The State of Our Homelessness Crisis

An Overview of Lane County Homelessness & Recommendations from the Eugene Business Community

Prepared by:
Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce

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Introduction ——

Over the past year, it has become increasingly clear that public safety and homeless-related issues are top priorities for the business community. Business leaders are frustrated by illegal activities accompanying many illegal camps across the city. There is also despair that we don't have safe places in our community for people who have fallen on hard times.

The Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce has tracked the efforts to manage our homeless crisis and engaged in conversations to identify resources over the past few years; however, there has been no collective effort for the private business community to formally engage in this issue at a community-wide level.

As the concerns and requests for help from businesses escalated, the Eugene Chamber board of directors, composed of local business owners and community leaders, agreed that bringing the private sector to the table to accelerate our community toward permanent solutions to homelessness needed to be a top priority for the chamber.

As a result, we set out to better understand the complexity of the crisis in order to identify existing barriers so we could recommend improvements. We do not claim to be experts, but we have spoken to the experts and their insights are included throughout this report.

Over the past six months, the Eugene Chamber interviewed over 150 stakeholders in the community, including executives from nearly every nonprofit delivering homeless services, city and county staff, business and community leaders, unhoused individuals and residents. In addition, we spoke with many experts from communities across the country who made significant progress towards ending homelessness.

As a comprehensive summary of our research, this report is intended to document the current state of the homeless crisis in our community. It highlights a collection of successful endeavors worthy of recognition, along with recommendations for additional actions.

The solutions -- plural intended -- cannot be reduced to a simple "golden ticket." Nevertheless, we believe there is a light at the end of this tunnel, and we hope to inspire community partners to unite to end to homelessness in our community.

Executive Summary —

The State of our Homeless Crisis

# of Homeless in Lane County in August 2021	# of Homeless moved into housing Aug 2021	Total Shelter inventory for Lane County Aug 2021
3,115	**42**	**851**

Homelessness is not new to our community. There are numerous factors that have led us to our current crisis, on a national, state and local scale. We have structural, cultural and political realities that uniquely impact the crisis in our community. We have long lacked adequate low-barrier shelter spaces. We have also lacked the political will and, consequently, the community justice resources to adequately address the criminal behavior taking place in our community.

Lane County's human-centered approach is one of our greatest strengths. Eugene and Springfield house dozens of service agencies that have been recognized nationwide as leaders in their areas of focus. Yet, critical analysis urges us to recognize that this crisis has continued to worsen in our community despite millions of dollars of investment and countless hours of service. Even with the aid of well-intentioned efforts, our community must reevaluate our definition of success and explore further opportunities to drive change.

To shift from our current state of *managing* our homeless crisis to truly making homelessness *rare, brief and non-recurring*, we must move away from a government-driven and funded model to a collective impact approach that brings more stakeholders to the table to pursue solutions.

By focusing on obtaining accurate data, increasing our shelter and housing capacity, improving coordination between service providers and targeting investments, we can break down silos, reduce overlap, and expand capacity for critical wrap-around services. None of this can be accomplished if we don't take the steps to build community trust and move from a culture of tolerance to one of wellness and accountability.

Implementing these recommendations will be difficult, but we have reasons to be hopeful. There appears to be more willingness than ever before to approach these challenges differently. By working together we can make our community better, safer and more humane. Together we can end homelessness for good.

Recommendations

There is broad agreement among partners that a fundamentally different way to approach this issue is needed. It is essential that community stakeholders from all sectors align to more efficiently utilize our limited resources. Until efforts are better united, we cannot achieve success.

The following recommendations, in no particular order, aim to establish homelessness as rare, brief and non-recurring.

1 ❯ Quality Data
Our current methods and systems for collecting data are inadequate and make it difficult to fully understand the scope of the problem. We need to establish a quality, actionable baseline of data so we can accurately identify solutions.

2 ❯ Shared Goals + Collective Impact
Convene leaders from across sectors to agree on shared goals and align around strategic actions to end homelessness. We can't rely on government and nonprofits to solve this crisis, it will take all of us.

