



HELP END HOMELESSNESS HOWARD COUNTY

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Need

According to Howard County's 2015 Survey of the Homeless, there were approximately 300 homeless persons, including 40 households with children, in the county. Grassroots and Bridges to Housing Stability provide respite, emergency, and transitional housing to some, but that housing is of limited duration. Under the county's [Coordinated System of Homeless Services](#), Bridges to Housing Stability is planning to provide up to 40 units of permanent workforce housing by 2018. For many families, though, especially those with the lowest income, there is no place to go after transitional housing.

Proposal

We have incorporated an independent 501(c)(3) corporation to buy a residential property in Howard County to house a family or up to three unrelated adults or couples. The residents will hold a lease or leases at below-market prices. In addition, we have kept a record of our experiences, with the aim in view of being a model and resource for others.

We will work with community agencies and organizations to support the residents as they get back on their feet, offering our own support where appropriate and desired.

We will take advantage of the Housing First model, attacking homelessness by providing permanent housing (that is, the residents hold a lease or deed) without prior requirements beyond those of typical renters or owners in the community. A variety of data sources from all over the country show that this model, providing housing stability without requiring prior individual support, leads to the most successful solutions to homelessness. For the homeless population, it has also been shown to be the most successful base from which individuals act to address their other needs. Howard County's [Plan to End Homelessness](#) is based on this approach.

After we provide the first housing unit we will review our experiences as we consider expanding.

Action to date

Help End Homelessness Howard County began with a group of members of Kittamaquindi Community Church hearing the call to do more than the church was already doing to respond to homeless people in our community. In March, 2012, following almost a year of study and fact-finding, members the church incorporated Help End Homelessness Howard County (HEHHC). The corporation, as required by Internal Revenue policies, is separate from the church, with an independent Board of Directors. In June 2012, HEHHC applied for 501(c)(3) status, which was officially granted in July, 2013.

While waiting for approval, we developed a budget, attended to clarifying legal issues, developed a plan for managing the property, and strengthened ties with other community organizations. We decided that we would draw on the experience and expertise of existing organizations such as The Howard County Department of Citizen Services, Grassroots and Bridges to Housing Stability.

In May, 2013, Howard County's *Plan to End Homelessness* was operationalized as the Coordinated System of Homeless Services. As the system has developed, Grassroots and Bridges to Housing Stability have redefined their services to fit the new plan, making it easier to work together.

Target population

The homeless population is diverse, with a range of needs. We are specifically seeking to provide permanent housing for a family or up to three unrelated adults who have nowhere to go following transitional housing or find themselves in an equivalent situation.

The county will be building 35 small efficiency units for individuals who are unable live with others. In addition, at least four sober houses, self-governing residences of limited duration that require recovery or therapeutic options, have been established here by nonprofit organizations. As noted earlier, Bridges to Housing Stability is planning to provide up to 40 units of permanent workforce housing by 2018.

While all of these will be part of our local solution to homelessness, we saw a need to add to the available housing stock, focusing on an underserved segment of homeless citizens whose needs best match our resources, those with the lowest income.

Budget

We forecast our budget for our first house at a minimum of \$130,000 and a maximum of \$160,000. The budget projection includes nonrecurring costs such as the unit, renovation, and the costs of incorporation and other government fees. Recurring costs such as insurance on the property and the officers of the corporation, water and sewer, minor repairs, management, resident support, and escrow funds for the costs of utilities between rentals and for major repairs are also included in the initial figures above. We will apply for waiver of some taxes and fees, but have not assumed that in our budget.

Minimum estimates include volunteer and pro bono work in some areas; maximum estimates do not. Rent is projected to offset costs at approximately 30% of resident income.

Wishing to avoid taking out a mortgage, we expanded funding efforts during 2012 and 2013 by inviting other religious and community organizations to participate with us, not just as donors, but as active parts of the decision-making process and day-to day activities. In 2014 and 2015, we further expanded to individuals in the community and selected local foundations. In so doing, we realized the opportunity for a truly cooperative community effort.

Coordination with other community agencies

Under the county's new Comprehensive Plan for Homeless Services, Grassroots provides one central referral source for all homeless Howard County residents in search of help and provides emergency and temporary housing. Bridges to Housing Stability coordinates transitional housing, manages the day-to-day operation of the plan, supports housing self-sufficiency, and is working with the Howard County Office of Housing to develop housing

for worker households earning 30-60% of the county median income. Both organizations, and in some cases, Humanim and other organizations provide differentiated case management. The county's Coalition of Concern keeps data and coordinates information among the agencies and nonprofits. The Coordinated System of Homeless Services coordinator directs traffic within the system, helping to ensure that everyone is served and no services are duplicated.

The Department of Citizen Services, in cooperation with Grassroots and Bridges, can identify candidates who can sustain basic rental and livability requirements. Support services, such as mental health services, will be coordinated through the case manager and Howard County mental health, health, and social services agencies. HEHHC will not duplicate any of these services.

What is special about HEHHC?

We plan to provide permanent residence for a family that earns 25-40% of the local median income. This is somewhat lower than other permanent resident categories in the Comprehensive Services plan. Since we will not carry a mortgage, we will be able to limit rent to 30% of resident income. This limit is a keystone of our plan, again unique among the housing proposals for our population.

We strive to own our residence with deep compassion and respect for the residents, neighbors, and our community. We will create conditions under which our donors and residents will be more than sources of money and in-kind services; they will be encouraged to be part of decision-making and activities of the organization so that they feel ownership of the residence and the success of its residents.