



THOMAS M. MARKUS
CITY MANAGER

City of Lawrence

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

City Offices
PO Box 708 66044-0708
www.lawrenceks.org

6 East 6th St
785-832-3000
FAX 785-832-3405

CITY COMMISSION

MAYOR
LESLIE SODEN

COMMISSIONERS
STUART BOLEY
MATTHEW J. HERBERT
LISA LARSEN
MIKE AMYX

(Letter provided to the Mayor and City Commissioners on behalf of the Homeless Issues Advisory Committee.)

November 7, 2017

Dear City of Lawrence, KS Mayor and Commissioners:

The Homeless Issues Advisory Committee (HIAC) is taking this opportunity to exercise its advisory role with The City of Lawrence Commission. There are several points regarding homeless issues within the City of Lawrence, KS the committee has identified and feels the city should consider when making further policy and budgeting decisions.

The HIAC Committee commends The City of Lawrence for increasing funding for social services over the past several years. Unfortunately, the need appears to be increasing and outstripping the resources available in the community, as organizations report insufficient resources to meet increased demand.

For instance, Family Promise reported having received 276 family referrals for the 2015 year, and 419 for the 2016 year. This constitutes a 51.8% increase from one year to the next. Family promise also report that over 50% of the clientele they serve are under the age of 5, and one of their largest referral sources is USD497. The Bert Nash Homeless Outreach program reports having eliminated a position due to cuts in city funding. Their program also reports being completely inundated and unable to manage the level of need and referral for their service. Their program also reports seeing an average total of 400+ clients per year over the last 4 years, over 307 new clients reported for the 2015 year, and 233 new clients reported for the 2016 year (this and further information is available per the quarterly reports submitted to the city). Their reported flex funds are listed at \$9,000.00 per year, which averages around \$18-\$20 per client per year. That program also reports regularly running out of flex funds by August of each year.

Since the mayor's appointed task force on homelessness completed its study in 2005, the overall population of The City of Lawrence, KS has increased. The U.S. Census Bureau lists the year 2000 population at 80,098, while the 2016 population estimate is listed as being 95,358. This amounts to a 19% increase in population over 16 years. As is indicated by local service providers, the local growth in population includes growth among low/no income and homeless populations. Subsequently an increase in services will be needed to sustain an appropriate level of services.

Lawrence Community Shelter reports operating at capacity for both their individual and family shelter programs. And referring agencies, such as the Homeless Outreach Program, regularly report that the shelter has no space or room available. This is resulting in an increasing number of people having to camp for longer durations of time, and with fewer resources to assist in providing avenues for getting out of the literally homeless situation.



Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority reports continued lengthy waiting lists for the transitional housing waiting list, with wait times expected to be around 18 months.

Agencies are also reporting that most organizations are nearly or entirely out of funding for homeless services. There is, then, a real possibility, that the final quarter of 2017 will reach a near standstill so far as homeless services and assistance is concerned.

The HIAC identifies that, as the City of Lawrence is already aware, affordable housing and employment opportunities remain major challenges for people experiencing homelessness in the City of Lawrence, KS. However, the HIAC also identifies per community report that there is now a severe lack of community resources for immediate assistance, resulting in little to no options for service providers to offer new or continually homeless families and individuals. The HIAC committee therefore also identifies a need for increased flex funds granted to homeless assistance programs funded by the city, such as the Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Team, the Lawrence Community Shelter, Family Promise (family Promise receives bus pass funding only from the city), and the Willow Domestic Violence Shelter. There is also a need for continued supportive services for those who have obtained housing to assist with and help ensure the transition into a more stable life for this population.

The HIAC committee commends The City of Lawrence in re-investing in its housing trust fund. In assessing ways to secure affordable housing funds for the indefinite future the HIAC committee identified the possibility of converting the affordable housing trust into an endowment. HIAC notes that this would be a more attractive option if the tax initiative passes on the November 2017 ballot. Under an endowment, fewer funds would be available initially, but given the annual tax allocation those funds would increase over time and remain a resource without any risk of being diminished with effective management of the endowment. The HIAC committee also commends community partners on effective collaboration, such as Family Promise increasing its Transitional housing stock primarily through community collaboration, and the developing Permanent Supportive Housing project resulting from collaboration between the Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority, and Douglas County. In order to expand these types of community, collaborative projects agencies, including the City of Lawrence will need dedicated staff to seek out and develop such partnerships.

We on the HIAC committee acknowledge and commend local city and community efforts in developing further programs and services to meet the increasing needs of the community, but also acknowledge that more funding and manpower is necessary as the community grows and develops, and as State and Federal funds become less secure in the changing environment at that level of organization.

Sincerely,
The City of Lawrence, KS Homeless Issues Advisory Committee