3 ❯ Service Provider Capacity
Restrictive funding sources make it difficult to pay good wages and retain staff. We need to strengthen administrative and programmatic capacity for nonprofit service providers, with reimagined funding strategies.

4 ❯ Emergency Shelter + Permanent Housing
We must prioritize increasing emergency shelter capacity and relentlessly pursue strategies that will make housing more affordable in Lane County if we are going to make progress on ending homelessness.

5 ❯ Outreach + Case Management
Better coordinated outreach and case management is needed to reduce overlap, use our limited funds more efficiently and make the system easier to navigate for our unhoused population.

6 ❯ Wrap-around Services
We need effective 'wrap-around' services like mental health and substance abuse support, workforce skills training and employment connections that will help our unhoused achieve sustained wellness.

7 ❯ Enforcement + Accountability
It's time to shift our community culture from one of tolerance to one of wellness and accountability. We need to send the message that Eugene is no place for those, housed or unhoused, who want to break the law.

8 ❯ Rebuild Community Trust
Improving communication, transparency and accountability among all stakeholders, is critically necessary to rebuild community trust and instill a sense of hope for the future.

> **We recognize that we have structural, cultural and political realities that impact the crisis in our community.**

History ———

Homelessness is not a new phenomenon. To plan for the future, we must observe and learn from the past. Decades of federal, state and local policy decisions, as well as economic conditions and cultural influences, have led us to our current crisis. Mass gentrification of cities in the 1960s, deinstitutionalization of mental hospitals in the 1980s, federal reductions in funding for housing just as scores of veterans were returning from military conflicts, and the Great Recession have all contributed to the increasing numbers of people living on the streets.

More recently, Oregon voters passed Measure 110, decriminalizing personal possession of certain amounts of hard drugs. Addiction recovery experts observed that, as with the deinstitutionalization of mental health, Measure 110 began with public support and good intentions but went into effect before communities had effective alternative methods to treat mental health crises or substance abuse, both of which are leading drivers of homelessness in the United States.[1]

When the housing market crashed, the rate of building new homes slowed significantly. Federal, state and local regulations, as well as neighborhood push back, then led to underdevelopment of market rate, workforce and affordable housing. Oregon's Regional Housing Needs Analysis suggests that Lane County would need to add 44,411 units of housing over five years to keep up with population growth and house people without a home.[2] Last year, the Holiday Farm Fire destroyed hundreds of affordable dwellings, displacing a staggering number of individuals in our county.

Combine these obstacles with the complexity of a global pandemic and it becomes understandable that our systems are overburdened.

However, we are not the only community experiencing a homeless crisis of this scale. Many cities across the United States are also experiencing this crisis and are making progress towards ending homelessness.[3] We can look to those communities for inspiration and hope.

We recognize that we have structural, cultural and political realities that uniquely impact the crisis in our community. We have long lacked adequate low-barrier shelter spaces. We have also lacked the political will and, consequently, the community justice resources to adequately address the criminal behavior taking place in our community.

Historically, "Sweeping" entire unsanctioned homeless encampments, rather than arresting or specifically removing those homeless individuals who are participating in illegal behavior, has caused some to, rightly, criticize the local government for criminalizing the act of being homeless. As a result of that criticism, community members feel we are doing nothing about criminals committing vandalism, assault, theft and drug dealing, often against our unhoused individuals more than anyone else.

We heard time and again that as a consequence we are attracting some individuals to our community not to access services but due to our culture of tolerance for crime.

We know the reasons individuals become unhoused are as diverse as our population and will take strategic, individualized, and collective efforts to overcome, but we believe overcoming it is possible.

Our Current Crisis

Drive the streets of West Eugene, walk the parks of downtown or float past the banks of the Willamette River and you will see thousands of individuals living unhoused and unsheltered in our community.

