

CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
HOMELESSNESS TOWN HALL MEETING
APRIL 5, 2022

Those in attendance virtually and in person: Mayor Gowing and Councilors Solesbee, Savage, Fleck, Stinnett, Ervin and Roberts.

Staff present virtually and in person: City Manager Richard Meyers, City Attorney Carrie Connelly, Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone, City Recorder Mindy Roberts, Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart, Police Chief Scott Shepherd, and Finance Director Roberta Likens.

Mayor Gowing opened the meeting at 7:05 pm and welcomed those in attendance virtually and in person and recognized Lane County Commissioner Heather Buch, Lane County Health and Human Services Director Eve Gray, Lane County Human Services Division Housing Manager Kate Bud, Staff from the Offices of Senator Merkley and Wyden, and Lane Council of Governments Executive Director Brenda Wilson.

There were approximately 200 people in attendance gathered in table groups and 60 people attended virtually.

City Manager Richard Meyers and City Attorney Carrie Connelly gave a Power Point presentation regarding Homelessness that included an interactive polling system and open ended questioning. Those unable to utilize the polling site provided answers to the questions on index cards.

Carry It Forward Executive Director Kris McAlister and Homes for Good representative Steve Ochs gave brief introductions to the services they provide and examples of how they have helped other communities.

Mayor Gowing thanked everyone for participating and sharing their thoughts for the City Council to use in their discussion on this issue.

Town Hall ended at 9:29 pm

Mindy Roberts, City Recorder

Jeffrey D. Gowing, Mayor

Join the discussion and provide input to the City Council by responding to the questions during the presentation by entering the following address in your browser on your phone:

[www:pollev.com/cg100](http://www.pollev.com/cg100)

or with your cellphone scan the QR code below to go to the website:



Homelessness

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2. Have you ever experienced homelessness?

Yes

No

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Why Homelessness?

A 2019 report commissioned by the Oregon Community Foundation and prepared by EcoNorthwest highlights what is behind homelessness in Oregon:

"Homelessness has declined since the Great Recession but not as much as it would have in a better functioning housing market. Oregon's high rents make the crisis more severe than those in most states and, left unabated, they will contribute to a growing homeless population going forward. Like its West Coast neighbors, Oregon has not expanded its emergency shelter capacity to match the size of its homeless population and, in 2018, had the second highest rate of unsheltered homeless people in the country. The state also had the third highest rate of chronically homeless people in the U.S."



Myth:

"The West Coast - Oregon, California and Washington - face higher rates of homelessness due to their lax laws and providing shelters."

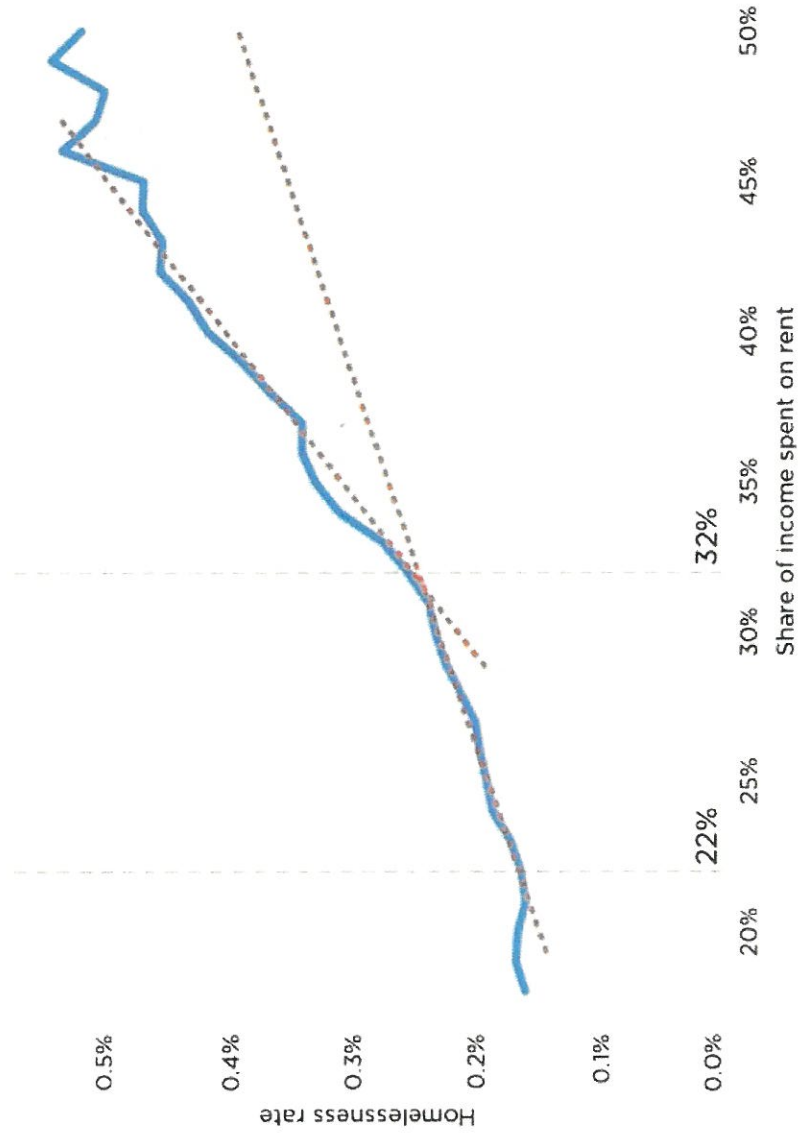
Fact:

