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DC's New Plan to End Homelessness Is a Great Start

By Kate Coventry

The District took a major step this week toward ending long-term homelessness, when the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) adopted an ambitious yet achievable Strategic Plan.

Homelessness is a problem that goes deeper than not having a roof over your head. People who don't know where they'll spend the next night struggle to hold down a job and regularly access needed services like counseling or medical treatment. The stress of homelessness makes it hard for children to focus and succeed at school.

HOMeward DC

District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness

Strategic Plan, 2015 - 2020

Now that the ICH has developed a plan, it falls to Mayor Bowser and the DC Council to implement it, including identifying the money needed to make it a reality.

The ICH is made up of representatives from DC government, nonprofit providers, advocates, and homeless and formerly homeless residents. Its mission is to guide the city's homelessness efforts. Recognizing that homelessness makes it much more difficult for residents to work towards a better future, the ICH created a Strategic Plan aimed at ending long term homelessness by 2020.

Acknowledging that it will never be possible to prevent all the life events that can lead to homelessness, such as divorce or job loss, the Strategic Plan is designed to make homelessness:

- **Rare.** Homelessness will be prevented whenever possible. This will involve the expansion of prevention programs that help people who face eviction. It also will require coordination with other agencies to ensure residents transitioning out of foster care, juvenile justice, or other systems do not become homeless.
- **Brief.** When homelessness cannot be prevented, services will be provided quickly to help residents move into stable housing.
- **Non-recurring.** The District will provide support services to make sure residents do not become homeless again.

The Plan identifies how much and what kinds of housing assistance will likely be needed over the next five years. The ICH intends to annually monitor the need, evaluate progress towards the goals laid out in the Plan, and offer funding recommendations. That last part is especially important

because, to make these goals a reality, the money needs to be there for priorities such as new emergency shelters and permanent supportive housing. We hope to see much of this funding in the mayor's proposed budget, set to be released today.

Stay tuned to the District Dime in the coming weeks to learn more about the Strategic Plan and the District's budget.

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