According to our Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count, a practice mandated by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department that helps us determine the size of our local homeless population, Lane County has seen an increase in homelessness every year since 2016.[4] While this number continued to grow year over year, our sheltering options, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing did not keep pace with increasing demand. As a result, in Lane County a staggering 80% of our unhoused population is living unsheltered (meaning they are not currently staying in a sanctioned shelter, but instead living in places not meant for human habitation). This is among the highest proportion of unsheltered among unhoused individuals in the nation; nationally, 35% are considered homeless and unsheltered.[4]

For years, homeless service providers have criticized the PIT count for its numerous shortcomings. Determining how many homeless individuals we have in our county by counting on one night, in the winter months, with an inconsistent number of volunteers has led to significantly under counting our unhoused population.

In 2019 our community made a positive move towards better understanding the size and scope of our homeless crisis by establishing a "Homeless-by-Name List" (HBNL)[5] that provides a more accurate count of homeless individuals in our community in any given month.

Essentially, the HBNL created an unduplicated list of all people experiencing homelessness who access services in the area. Managed by Lane County, nonprofit service providers input data every month, improving accuracy in identifying who is currently unhoused and who has received services.

In 2019, the first full year for HBNL in Lane County, **9,679** unduplicated individuals accessed homelessness services in Lane County during at least one point in the year. Comparatively, the 2019 PIT Count only identified **2,165** unhoused people.

As we will discuss in detail later, the HMIS system has several shortcomings of its own but a shift towards comprehensive, real-time, by-name data is a critical step in understanding the depth and breadth of the homeless challenge facing our region.

Average days spent homeless in Lane County.

86	**133**	**118**
2018	**2019**	**2020**

Scope of Homelessness in Lane County

A public dashboard, updated monthly by Lane County, gives insight into the scope of our current crisis. Data provided by a limited number of nonprofit service providers allows us to see the homeless inflow and outflow numbers as well as provides information about our shelters, temporary housing and permanent housing units.

3,155
# of Homeless in Lane County in August 2021

9,107*
Total # of Homeless in Lane County in 2020

42
# of Homeless moved in to housing in August 2021

851
Total shelter inventory in Lane County in August 2021

80
% of Unhoused living unsheltered in Lane County in 2019

46
% Increase in Eug/Spfld rental prices between 2011-2020

* This is the total number of individuals who spent time unhoused in Lane County in which data was collected for throughout all of 2020. Year to Date for 2021, we are on pace to exceed our 2020 numbers with 6,505 individuals who have been identified as unhoused through August 2021.

SOURCE: LC-Human Services Division Tableu Report Homeless Housing Shelter Inventory in Lane County & Homelssness in Lane County   https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/lchsd
SOURCE: www.rentdata.org

Local Progress ———

In the midst of a discouraging situation, we have success stories and innovative programs that we should continue to support.

The community's human-centered approach is one of our greatest strengths. Eugene and Springfield house dozens of service agencies that have been recognized nationwide as leaders in their areas of focus.

The Community Court program has reduced repeat offenses for participants who graduated from the program, diverting individuals from entering our overburdened criminal justice system.[6]

We were one of the first deployments in the country of the FUSE (Frequent User Systems Engagement) system, which identifies individuals who, due to their unhoused status, frequently use health and justice services and prioritizes getting them into permanent supportive housing.[7] This reduces costs for our community and improves outcomes for those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Innovative programs like CAHOOTS, tiny home villages and Conestoga Huts are catching the eye of community leaders across the country. This positive public recognition reflects the heart of the community: compassion for others.

Yet critical analysis urges us to recognize that this crisis has continued to worsen in our community despite millions of dollars of investment and countless hours of service.

In early 2018 Eugene and Lane County hired the Technical Assistance Collaborative to conduct a Public Shelter Feasibility Study and Homeless Service System analysis for Lane County. Out of that effort ten recommendations were made to improve our homeless services system.[8] While many of those recommendations are still valid, they were built off of inaccurate data and the City and County have been very slow to implement the improvements. They must still be considered in future actions, but need a broader coalition of community members driving them forward with much greater urgency.

Even with the aid of well-intentioned efforts, our community must reevaluate our definition of success and explore further opportunities to drive change.

Our Recommendations

When speaking with stakeholders it became clear that while we have experienced some success and have examples of impactful programs in our community, we are still very far from making a sizable impact on the current homeless crisis.