The West Coast faces one of the largest affordable housing shortages in the country which has been identified as the number one cause of homelessness.

2018 Gap Report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition

Homelessness in Oregon: Determinants and Recent Trends

Figure 1. Rates of Homelessness in U.S. Metros Accelerate As Rents Become Less Affordable

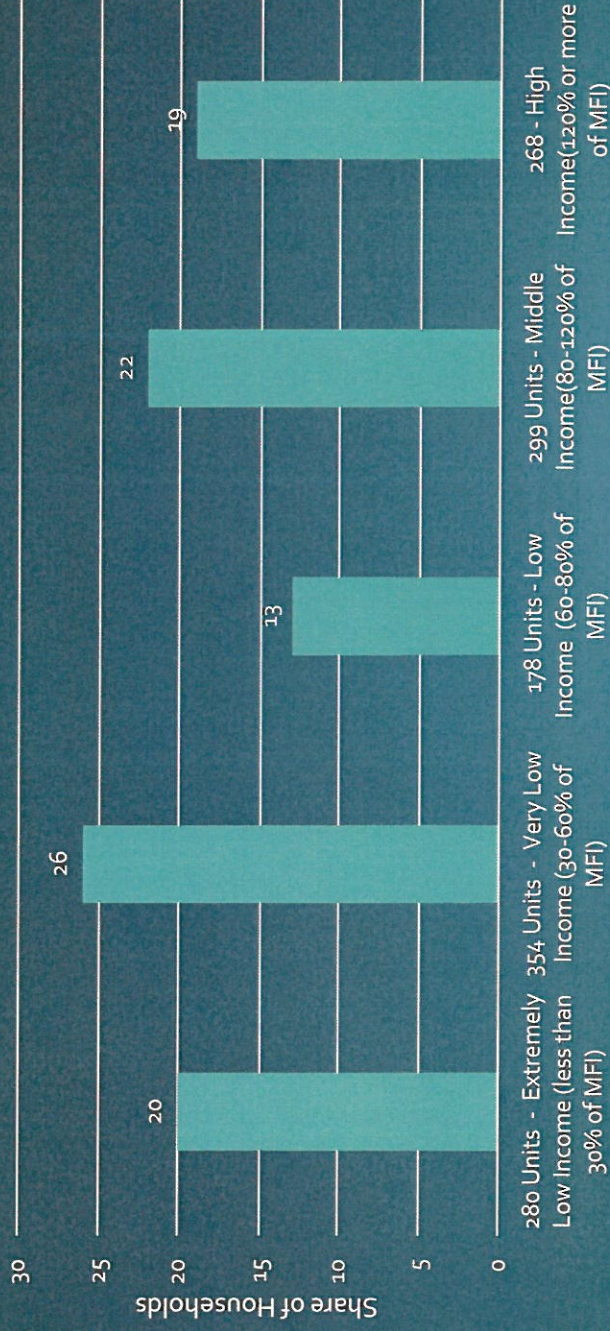


Source: Zillow Economic Research: Analysis by Zillow Research Fellow Chris Glynn of the University of New Hampshire, Thomas Byrne of Boston University, and Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania. Analysis of housing markets in 386 HUD Continuums of Care.

