



# The face of homelessness: Tyler, Texas

Findings from the Mayor's  
Homelessness Task Force  
January 2012

# Formation of Task Force



- October 26, 2011 Mayor launched task force to look at the state of homelessness in Tyler
- Growing dialogue about the homeless issue and recent cases that have come before the Planning Commission involving facilities to serve the homeless
- Councilman Heines asked to chair the Task Force, Councilman Wright also participated

# Stakeholders



- The City of Tyler
  - City Manager's Office
  - External Relations
  - Parks Department
  - Police Department
  - Neighborhood Services Department
  - Planning and Zoning Department
- Andrews Center
- Cornerstone Assistance Network
- East Texas Crisis Center
- Gateway to Hope
- Highway 80 Rescue Mission
- Mayor's Veterans Roundtable
- PATH
- The Salvation Army
- 211 Texas: East Texas Region
- Tyler Independent School District

# Goals of the Task Force



- I. Establishing a shared definition of homelessness
- II. Identifying the extent of homelessness in the Tyler area
- III. Determining the needs of the homeless that are currently unmet by the providers in the area
- IV. Proposing goals and strategies that the community can pursue that will close the gap between services currently available and those that are still needed to prevent homelessness

# Goal I: A Shared Definition



***An individual who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings***

# Goal II: The Extent of Homelessness



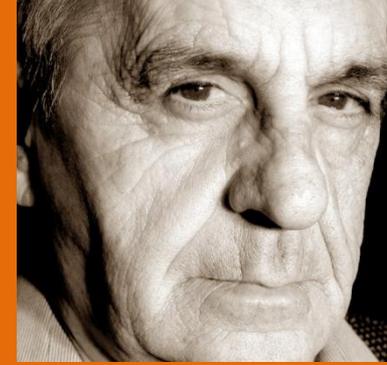
- The extent of homelessness in Tyler is difficult to pin down due to constantly changing conditions. Some measurements are:
  - *2011 Point-In-Time Study shows that up to 243 people, 192 adults and 51 children, are homeless in Tyler*
  - *Tyler PD estimate 12 to 30 living on the street*
  - *TISD have 96 children registered as homeless*

# Current Conditions



- Salvation Army has a normal capacity of 200 (500 emergency) but only house an average of 100 people per night
- At least 24 locations provide meals and groceries to those in need
- There are 7 locations for emergency shelter and transitional housing
- There are 5 long term affordable housing programs
- There are 9 tax credit developments in Tyler
- Other programs provide clothes, rent, utilities, education services, medical services, referrals, etc.

# Goal III: Gaps in Services



- **Transitional Housing**
  - Although the community currently has adequate emergency shelter capacity (one to three days), transitional housing for stays from three days to 24 months is extremely limited.
- **Mental Health Services**
  - The 2011 Point in Time Homeless Study indicates that 29% of Tyler’s identified homeless need mental health care; however, only 13% received it.
- **Tracking Mechanism for Homeless Receiving Services**
- **Post Hospital Services Including Housing Needs**
- **Casework/Social Worker Connection (Coordination of Services)**
  - Although there are many services available to the homeless in Tyler, there are limited central points of assessment and referral to connect the homeless to these services.
- **Housing for Those With Criminal Records**
  - Although there is adequate emergency shelter capacity for the homeless population in Tyler, those with certain criminal records are not permitted to access this service. Sheltering options for those with criminal records is an unmet need in the community.
- **Additional Affordable Housing Opportunities**

# Goal IV: Conclusions and Recommendations



- Key organizations are playing a critical role in meeting the needs of the homeless in the Tyler area
- The entire community led by faith-based organizations, local and county governments, the private sector, non-profits and individual citizens will all need to play a part in helping to overcome homelessness
- Not a short term undertaking. Ongoing, concerted effort must be made in a multi-disciplinary approach to end homelessness in our community and to evolve from consumption based problem solving to transforming lives

# Goal IV: Conclusions and Recommendations – A 10 Point Plan



- 1. Establish an ongoing Homeless Roundtable**, that serves as the local continuum of care organization, to implement these recommendations and plans that are developed
- 2. Undertake the development of a local continuum of care plan** to serve as the community's five- and ten-year plans to end homelessness for veterans and the general population
- 3. Examine client discharging practices for institutions** – including, foster care, jail/prison and health facilities—and develop interventions to provide transitional support
- 4. Support the opening of a Day Resource Room** to provide the homeless with services such as showers, lockers, haircuts, phone messages, etc. (such as Gateway to Hope)

# Goal IV: Conclusions and Recommendations – A 10 Point Plan



- 5. Support the efforts of groups like Cornerstone Assistance Network, and others, to provide support and casework/referrals to services for individuals dealing with homelessness—assisting them with gaining independence and self sufficiency**
- 6. Implement enhanced (or more integrated) software to better track services related to the homeless. Use this data to better identify subgroups and higher-risk populations in this community**
- 7. Develop enhanced access for behavioral health/mental services**
- 8. Seek funding from all available sources to provide for gaps in services and to end homelessness (Federal, State, and private foundations, including, but not limited to, HUD and the VA)**
- 9. Support efforts of 211 to update resource database**
- 10. Support the efforts of faith-based organizations and non-profits to combat homelessness in the community**



# Questions and Answers

Council action recommended today:

- Accept report
- Authorize the creation of the Homeless Roundtable