

Elsen, Nikki

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To: Elsen, Nikki
Subject: Please submit for review at August 8 Open Public Meeting

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Introduction

Homelessness is a significant issue in La Crosse, as it is in many cities across the nation. The common question posed is: "Where should the homeless go?" Our belief is simple and compassionate: they should be able to go about their day like any other citizen. To achieve this, they need essential services such as a place to store their belongings, showers, laundry, meals, and a place to sleep. This proposal outlines how the City of La Crosse might utilize an intake facility and process to assign temporary home bases, meeting these needs and supporting our homeless population in leading dignified lives.

Objectives

1. **Provide Secure Storage:** To offer safe storage solutions for personal belongings.
2. **Hygiene Facilities:** To ensure access to showers and laundry services.
3. **Food Security:** To provide regular, nutritious meals.
4. **Shelter:** To create safe sleeping spaces.
5. **Support Services:** To offer additional support such as job training, counseling, and healthcare.
6. **Temporary Homebase Assignment:** To ensure every individual has a stable, consistent base.

Proposed Solution: Centralized Intake Facility/Process Where Each Participant Has An Assigned Temporary Home Base

Centralized Intake Facility/Process

Location: A centrally located space in La Crosse, ideally an office in an underutilized municipal building or repurposed vacant property that is or could be open a few hours a day 7 days a week.

Implementation:

- Establish the intake facility and process as the first point of contact for homeless individuals.
- Complete a brief initial assessment to understand individual needs and circumstances.
- Assign each person a temporary homebase within designated properties in La Crosse.
- Ensure each homebase includes secure storage, hygiene facilities, food services, and sleeping quarters.

Key Services Provided by each Homebase Facility

1. Secure Storage

Implementation:

- Provide lockers or storage bins in a locked room at each assigned homebase.
- Develop and implement a process to ensure access to secured storage.
- Ensure proper security measures are in place (ie camera in the store area).

Rationale: Secure storage allows homeless individuals to keep their belongings safe, reducing the burden of carrying everything with them and preventing theft or loss. Ensuring access provides flexibility and peace of mind.

2. Hygiene Facilities

Implementation:

- Ensure each homebase has access to showers and laundry machines.
- Provide toiletries and laundry supplies.
- Maintain cleanliness and hygiene standards.

Rationale: Access to showers and laundry facilities helps individuals maintain personal hygiene, boosting their self-esteem and health, and enabling them to present themselves well for job opportunities.

3. Food Security

Implementation:

- Partner with local food banks and charities to supply food.
- Organize regular meal schedules (breakfast, lunch, dinner) at each homebase.
- Ensure a variety of nutritious options are available.

Rationale: Consistent access to nutritious meals can alleviate the stress of food insecurity and contribute to better overall health.

4. Shelter

Implementation:

- Convert properties already identified by the City into homebase shelters with individual sleeping spaces assigned via the intake facility.
- Provide bedding and personal space for each individual.
- Ensure the homebase shelters are safe, clean, and well-supervised.
- Require residents to vacate the homebase shelters between 7 AM and 7 PM daily.

Rationale: Providing a secure place to sleep is fundamental to addressing homelessness, giving individuals a safe space to rest and recuperate. A designated home base ensures stability and a sense of

belonging. Vacating the shelters during the day encourages individuals to engage in community activities, access services, and seek employment.

5. **Support Services through the Pathways Home Project**

Implementation:

- Offer job training programs and employment assistance.
- Provide mental health and addiction counseling.
- Ensure access to healthcare services.
- Facilitate social services to help individuals transition out of homelessness into permanent housing.

Rationale: Comprehensive support services are crucial for addressing the root causes of homelessness and assisting individuals in becoming self-sufficient.

Phase 2 May include Community Appointed Advocacy Program

Implementation:

- Assign each individual a trained community advocate.
- Advocates will assist in navigating social services, healthcare, job training, and housing programs.
- Ensure ongoing support to address any barriers to self-sufficiency.

Rationale: Community advocates will provide personalized support, helping individuals understand and access the systems in place to aid their transition out of homelessness. This tailored assistance increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Conclusion

Addressing homelessness requires a holistic approach that provides not just shelter but a supportive environment where individuals can regain their dignity and independence. By establishing a centralized intake facility and process, La Crosse can efficiently assign temporary home bases that meet the fundamental needs of the homeless population. This approach not only benefits those directly affected by homelessness but also fosters a more inclusive and compassionate community.

Call to Action

We urge the City of La Crosse to consider this proposal and take the necessary steps to implement these solutions. By doing so, we can ensure that our homeless population is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve and that they have the opportunity to go about their day with the same sense of purpose and normalcy as any other resident.

Respectfully Submitted by La Crosse Community Member and Red Cross Trained Shelter Volunteer
Marsha Kurth