Stakeholders communicated a sense of defeat and exhaustion, explaining that the community is entrenched in a cycle of *managing* the crisis rather than *solving* for homelessness.

There is broad agreement among partners that a fundamentally different way to approach this issue is needed. It is essential that community stakeholders from all sectors align to more efficiently utilize our limited resources. Until efforts are better united, we cannot achieve success.

The recommendations on the following pages aim to establish homelessness as rare, brief and non-recurring.

1 Establish a quality, actionable baseline of data.

In order to understand and solve any complex problem, it's necessary to start with accurate, actionable data that will help us maximize efficiency while minimizing waste or duplication of resources. Unfortunately, it is increasingly clear that a streamlined data-collection process is missing.

All too often, our lack of coordination and poor data collection lead to examples like the one below.

Ex. Mary has been living unhoused in a community park. She recently began working with a case manager from a local service agency to find shelter. While she is placed on a waitlist for a rest stop she is approached by a volunteer from a faith-based organization who attempts to connect her with shelter and sends her to a case manager from a different agency. Neither agency knows what the other is doing or that they are duplicating efforts. In the end, Mary is confused, frustrated and turned off by the system altogether.

Our "Homeless By Name" list and "Homeless Management Information System" (HMIS) attempt to mitigate those errors, but not all nonprofit service providers or faith organizations input data into the system. There is little incentive to do so. It is costly for nonprofits and no one requires participation, thus there is little interest in participating.

Additionally, the "Homeless By Name" list only tallies the total of individuals receiving services from specific providers. It does not capture the numbers of unhoused individuals living on the streets who are not receiving services. Making Lane County's total count of homeless persons inaccurate.

Until data collection is more effectively utilized and organized, this community will not have the information needed to identify viable solutions and improvements.

Where do we go from here?

- Establish a collective group of nonprofit service providers, private sector technology professionals and county staff to analyze the shortcomings of our current system and determine process improvements. This group can help determine policy and establish standards of excellence to be used by all those providing data.

- Improve or acquire a more versatile system to count the total number of homeless individuals in Lane County and to assist in connecting them to services.

- Provide users easy access to the data they share and allow them to pull reports that help them track the impact of their programs.

- Provide funding and incentives and require all organizations serving unhoused individuals to participate in data reporting through the HMIS system.

- Offer training for more organizations and individuals on how to contribute data.

- Establish regular audits of the system to ensure data entry is accurate and consistent.

2 Convene leaders from across sectors to agree on shared goals and align around strategic actions to end homelessness.

For years the responsibility of serving our unhoused population has fallen on government, nonprofits and the faith community. As the number of individuals living on the streets has grown, these institutions have become overwhelmed. As a result, our community spends enormous amounts of time and energy just trying to manage the impacts of this crisis.

Our homeless crisis is too large for any of these institutions to solve on their own. We need a coalition of business, nonprofit, philanthropy, faith-based, government, unhoused and housed community members to convene as equals and determine how we can do things differently.

To start, we need a shared understanding of what we are actually trying to accomplish. Once we agree on the ultimate goal, we can better determine how we get there and how we intend to measure success.

In our interviews, many stakeholders shared a concern that our city and county have not fully agreed to a method for how we approach this problem or identified who is responsible for funding or executing which tactics. Additionally, we heard that in the past nonprofits have been perceived as competing with each other for funds and holding data close to the chest.

Homelessness can not be solved by a hodge-podge collection of individual program efforts.

Where do we go from here?

- Convene a strategic group of business, nonprofit, government, philanthropy, faith community, housed and unhoused neighbors to determine our shared goal.

- Implement a collective-impact, or similar model, approach to agree on the metrics we will use to measure success, identify known barriers to achieving our shared goal, and convene expert groups to tackle each challenge.

- Agree upon a method to hold each other accountable and communicate our progress to the broader community.

We have incredible nonprofits and service providers delivering programs that are not integrated or measured against or with each other. We must have a strategic approach that ties all of these individual programs together and shares responsibility for solving this crisis.

In the face of limited resources, we must make the most of those we have by aligning priorities, clarifying responsibilities, and securing a commitment from all partners to work together to achieve our goals.