2018 Cottage Grove Housing Needs Analysis

The City of Cottage Grove has a housing shortage requiring 1,379 new housing units constructed between 2018 and 2038. That is an annual average of 69 new units each year.

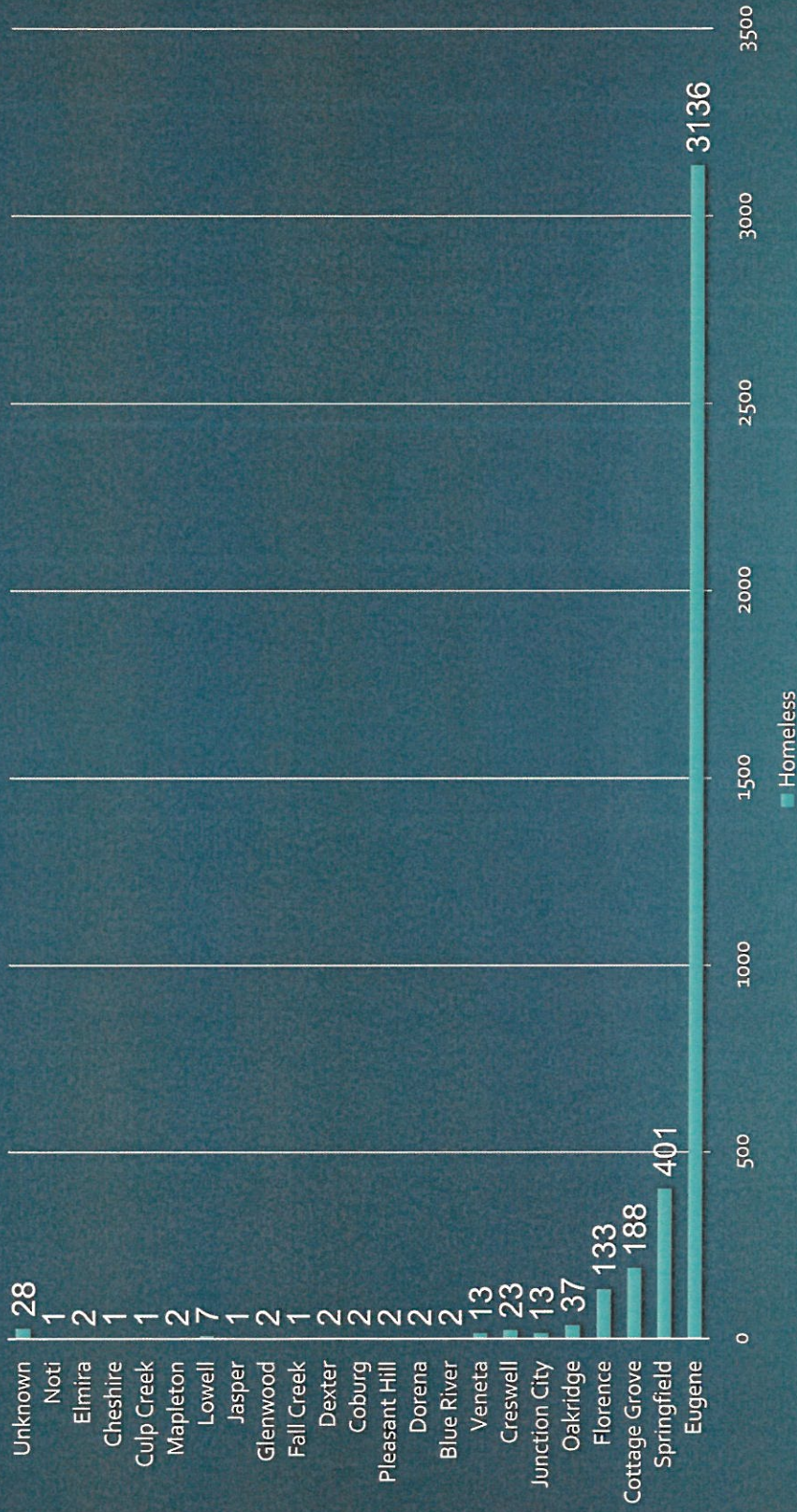
New Dwelling Units by Income – 2018-2038



4. In discussions about homelessness, we regularly hear, "We don't want to be like Eugene (Portland or Salem)."

What does that mean?

