sup>15</sup>

This data provides baseline information about our homeless population that will allow us to benchmark our progress as we implement our ten year plan to end homelessness. The data in the 2007 Southern Nevada Homeless Census also provides information about the characteristics, likely causes, and contributing factors to homelessness in Clark County. Two primary reasons for homelessness included loss of employment (over 35%) and alcohol or substance abuse (over 17%). Other reasons articulated ranged from gambling problems, domestic violence, disputes with friend or family, illness or medical problems, divorce or separation, incarceration, mental health issues, landlord raised rent or landlord stopped renting.

It is important to note that point-in-time surveys are unable to capture homeless persons who experience short episodes of homelessness at different times of the year. Applied Survey Research used a formula created by the Corporation for Supportive Housing to arrive at the estimated number of homeless people in Clark County over the course of a given year. Using this formula, there are an estimated 50,656 persons who will experience homelessness this year in Clark County. This alarming statistic places Nevada at the top of the list of the nation’s point-in-time homelessness rate.<sup>16</sup>



## **Southern Nevada’s Plan to End Homelessness**

Our plan is a living, working reflection of the collaborative process that began two years ago, and larger efforts by community advocates and providers over decades in Southern Nevada, and continues today through a strategic, regional approach to change. *Help Hope Home* is the product of that work, and the roadmap that will guide us in our actions as we work together toward a common vision. We have worked with the community for two years to conduct a gaps analysis and a point in time homeless count that now provides us with baseline data about how homeless people interact with services, move through the system, and how we can improve those outcomes.

Using this data we are able to articulate our plan to end homelessness in this Business Case, and to begin implementing the strategies that have been proven effective nationwide, as well as the strategies that local leaders, citizens and stakeholders have designed to drive local policy. As we move into the Implementation Phase of the ten year plan process, the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition and its Committee on Homelessness will develop action plans that detail short and long term implementation strategies and benchmarks. We will empower organizations to change and grow with this plan by providing technical assistance and support as we focus on planning, prevention and housing in Southern Nevada and evolve our systems and programs to end this problem.

### **Moving Forward – Our New Approach**

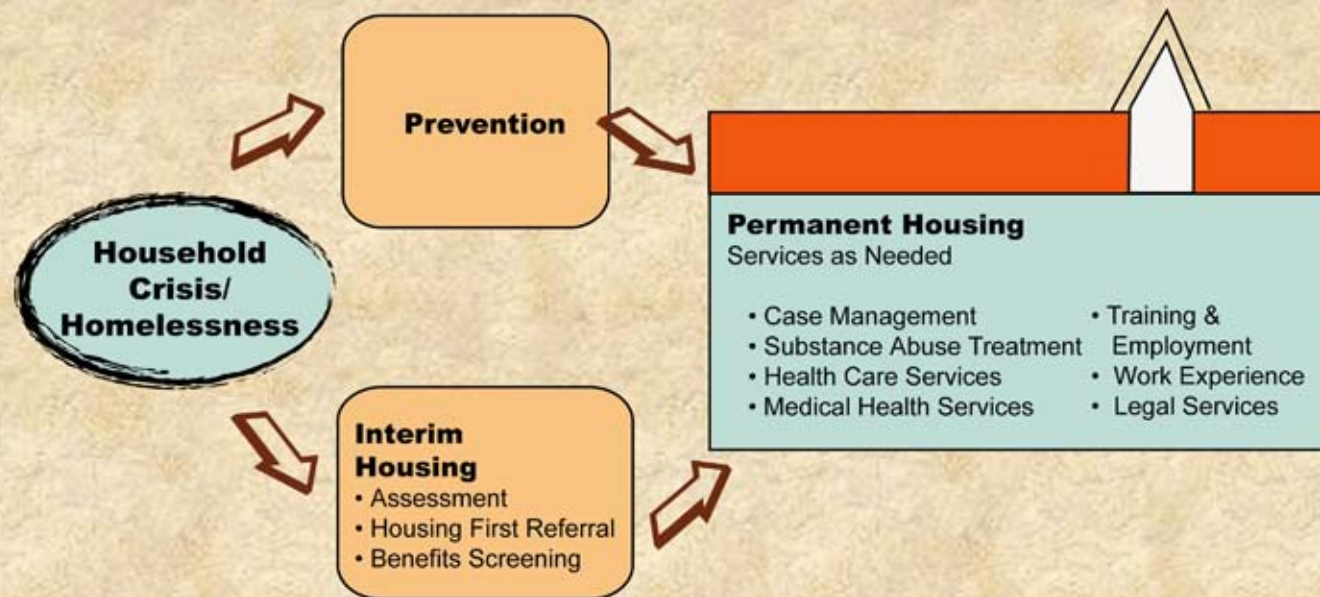
The long term solution to the problem of homelessness is to provide affordable and accessible housing for all of our residents. The *Help Hope Home* plan will define core strategies and create an Implementation Schedule that we will use to make this change a reality. These strategies and their objectives, along with the activities that support them, form our local agenda for change over the next ten years. These core strategies are based on best practices and proven methods that have decreased the incidence of homelessness in communities that have successfully implemented them across the country.