3 Strengthen administrative and programmatic capacity for service providers, by focusing on a reimagined funding strategy.

The homeless service and affordable housing system, such as it is, is heavily funded by the federal government, has supplementary funding from the state and otherwise relies on local governments to implement and make up the resource difference.

With government funding comes a regulatory and administrative burden for nonprofits to fulfill tracking and reporting on grants. The funding, however, rarely comes close to covering the true overhead costs associated with administering and delivering the desired services.

As a result, nonprofits find themselves stretched too thin to adequately perform the services they have agreed to deliver and our community does not get the outcomes we desire. Like many businesses across our community, nonprofits are facing workforce challenges never seen before. In interview after interview with service providers, we heard about the difficulty nonprofits face in retaining staff as limited finances constrain the pay and benefits they can offer.

High levels of turnover in these organizations result in resources being repeatedly spent on training and fewer resources spent on serving the unhoused. We need to rethink the ways we are funding solutions to homelessness. Both public and private funders should establish shared metrics and desired outcomes in which we collectively invest. We should also identify opportunities for the private sector to support nonprofits in developing business plans, creating more efficient systems, financial management and sharing human resource strategies.

Where do we go from here?

- Establish a 'funders collaborative' to bring private donors together to align funding with public sector dollars, establish guidelines for funding that follow broad community metrics and holds nonprofits accountable to achieving those metrics, and pools resources to ensure our funding can go further

- Advocate together for federal policy changes that recognize and fund new and innovative forms of shelter and enable us to serve more individuals

- Improve the RFP system at the city and county level to allow for funds to cover overhead and administration at a level that will enable nonprofits to pay living wages, reduce turnover but still be held accountable to outcomes

- Provide leadership and training for nonprofits that guide them in strategic business planning, scaling programs and attracting and maximizing funding

- Consider a standard, core curriculum for new hires to the homeless service sector to improve efficiency, quality and consistency in case management and service delivery

4 Prioritize a short-term increase in emergency shelter and enact policies that make it easier to build housing.

Providing permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals is key to ultimately ending homelessness. Our county, along with many others across the country, has prioritized building permanent supportive housing and de-emphasized emergency shelters for many years.

Unfortunately, as the cost of housing and rental prices increased in our community many low-income individuals became even more cost-burdened and vulnerable. Demand increased for housing subsidies that are used to supplement costs for low-income residents, as did the cost of those subsidies.[9] As a result, inflow into homelessness and to the shelter system increased more quickly than our ability to build and place individuals in permanent supportive housing. We are witnessing the impact of an overburdened shelter and housing system on our streets and in our parks.

We need to significantly increase the amount of temporary, emergency shelter options we have available for the unhoused. With nearly 3,000 unsheltered individuals in Eugene alone, we have to shift away from our previous strategy of creating sites for 6-20 people at a time and focus on opening a handful of larger, managed sites that can temporarily provide legal, safe places for more individuals to stay.

As we increase our capacity in emergency shelters we must simultaneously enact policies that will make it simpler and more cost-effective to build permanent housing. If we are going to reduce the number of homeless individuals in our community, we must build more housing. It is time to say yes to housing development at all levels- affordable, workforce and market rate.

Both increasing emergency shelter capacity and relentlessly pursuing strategies that will make housing more affordable are critical to ending homelessness in Lane County.

Where do we go from here?

SHELTER

- Continue to pursue the creation of "Safe Sleep Sites" across the community until we have secured 500 new, sanctioned spaces for individuals to shelter. Make quick, decisive and transparent decisions, recognizing we will never find perfect placements for each site.

- Centralize management of safe sleep sites so they have consistent rules and operational expectations and they don't create a patchwork of sites with varying outcomes.

- Provide enhanced security and establish neighborhood agreements that ensure residents inside and nearby the safe sleep sites are protected from crime.

- Increase communication and outreach regarding the 75-bed low-barrier shelter and navigation system opening in July of 2022.

HOUSING

- Ensure everyone in emergency shelters have access to wrap-around services and workforce development opportunities.

