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NEWS RELEASE

Oakland County Offers a Blueprint to End Homelessness During National Homelessness Awareness Month

Pontiac, Mich., Nov. 23, 2021 – Oakland County Neighborhood and Housing Development (OCNHD) Division and its community partners are proud to announce the release of the county’s Blueprint to End Homelessness.

“Three thousand people find themselves homeless in Oakland County, which fails to include residents on the edge of homelessness or in danger of losing their homes or getting evicted,” said Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter. “As a county blessed with many advantages, it is our responsibility to tackle our deepest and most troubling challenges and this blueprint will help us make progress in the critical area of homelessness.”

Some of the goals in the Blueprint include:

- Establish a county-wide affordable housing trust fund
- Work with municipalities on zoning laws that support the development of affordable housing
- Identify funding sources, community acceptance, and locate an additional shelter in south Oakland County
- Increase the number of shelter beds in existing shelters: on any given day in Oakland County, there are 3,000 people who are homeless and yet, there are only 254 emergency shelter beds available in Oakland County.
- Increase the number of hours of service in emergency shelters
- Create a system that will track the availability of shelter space across the county.
- Provide case management to coordinate services and available resources across communities.
- Educational campaign to increase awareness of homelessness among community members and policy makers.
- Develop outreach to effectively distribute information about resources and services available to individuals and families who are at risk or experiencing homelessness.

Michigan State Sen. Rosemary Bayer secured the \$250,000 grant for this project in 2019, but COVID-19 interrupted the completion of the plan until earlier this year. The plan is dedicated to eradicating homelessness in Oakland County through prevention, housing with wraparound services, reforming the system of care and engaging the community.

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The task force included Oakland County Neighborhood and Housing Development and Community Corrections, Alliance for Housing, Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, HOPE, Community Housing Network, Lighthouse, Haven, Samaritas, Street Democracy, City of Ferndale, Centro Multicultural de la Familia and many others. The Alliance for Housing, a non-profit agency dedicated to ending homelessness, was a valuable partner during the development process and will be a key leader during the implementation phase. The Alliance coordinates housing, services and funding to support Oakland County citizens experiencing homelessness.

The group looked at the systemic causes that can lead to homelessness, including domestic violence, lack of access to transportation, healthcare and affordable housing. One in four homeowners have excessive costs and more than 40 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their budget to housing costs. An individual working a minimum wage job would have to work 65 hours a week to afford rent in Oakland County.

These are large issues that require the work of many towards a common goal, including policy makers, service providers, and the community. The Blueprint makes it clear that ending homelessness will not happen without long-term commitment and vision to prevent homelessness before it happens.

“This plan informs and aligns policy makers, service providers and the community towards a common goal,” explained Shane Bies, manager of OCNHD. “Now that the plan is developed, the hard work begins. A plan won’t accomplish anything if there isn’t follow through.”

To read the Oakland County Blueprint to End Homelessness go to <https://www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland/communities/Pages/Housing-Counseling-and-Homeless-Services.aspx>