The difference between the current continuum service model and the *Help Hope Home* service model is a focus on the immediacy of housing and homelessness prevention versus the current shelter system of emergency shelter, transitional shelter, and finally permanent housing. The following diagram represents the current shelter system and the *Help Hope Home* plan.

## Current Shelter Model



## Help Hope Home Model




As we work with community stakeholders to obtain input, feedback and the data necessary to implement a plan to end homelessness, we have also taken advantage of the experience and expertise of national advocates to end homelessness by modeling *Help Hope Home* after other successful initiatives in other communities, including Chicago, Denver and Portland.

In addition, we have evolved this community process based on the work of the National Alliance to End Homelessness ([www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)), an early advocate for ten-year plans. *Help Hope Home*, and the strategies that anchor our plan are supported by the best practice model and experiences of the Alliance, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and 300 communities across the nation that are working to end homelessness.


*“More is being done now than ever in our community’s history to help the homeless. Never have all the local governments and homeless providers come together and reached consensus on how to get people off the streets and into jobs or supportive services.”*

--Darryl Martin, Assistant County Manager  
Chair, SNRPC’s Committee on Homelessness

A photograph of a piece of white paper with the word "HELP" written in black capital letters, placed on a light-colored surface.


**Planning for outcomes by designing and implementing the roadmap: the Business Case and Implementation Schedule for *Help Hope Home*.**

- o Collecting data that allows identification of the most effective strategy for each sub-group of the homeless population.
- o Bringing to the planning table those responsible for mainstream as well as homeless-targeted resources.
- o Planning an improved infrastructure - helping people stay in their homes and thrive.
- o Evaluating progress toward plan objectives and creating effective feedback loops to obtain data about program effectiveness.

A photograph of a piece of white paper with the word "HOPE" written in black capital letters, placed on a light-colored surface.

***Closing the front door to homelessness through prevention and support.***

- o Reaching individuals and families in crisis when they need it through supportive and wraparound services to prevent homelessness and help people maintain housing when they have been re-housed.
- o Preventing homelessness by making mainstream poverty programs more accountable or the outcomes of their most vulnerable clients and wards.

A photograph of a piece of white paper with the word "HOME" written in black capital letters, placed on a light-colored surface.

***Opening the back door out of homelessness to housing.***

- o Moving people out of crisis and into a safe place to live through rapid re-housing programs.
- o Creating an adequate supply of appropriate housing that can be developed and subsidized for homeless persons.
- o Increase access to affordable housing.

## **HELP - Planning For Outcomes**

By designing a roadmap for change, including strategies, objectives and an evaluation plan that ensures accountability, we will build an improved infrastructure that will support progress toward our goal of ending homelessness.

As part of the planning process, we have worked collaboratively over the last two years to build a base of cooperation and communication and obtain locally relevant sources of data. As a result of this community based process, we have forged new relationships and garnered support as we move toward the common goal of ending homelessness in Southern Nevada.

We will continue to work with local service providers at all levels to encourage alliances, referrals, communication and coordination of services to benefit the client and improve outcomes. The implementation of this type of approach will mean that agencies and organizations will need to work together to develop plans for clients, with each agency contributing it its own way. The Committee on Homelessness will continue this focus on collaborative problem solving and strategic alliances as we move into the implementation phase of the plan. The implementation schedule that we create and follow will guide us as we work together to end homelessness.