- Implement Accessory Dwelling Unit code amendments and House Bill 2001 to enable development of more affordable housing.

- Increase rentals available for rapid rehousing and section 8 vouchers by educating landlords about the benefits of participating.

- "Right size" our permanent supportive housing options by utilizing affordable models like California's Project HomeKey which provides funding to purchase hotels and motels to create emergency housing.[10]

- Fully execute, resource and coordinate the City of Eugene "Housing Tools & Strategies"[11] and Lane County's "Affordable Action Plan"[12] to rapidly expand the availability of housing- from shelters to home-ownership.

5 Coordinate outreach and case management to increase efficiency and effectiveness of our service delivery system.

As we focus on increasing our emergency shelter capacity we must also improve our ability to coordinate and connect individuals to the wrap-around services and/or workforce development training they need to successfully exit homelessness and remain housed. Without this, we will never see a true end to homelessness.

A wide variety of nonprofits and government programs exist to provide meals, shelter, healthcare, job connections and workforce development, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and many other critical services. Many of these nonprofits are doing their own outreach to homeless individuals and working in silos to connect those people to services and housing. The result is a fragmented system that is difficult to navigate for the unhoused and undoubtedly duplicating efforts and using scarce funds less efficiently than we can afford.

We need a radically aligned system where all nonprofit service providers have clearly defined roles and expected outcomes within a larger, coordinated framework.

Starting with an increase in coordinated street outreach, we must ensure all outreach is documented in our shared HMIS database and accessible to those doing street outreach. Once an individual is in our HMIS database they need access to case managers who can begin to work with them to find shelter and assess which services they need to gain stability. With a greater number of case managers who have a holistic understanding of all resources in the community, not just those their organization can provide, unhoused individuals can be supported to gain access to a variety of services until permanent housing is acquired.

No individual nonprofit or government agency owns each step in this continuum, which means incredible coordination and unprecedented cooperation is necessary to truly stabilize unhoused individuals and ensure they receive the services they need to get well.

Where do we go from here?

- Map the geographic areas currently covered by outreach efforts and communicate where gaps exist.

- Require all outreach workers to use HMIS database system to ensure unhoused individuals get accurately entered in the coordinated entry system.

- Empower the newly appointed Lane County Outreach Coordinator to identify process improvements in our current outreach and coordinated entry efforts.

- Create a pathway for formerly homeless individuals to gain employment as outreach workers with their peers.

6 Increase investment in proven, sustainable wrap-around services.

Along with increased capacity and coordinated case management, we need effective wrap-around services like mental health and substance abuse support, workforce skills training and employment connections that will help our unhoused achieve sustained wellness.

In December of 2020, nearly 50% of our communities' unhoused population, reported a disabling condition such as mental illness, substance use disorder, developmental disability or a chronic physical illness.[13]

As demand has increased for mental health services amongst housed and unhoused individuals, the availability of those services has actually decreased over time.

Our community's ability to support individuals with disabling conditions will directly impact our ability to end homelessness.

Community partners are currently exploring the viability of a behavioral health crisis center that will allow for 24/7 walk-in service as well as provide a safe place for law enforcement or CAHOOTS to bring individuals who need stabilization. A facility like this can divert individuals from hospitals and the criminal justice system, while ensuring they receive appropriate care in a more cost-effective manner.

In addition to innovative mental health solutions, we need more workforce development training and career opportunities for unhoused individuals. Expansion of successful local programs that employ unhoused individuals to build housing options, or conduct peer outreach, for example, can provide much-needed income and opportunity for our unhoused neighbors.

Initiatives like this crisis center, among others, require investments that go beyond our current funding allocations. We can improve community outcomes by targeting investments and scaling proven, sustainable solutions.

Where do we go from here?

- Pursue innovative funding and operational strategies to enable the opening of a behavioral health crisis center.

- Explore opportunities for collective investment in targeted mental health and workforce development initiatives.

- Create supervised Medical Respite beds for unhoused individuals recovering from medical procedures or illness.

- Identify locations that can provide end-of-life and long-term care for individuals without financial resources to acquire that care on their own.

