



## Community Conversation – Feb. 27, 2024 Executive Summary



### **Things Heard and Learned at 2/27 Community Conversation**

The Homeless Solutions Coalition of Clackamas County conducted a **Community Conversation** on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. Seventy-one citizens attended.

This gathering provided an opportunity for the community to learn about some of the successes Clackamas County has had in addressing homelessness along with some of the things we are looking forward to. Most importantly this meeting was an opportunity for HSCCC and County officials to listen to the creative ideas and concerns of community members.

Vahid Brown, Clackamas County Housing and Community Development Deputy Director shared with us some of the factors that have led to a greater drop in homelessness than any other county. We now have contracted with six agencies to provide 24 skilled outreach workers working to prevent or reduce the homeless population. Outreach provides an initial contact that leads to connecting people to housing. Clackamas County has rehoused 128 households, or 314 people, in just six months. Additionally, many community-based organizations are working to provide the support required to equip newly re-housed individuals with the necessary skills and resources to be successful going forward. We learned that besides helping people move into housing much has been done to prevent our neighbors from slipping into being unhoused through eviction prevention assistance. More good news is Clackamas County is working to create a county-wide

system of services and programs based on geographic equity – services equitably distributed throughout the community – whether it’s Estacada, Molalla, Canby, Sandy, Milwaukie, or any other city. People with housing crises should find resources where they live.

Dan Fowler and Mason Wall, a board member and the Coalition’s Facility Committee Chair, provided an update about the Resource Center. This Center will be a shared space for service providers and a centralized location to provide services for people experiencing homelessness.

Participants were encouraged to sit at mixed tables so that each person could hear various perspectives. Table groups shared how they personally had been impacted by homelessness. Then they identified a list of issues, ideas, and concerns that they believed were important to be heard.

Some of the “Solution Ideas “ from the table groups were:

- Create an Educational Campaign to help people understand that homelessness can happen to anyone.
- Treat families and children impacted by homelessness with dignity and humanity.
- Provide more restrooms for unhoused people.
- Provide legal support services at the Resource Center.
- Secure, long-term, stable funding for the Resource Center.
- Provide more resources for people struggling with addiction.
- Provide more access to counseling.
- Help for people who’ve lost their identification.
- Provide expungement services.
- Eliminate the supportive services gap between outreach and housing.
- Develop more geographic service equity in Clackamas County.
- Provides free lunch program in the summer at local parks.

Some of the “Concerns” expresses at table groups.

- Not enough beds for people
- Homeless hampers the ability to walk around.
- Don’t want Oregon City to become PDX.
- Possible increase in crime
- Not enough shelter space
- Feel helpless about the homeless we see on the street.
- Providers need to be more accountable.
- Will with law enforcement and service providers work together .
- Concerns about the Resource Center in particular :
  - Location – not big enough space.
  - Not a full solution. Where will the homeless go after they receive services?

- A larger Resource Center might attract more homeless.
- Strain on police and courts.
- Public safety concern
- Lots of traffic.
- Safety
- How will the Resource Center evolve once it opens?

The Community Conversation concluded with a consensus that “Communication is the Key”. There is a need for ongoing Community Gatherings and other venues of communication that keep everyone informed as well as providing an opportunity for all involved to know their voice , ideas and concerns are heard and will be wrapped into future plans .

The homelessness challenge impacts us all, and we can all help with the solutions by working together.