A key component of this coordination is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is a software program that stores data on the characteristics and service needs of homeless persons. Homeless assistance providers in Southern Nevada will use this web-based application to coordinate care, manage their operations, reduce duplication of service, and improve client services. An HMIS knits together homeless service providers within a community and creates a more coordinated and effective housing and service delivery system, allowing for the improved evaluation of program effectiveness which is critical to ending homelessness.<sup>17</sup>

***Planning for Outcomes objectives include:***

- o Holding focus groups, work sessions
- o Conducting the Point-In-Time Homeless Count every two years
- o Conducting a Gaps Analysis
- o Collaborating to drive regional policy
- o Working to streamline funding programs to support plan initiatives
- o Crafting a business case for ending homelessness
- o Developing an implementation schedule with goals, objectives and benchmarks delineated
- o Producing an evaluation and reporting plan
- o Continuously evaluate the service delivery system through the Homeless Management Information System



## HOPE - Prevention

For all involved in the fight to end homelessness, a focus on prevention as one of the key strategies to achieve our goal is critical. We will work to prevent homelessness through access to support services when homelessness is threatened, and through the provision of wraparound services once a person has found permanent housing again after homelessness, improving stability.

For an individual or family to remain stable in a home, access to fundamental resources and supportive services are necessary, so that when the family experiences difficult times, their housing is not jeopardized. It is critical that we focus on meeting the needs of homeless youth in order to prevent adult homelessness as our own Homeless Management Information System data tells us that 35% of homeless adults claim to have been homeless teens.

### Prevention objectives include:

- o Preventing eviction and displacement
- o Increasing access to transitional and supportive housing
- o Providing one time and short term rental assistance
- o Increasing the income of the poor through education and training
- o Increasing access to community treatment programs and supported institutional release programs
- o Improving placement services for housing for individuals coming out of hospitals, mental health institutions, jails, prisons and the child care system
- o Providing wraparound social services to clients who have been housed after a period of homelessness



***“Only by addressing systemic problems and providing emergency relief can homelessness be eliminated.”***

-- The Urban Institute, 2001



## HOME - A Focus on Housing

Over the next ten years, Southern Nevada must dramatically change the way it addresses homelessness in order to reach our goal of ending the crisis in that time. In order to end homelessness, we will transition our system to a Housing First model, with all resources and efforts directed to this end. The Housing First methodology is premised on the belief that vulnerable and at-risk homeless families are more responsive to interventions and social services support after they are in their own housing, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities or housing programs.<sup>18</sup>

### Focus on Housing objectives include:

- o Expanding permanent housing subsidies
- o Increasing the availability of affordable housing
- o Implementing a Housing First strategy
- o Addressing regulatory barriers and retention of affordable housing
- o Developing harm reduction programs for clients

***“Homelessness in Southern Nevada and across the nation is an extremely complex and intractable challenge facing our communities. Successfully obtaining solutions for this population is contingent upon the coordinated efforts of everyone in this valley--governmental organizations, the private sector, non-profit groups, faith-based organizations and citizens.”***

--Thom Reilly, Vice President of Community Reinvestment & Social Responsibility, Harrah’s Entertainment, Inc.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### **Assessment and Preparation**

Phase One: The Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition has worked with community stakeholders over the past two years to inspire change, and design the roadmap that our community will use to end homelessness over the next ten years. We have assessed a wide variety of variables through a range of means, including conducting a gaps analysis, a point-in-time homeless count, focus groups, stakeholder input sessions and primary and secondary research.

We now have baseline data on how many homeless people are living in Clark County, and how they interact with social services and institutions. This data will allow us to benchmark our progress against the implementation goals. For example, we will be able to see trends in how long people are remaining in shelters versus how quickly we can move them into housing, and how many people are becoming homeless in a given year. We have also mapped out federal, state and local funding sources, as well as the community providers serving clients in our community.