January 2022 - Homelessness in Lane County



The 1,932 shelter beds throughout Lane County isn't even enough for those experiencing homelessness even in just Eugene.

5. How would you solve homelessness in Cottage Grove?

Martin v. Boise

FN 8: Requires an individualized analysis

Naturally, our holding does not cover individuals who do have access to adequate temporary shelter, whether because they have the means to pay for it or because it is realistically available to them for free, but who choose not to use it. Nor do we suggest that a jurisdiction with insufficient shelter can never criminalize the act of sleeping outside. **Even where shelter is unavailable, an ordinance prohibiting sitting, lying, or sleeping outside at particular times or in particular locations might well be constitutionally permissible.** So, too, might an ordinance barring the obstruction of public rights of way or the erection of certain structures. Whether some other ordinance is consistent with the Eighth Amendment will depend, as here, on whether it punishes a person for lacking the means to live out the “universal and unavoidable consequences of being human” in the way the ordinance prescribes.

2021 Legislative Session: HB 3115 codified/expended upon case law.

Definitions - "Keeping warm and dry means using measures necessary for an individual to survive outdoors given the environmental conditions" Does NOT include measures involving fire or flame.

"Public property" means public lands, premises and buildings, including but not limited to any building used in connection with the transaction of public business or any lands, premises or buildings owned or leased by this state or any political subdivision therein.

Any city or county law that regulates the acts of sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property that is open to the public must be **objectively reasonable as to time, place and manner with regards to persons experiencing homelessness.**

It is an **affirmative defense to a charge of violating a city or county law** described that the law is not objectively reasonable.

Reasonableness shall be determined based on the totality of the circumstances, including, but not limited to, the **impact of the law on persons experiencing homelessness.**

A person experiencing homelessness may bring suit for injunctive or declaratory relief to challenge the **objective reasonableness of a city or county law.** . . .

The court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorney fees to a prevailing plaintiff . . . "if 90 day written notice provided".

Responsive amendments to City Code (~~delete-strikeout~~ *add italics*)

Cottage Grove Municipal Code 12.24.020 City Parks and Public Playgrounds

- ~~I. It shall be unlawful for any person to camp out or sleep in any park area at such time when the park is closed, except by specific permission of the city manager or designee and only in areas designated for such purpose.~~
- J. Certain activities, including, but not limited to, group picnicking, camping, group camping, hiking, and driving of vehicles, and riding of bicycles, skates, skateboards and horses may be restricted by the city manager and/or public works director or their designee to designated zones or areas, and such designations shall be observed.
- ~~K. It shall be unlawful for any person to enter or remain in any park or part thereof from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., except as provided below:~~
 - ~~1. A gathering for a special event or use of a park area at special times or for special uses or events which are authorized under subsection 1 of this section.~~
 - ~~2. The following persons, when engaged in the course of their duties: city employees, law enforcement officers, fire and emergency medical personnel, and those persons authorized by the city manager and/or city council.~~

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6. The City should do more than just the minimum required under Case Law and State Statutes.

Agree

Somewhat agree

Neutral

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

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Objectively reasonable time, place and manner regulations with regards to persons experiencing homelessness may include:

- Prohibitions on blocking sidewalks/rights of way.
- Prohibiting safety risks (including regulating fires/flame).
- Overnight limits in some, but not all, City parks.
- Enforcing reasonable parking limits, with notice.
- Alternative shelter sites improve the totality of the circumstances, as applied persons experiencing homelessness.

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8. What additional actions should the City take to mitigate homelessness in Cottage Grove? (choose all that apply)

Provide alternative shelter to keep camping out of City Parks.

Restrict camping on sidewalks, planting strips and bike lanes.

Partner with housing providers to build low income housing.

Allow private property owners (businesses, churches and individuals) to have overnight camping on their property.

Restrict camping in certain parks.

