



Good Faith Communities Coalition

Taking action on homelessness and affordable housing with and for the poor in the District of Columbia

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Top Tier Initiatives on Homelessness...Updates January 20, 2016

#1 Neighborhood Shelters for Families Who Are Homeless

In the District's strategic plan to make homelessness "rare, brief and non-recurring" (*Homeward DC*), **small neighborhood shelters** for families who are homeless were proposed. Each shelter would **house 40-50 families**. After completion, **DC General**, regarded as totally unsuitable for families, **would close**.

Status: In November 2015 the City sought urgent Council action on several provisions of the Homeless Services Reform Act **so that the placement and design of the neighborhood shelters for families could proceed within budget and on schedule**. The schedule



projected that DC General would close after the 2017 hypothermia season. The Council approved the requested changes. No definite date was established for release of the shelter design, nor their location in each ward - nor was there assurance that provisions for public discussion and comment would accompany the release. The **Homeward DC update (January 11, 2016) did not mention a**

release date for the shelter design and location.

Good Faith Action: Good Faith supports placing appropriately designed and located shelters for families throughout the city. Good Faith also strongly supports community discussion and comment on the proposals when presented. Good Faith and other advocacy and service groups have **requested information** on the plan's release date, but have received **no response**. Good Faith has submitted questions to the **Council Oversight Committee** and **will testify at the February 25th hearing**.

Shelter Census on January 11, 2016: 998 families with 1815 children in shelter and transitional housing + 1461 individuals in low barrier shelters.

2 Chronically Homeless, Veterans, Encampments ...

The city makes available **low barrier shelters that can accommodate over 1,400 individuals who are homeless**. Outreach to men and women living on the streets, many chronically homeless, is ongoing. The intent is to provide care, shelter if possible, and in the long run, housing.

Status: The city reports housing 1,300 individuals in the past year - 700 of whom are veterans. In addition, a service center where city services can be accessed has been opened. On November 20th, the DC government staff cleared the encampment under the Whitehurst Freeway. Other encampments were also cleared. Some living at encampments accepted shelter; others preferred to remain on the street. **New encampments with tents have emerged in the city.**



Good Faith Action: 25 organizations, including Good Faith, signed a [letter to the City](#) applauding the City for its significant investments in programs to end chronic homelessness, but cautioning that no matter the good intent, **the safety, well being and rights of people who continue to sleep outside must be protected.**

Good Faith will testify at the Council oversight hearing on February 23rd on the need to move ahead with the replacement or renovation of low-barrier shelters as planned - and to recognize the needs of those who can't accept shelter at this time due to personal fears and lack of trust.

#3 Assistance for Low Income Families...CRITICAL!

The **cash assistance program for families** in need is TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), a **60 month program** in which cash, training for employment, transportation and childcare assistance as well as mental health services are provided with the intent of moving the families to sustainable independence in the 60 months of support.

Status: **6,000 District families** were scheduled to age out of the program on October 1, 2015. Council action provided a one year extension. Challenges with the training-to-employment service continue and are unlikely to achieve the desired outcome (**jobs for all 6,000 participants**) by **October 1, 2016. With the elimination of benefits many of these families are more than likely to become homeless.**

Good Faith Action: Good Faith supports legislation introduced in the Council for a **hardship exemption** provision eliminating the 60 month cap for about 2,000 families who are likely to qualify because of health, personal or family disability or low literacy. The legislation also would provide **continuing benefits for children** in families who have aged out of the program without sustaining income. Good Faith will testify in support of this legislation on February 25th..

And we continue to pray....

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

BE INFORMED, BE ACTIVE, MAKE A DIFFERENCE!