### **Transition**

Phase Two: The next phase of Southern Nevada's regional plan to end homelessness includes the transition to a system that focuses on planning, prevention and housing, and includes the design of a detailed implementation schedule, evaluation plan, and lines of accountability for the plan. We will work with stakeholders, government, and community agencies to create the infrastructure elements of a Housing First service system, provide incentives to change, direct resources to programs that support plan goals, and advocacy at the policy level to build State and Federal support. The Implementation Schedule will identify plan costs and will include an assessment of available funding and the gaps that we must address in order to fully implement program strategies and objectives.

### **Implementation**

Phase Three: The final phase is described as full implementation of the *Help Hope Home* plan. As the plan is implemented, we expect to reduce homeless counts and improve short and long-term outcomes for persons experiencing homelessness. We will expect to see increases in affordable housing stocks and reduced expenditures on the traditional shelter infrastructure. We will evaluate plan activities on an ongoing basis in order to ensure the effectiveness of the model and benchmark progress against baseline data.

### **Evaluation**

The implementation schedule will include specific activities and lines of accountability and reporting. Evaluation will be ongoing and will include all aspects of the plan. We will implement usage of the HMIS system across the region and will establish reporting plans for outcomes, as well as technical assistance provision to programs to assist them with their own evaluation efforts.

The Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition and its Committee on Homelessness are responsible for implementation and evaluation of the *Help Hope Home* plan to end homelessness. Coordination will be provided by the Office of the Regional Coordinator. Every two years the Office of the Regional Coordinator will publish a report back to the community on our progress toward goals and outcomes with updates during the interim years.

## CONCLUSION

This Business Case is designed to outline the merits of *Help Hope Home* and acknowledge the work done over the past two years to support the paradigm shift from addressing homelessness to ending homelessness here in Southern Nevada. Our vision, in this city of opportunity and innovation, is that every person who calls this community home has access to a safe, permanent place to call home. Please join us as we initiate true change in our community. It can be done. It will take all of us.

*“Homelessness is a regional issue that affects us all. By working together, we become stronger and can accomplish our ultimate goal of ending homelessness.”*

---Oscar B. Goodman, Mayor of Las Vegas and  
Chair of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition





## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, codified in USCA 42 Section 11302(a).
- <sup>2</sup> This definition was taken from the Notice of Funding Availability for the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness/Federal Register, Vol. 68, Number 17/ Monday January 27, 2004, 4019. This definition is shared by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- <sup>3</sup> Burt, Martha, Laudan Y. Aaron, and Edgar Lee, with Jesse Valente, 2001. *Helping America's Homelessness: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing?* Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/tenyearplan/execsum>
- <sup>5</sup> Burt, Martha, Laudan Y. Aaron, and Edgar Lee, with Jesse Valente, 2001. *Helping America's Homelessness: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing?* Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.
- <sup>6</sup> *A Plan: Not a Dream. How to End Homelessness in Ten Years.* The National Alliance to End Homelessness.
- <sup>7</sup> <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/01/14/>
- <sup>8</sup> [http://www.homebaseccc.org/site\\_extras/NAEH.pdf](http://www.homebaseccc.org/site_extras/NAEH.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> Shinn, M., and J. Baumohl. 1999. "Rethinking the Prevention of Homelessness." In *Practical Lessons: The 1998 Symposium on Homelessness Research*, edited by L.B. Fosburg and D.L. Dennis. Washington, D.C.: U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services
- <sup>10</sup> *Help Hope Home* website located at [www.helphopehome.org](http://www.helphopehome.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Southern Nevada Community Assessment located at [www.uwsn.org](http://www.uwsn.org)
- <sup>12</sup> Real Estate Round Table, Social Impacts of Growth, Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies, College of Business, Department of Finance, UNLV, 2004
- <sup>13</sup> *Help Hope Home* website located at [www.helphopehome.org](http://www.helphopehome.org)
- <sup>14</sup> Southern Nevada Community Assessment located at [www.uwsn.org](http://www.uwsn.org)
- <sup>15</sup> Southern Nevada Homeless Census and Survey. 2007. Applied Survey Research. Watsonville, CA 95076.
- <sup>16</sup> Southern Nevada Community Assessment p. 57 figure 15, located at [www.uwsn.org](http://www.uwsn.org)
- <sup>17</sup> From [www.HMIS.info](http://www.HMIS.info), a HUD sponsored website.
- <sup>18</sup> [www.beyondshelter.org](http://www.beyondshelter.org)