Do nothing beyond the minimum required case law and state law.

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10. Should the City develop shelter sites to prevent camping in City Parks?

Yes

No

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11. Currently a 72 hour parking limit is enforced on all vehicles parked on roadways. Should the City continue to use this to regulate vehicles being used for lodging on roadways?

Yes

No

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13. Should the City restrict camping on sidewalks, planting strips and bike lanes?

Yes

No

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THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Align shelter eligibility criteria, policies, and practices with a Housing First approach so that anyone experiencing homelessness can access shelter without prerequisites, make services voluntary, and assist people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

Provide diversion services to find safe and appropriate housing alternatives to entering shelter through problem-solving conversations, identifying community supports, and offering lighter touch solutions.



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS

Ensure immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7. Eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities.



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Focus services in shelter on assisting people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Measure data on percentage of exits to housing, average length of stay in shelter, and returns to homelessness to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve outcomes.

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15. The City should be providing shelters and wrap around services for community members experiencing homelessness.

Agree

Somewhat agree

Neutral

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

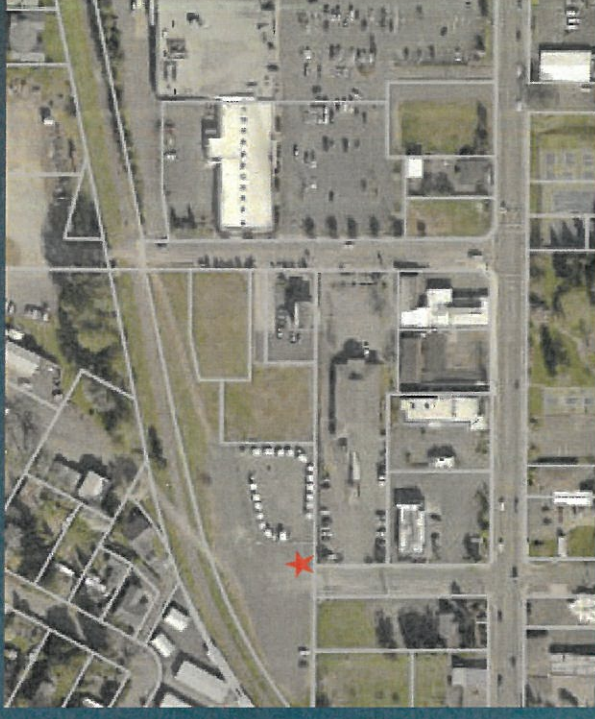
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Current Sites

- Community Center 8 tent sites
- City Hall 3 tent sites
- Supervised
 - Rules were established
 - Violations were addressed – residents were trespassed from the property and/or if necessary arrested for violation of laws.
- Successes
 - Several individuals rejoined families for support and recovery
 - Jobs
 - Counseling

Warming Shelter Site

- Warming Shelter season ended March 31st
- Warming Shelter site is about .43 acres.
- Shelters with electricity installed. Water and sewer connections on site.
- Will have to schedule use of mobile showers on site.
- 17 shelters available (18 if organization brings staff trailer.)
- Use of site will only be while the low barrier shelter location is set up. Once new location is set up all Pallet Shelters on this site would be moved to new location.
- Location could be used for events, BMD vendors or other events and activities.



Possible Very Low or Extremely Low Income Housing Site

- 443 North Douglas Avenue – 1.55 acres.
- Currently zoned R-2
- Make the site available to Homes For Good for development into low income housing units.
- Homes For Good is the Housing Authority for Lane County and has been managing sites within the community. Riverview Apartments, Legion Cottages.
- City has cleared the site and it is ready for development.
- Secure Federal and State funding for construction.
- While securing funding will explore temporary housing – park models/tiny homes.



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16. Do you support the use of the Warming Shelter site for a temporary shelter site until the Low Barrier Shelter location can be prepared?

Yes

No

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18. The City should use the HWY 99 site as the Low Barrier Shelter location?

Agree

Somewhat agree

Neutral

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

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20. The City should be purchasing land for low income housing projects.

Agree

Somewhat agree

Neutral

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

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21. Private property owners (churches, businesses and residents) should be allowed to apply for permission to host overnight camping on their property.