- Work with state partners to create a path to "day worker" programs or alternative workforce development programs that allow unhoused individuals to have a flexible job while they navigate the shelter and service systems locally.

> **Our community's ability to support individuals with disabling conditions will directly impact our ability to end homelessness.**

7 — Shift community culture from one of tolerance to one of wellness and accountability.

As community members discuss our homeless crisis the conversation often leads to a debate about whether we are attracting homeless individuals from outside of our community. It is easy to deflect the question as we consider the fact that we need to find ways to serve these individuals no matter where they come from. While debating where individuals come from may be unproductive, understanding why they are coming, is fundamental to addressing the problem.

In our research, we learned that Eugene is without a doubt attracting individuals from outside of our community who are currently living here unhoused. We know that some of those individuals do come from outlying communities in our region to access services that are available in Eugene, which is common for a metro area or county seat.

The more pressing issue to address is the large number of individuals who are attracted to our community, not for services that will help them get well, but rather because of our reputation for not enforcing crime and allowing individuals to get away with illegal behavior.

Whether our lack of enforcement is intentional or due to a lack of resources, spend time talking to individuals on the street and you will learn that it is a commonly held belief that Eugene is where you go to get away with things you couldn't get away with in other places. This is not the business community's perception. This is what unhoused individuals themselves are telling us.

If we are going to go upstream to address one of the many reasons we have a large homeless population in Eugene, we have to reckon with this cultural reality and shift our reputation from being a community that tolerates crime to being a community that prioritizes wellness and housing our unhoused. If we refuse to acknowledge and admit that we have played a role as a community in creating this environment, then we will never truly accomplish our goal of ending homelessness in Eugene.

Changing our culture is not an easy task, but it is one that can be done with deliberate and consistent action over time.

> **Changing our culture is not an easy task, but it is one that can be done with deliberate and consistent action over time.**

Where do we go from here?

- Explore a technology solution that would provide real-time data to law enforcement and outreach workers to show where we have vacant shelter spaces on any given night

- With adequate shelter available for those that want it, our community must hire enough staff to enforce parking and camping laws to reduce the number of individuals choosing to set up camp in places that are not intended for habitation

- Elected officials at the city and county level need to make a public statement that we will no longer be tolerating illegal behavior or willful violation of laws by housed or unhoused individuals in our community and then definitively direct our law enforcement and court systems to uphold the laws we have in place in our community.

It starts with our elected officials taking a stand and publicly drawing a line- declaring through words and actions that we are a compassionate community with services that help individuals get well but we are not a place where you can ignore laws and get away with illegal activity. We do not want to criminalize homelessness, we want to help individuals exit home- lessness. We need to send the message that Eugene is no place for those, housed or unhoused, who want to break the laws that our community has agreed to follow.

It is not enough to take a stand with words alone. The most critical thing we can do to change the culture of our community is to follow through with that proclamation with a set of clear, strong directives and actions. Whether accurate or not, community members perceive our elected officials as soft on crime and as di- recting city staff and law enforcement not to enforce certain laws.

This reputation has been earned over years of worsening crime and stories of officers on the streets feeling like they aren't empowered to do anything about the crime and that it's a waste of time because these individuals won't have any consequences. This culture must be changed from the inside out and it starts with our elected officials publicly empow- ering staff to enforce the law.

Finally, as we open up enough locations that adequately shelter those that want a place to shelter at the moment of inter- vention, we must have the courage to tell those that refuse to utilize the resources we provide, that they can not just choose to live on the streets of our community.

By maintaining a culture of tolerance and a reputation of letting folks get away with crime, we are posing serious threats to the livability of our community as well as the safety of our vulnerable and un- housed populations.

8

Improve communication, transparency and accountability among all stakeholders, to rebuild community trust and instill a sense of hope.

Our ineffectiveness in making a visible impact on the issue of homelessness has escalated the frustration and hopelessness of local businesses and community members across the county.

When it comes to the broader community, people don't know what is being done to solve this crisis, don't think anything is being done, or believe whatever we are doing just isn't working. We have an urgent need to bring more transparency to our current efforts, communicate our successes and shortfalls more broadly and engage the public more effectively in solving this challenge together.

This growing frustration and hopelessness threatens the public support we will need to end homelessness in our community. Whether it is additional funding, placement of shelter or supportive housing in neighborhoods, or willingness to share the expertise we need the help of private citizens and businesses. In return, they deserve better transparency and accountability from our elected officials, service providers and government partners.

With all of the complex and critical improvements needed to put our community on a path to success, none may be more important than rebuilding trust with our community members and instilling a sense of hope for better days ahead.

Where do we go from here?

- Create a coordinated outreach plan among government, business, neighborhoods, and service providers that emphasizes timely and responsive communication to community members in advance of critical decision points.

- Create a website and public dashboard to track progress on the shared outcomes and metrics we have identified.

- Develop a streamlined communication plan for each relevant neighborhood or area within the city where initiatives are taking place that could impact residents or businesses- ie. changing parking rules, moving illegal camps, opening shelters, etc.

- Publish and market broadly an annual progress report.

- Publish a funding map that clearly shows where money is being spent and how those funds are performing.

Next Steps ————

Many of the recommendations in this report will take partners from across sectors to fully implement. Some of these items can be led by the Eugene Chamber and business comunity and others will need champions in local government or with our service providers. Now comes the hard work of bringing disperate voices together and agreeing to act.

As for the Eugene Chamber, we are ready to come to the table and plan to prioritize and take the lead on the following actions.

1 Launch a focused task force of business and community leaders to bring private sector support to the task of ending homelessness. This group will help ensure the implementation of these recommendations and increase the accountability and transparency of our community's efforts towards these goals.

Execute by: October 2021

2 Continue to build out strategic implementation tactics for each of the recommendations included in this report while continuing to explore models of success from across the country that could work for Eugene.

Execute by: November 2021

3 Convene a strategic group of community stakeholders from business, government, nonprofit, philanthropy, faith community and those with lived experience to determine a collective-impact approach to turning the tide on this issue in our community.

Execute by: November 2021

4 Perform cost study/economic impact analysis to better understand the cost of this issue on our community and find areas to more efficiently use our resources.

Execute by: December 2021

———— Call to Action

If you are interested in joining the business leaders task force, providing funds to help implement strategies to end homelessness, or offering specific technical expertise to help improve our system, please contact Brittany Quick-Warner at the Eugene Chamber to get plugged into these activities at brittanyw@eugenechamber.com.

Conclusion ———

To shift from managing our homeless crisis to truly making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring, we must move away from a government-driven and funded model to a collective impact approach that brings more stakeholders to the table to pursue solutions.

By focusing on obtaining accurate data, increasing our shelter and housing capacity, improving coordination between service providers and targeting investments, we can break down silos, reduce overlap, and expand capacity for critical wrap-around services. None of this can be accomplished if we don't take the steps to build community trust and move from a culture of tolerance to one of wellness and accountability.

We are aware of the difficulty of implementing many of these recommendations. Shifting community culture and re-aligning the efforts of local, state, and national government with local providers, funders and community stakeholders is daunting yet necessary work.

We have reasons to be hopeful. There appears to be more willingness than ever before to approach these challenges differently. By working together we can make our community better, safer and more humane. Together we can end homelessness for good.

The State of Our Homelessness Crisis
Prepared by the Eugene Chamber of Commerce

Thank you.

We sincerely appreciate the nonprofit, City of Eugene, and Lane County staff who spent time sharing their expertise, challenges and data to help inform this report. We also appreciate the business leaders, neighbors, and faith community partners who assisted with this research and shared their own experiences. Lastly, we are incredibly grateful for the currently or formerly unhoused individuals who imparted wisdom and first-hand experience that no amount of research could replace.

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce
September 2021

Learn more at www.eugenechamber.com

1. https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Homeless_Stats_Fact_Sheet.pdf
2. https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/about-us/Documents/RHNA/02-21-2021-ECONW-OHCS.pdf
3. https://community.solutions/our-solutions/built-for-zero/
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