Agree

Somewhat agree

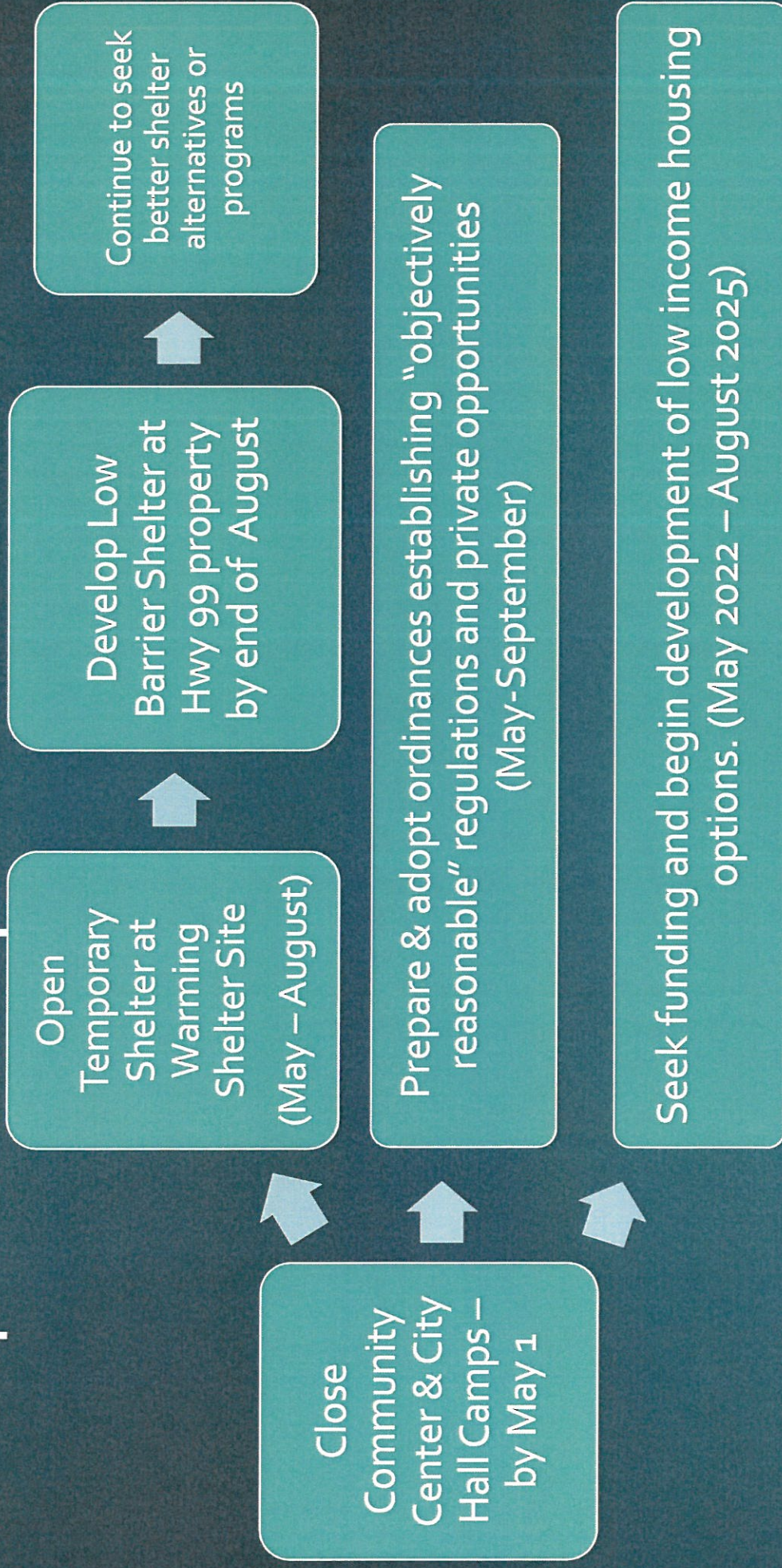
Neutral

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

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The Proposed Road Map



23. If it were up to you, what changes, if any, would you make to the proposal presented tonight?

25. The results of the tonight's Town Hall will be posted on the City's webpage in the next week. If you would like to be notified when the results are available please provide your email.