

BERKSHIRE HOUSING
Development Corporation & Housing Services, Inc.

Pittsfield Homelessness Response – August 2022

Overview

The city of Pittsfield wishes to address the complex needs of residents experiencing homelessness, with a priority to provide permanent supportive housing. In January of 2022, a high-level strategy was developed, and work began to operationalize the response.

Strategy

This strategy attempts to address the primary infrastructure needs as well as community capacity to provide both a welcoming, non-judgmental community and the needed support services. This includes access to emergency shelter and housing navigation services 24 hours a day and housing with supportive services at the level of permanent supportive housing (PSH). Together, this approach will make a significant positive impact on the ability of those experiencing homeless to have their emergent and longer-term needs met.

Specifics

- Complete construction of a new 45 bed emergency shelter
- Design both structure and programs and build a Housing Resource Center
- Design and build permanent supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness
- Complete assessment and make recommendations for program design and facility operation for the housing resource center.

Process

With financial support from the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) for permanent supportive housing, Berkshire Housing began pre-development work on the infrastructure projects and engaged the Barrett Planning Group LLC to complete what became the attached Technical Memorandum: Housing Resource Center. To complete the report, the Barrett Planning Group assessed operations of local and regional sources related to serving people experiencing homelessness; completed 32 interviews with municipal staff, service agencies, housing providers and other stakeholders and facilitated two focus groups with people experiencing homelessness. Although the report focused on the housing resource center, the intention and outcome was to introduce the comprehensive response to the community and begin the dialogue with service providers about collaborating to support the services at the permanent support housing sites.

Status

The emergency shelter is under construction, and a request for funding for a total of 37 units of PSH will be submitted in the fall 2022 state supportive housing round. And importantly, key relationships have been established through the work of the Barrett Planning Group to ensure that strong services will be available at the PSH sites. Also, resulting from the learning of the Barrett Planning Group, was a strong sense that the community would benefit from facilitated conversations that will educate them about the complex nature of homelessness and the power of stigma. These efforts together will enhance the experience of those living in the PSH and help to ensure their success.

Thank You

Berkshire Housing would like to recognize the City of Pittsfield, MHSA, and the many community partners who contributed to this process. We are happy to share the report with anyone who may find it of interest. The contents are certainly transferable to communities across the state.

Technical Memorandum: Housing Resource Center

Prepared for:
Berkshire Housing Development Corporation
Pittsfield, MA



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Introduction

The Berkshire Housing and Development Corporation (BHDC) plans to establish a Housing Resource Center (HRC) to support people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness in the City of Pittsfield. In February 2022, BHDC asked Barrett Planning Group LLC to assist with developing recommendations for program design and facility operations. The consulting team's scope of work consisted of the following tasks:

TASK 1. MOBILIZATION

- Prepare for and participate in kickoff meeting with BDC staff.
- Identify, review, and assess existing information from local and regional sources (in addition to BDC's own studies and data), e.g., recent Community Health Needs Assessments prepared by BHS, findings and data reported in the City's most recent HUD Consolidated Plan, and related sources to identify and understand the operations of Berkshire's housing, homelessness, and social services agencies and providers.
- Gather basic information from available sources to assist the consultants in understanding the service area's demographic, historical, civic, geographic, and other assets and challenges.
- Review sample of HRC program designs in other cities.
- Develop engagement plan for review and approval by BDC.

TASK 2. INTERVIEWS, FACILITATION, ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM DESIGN

- Develop interview protocol and interview regional service providers serving people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In addition to groups specifically mentioned in BDC's Request for Interest, we anticipate interviewing representatives of the Pittsfield Public Schools, Berkshire Community College, the Elizabeth Freeman Center, and Elder Services. Depending on the organizations and issues involved, these interviews may be conducted individually or in small groups. The goal of the interviews is for our firm to understand and assess existing capacity, expertise, working partnerships, and weaknesses or gaps in the service delivery system.
- Design and facilitate up to five working sessions with potential community partners in the HRC. These sessions should culminate in a proposed plan for HRC programming and management. The consultants anticipate that these meetings will move from confirming needs, barriers, and resources to focus group sessions about what is feasible and what is most important, and how the HRC's benefits to housing residents and the community should be monitored, evaluated, and documented. Ideally, these sessions will include the same

participants and will be scheduled to accommodate all of them to the extent possible. (Note: the consultants ultimately led thirty-two discussion sessions with community partners. The results are described later in this report.)

- Prepare technical memorandum and recommendations for BHDC's review.
- Meet with BHDC staff to review findings and recommendations and plans for next steps.

TASK 3. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR HRC OPERATOR

- Draft the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a lead HRC agency.
- Review draft RFP with BHDC staff.
- At BHDC's request and if time permits, coordinate an information session with service providers to explain the RFP, answer questions about it, and revise the RFP (if necessary) to clarify it or provide additional information to aid eventual respondents.

When the HRC is ready for occupancy, BHDC will continue to own and manage the property and the HRC lead agency will operate the facility. BHDC expects to apply for funding from various sources, including the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, City of Pittsfield, and Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) to launch the HRC's operations.

From the outset of the consulting team's work, the project was guided by two goals: to create affordable, permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and to co-locate that housing with the HRC. Originally, these activities were to be developed in space BHDC is acquiring from the Zion Lutheran Church, which is very close to BHDC's headquarters on Fenn Street. As the project evolved, BHDC identified another option for developing more permanent housing units on a site near the HRC. Nevertheless, the focus of the consulting team's work has always been the HRC: space where people experiencing a housing crisis can obtain advice, support, counseling, and meet basic needs during the day when the overnight shelters are closed. BHDC anticipates serving approximately sixty people a day. The facility's clients will have access to meals, showers, and bathrooms, and most important of all, a safe, welcoming environment.

The public engagement process for the HRC included outreach to nonprofit service providers, faith communities, people experiencing homelessness, and other stakeholders, including City staff. The purpose of this report is to document the engagement process, summarize key findings, and provide the consulting team's recommendations for the HRC.

Community Engagement

Between February and May 2022, Barrett Planning Group interviewed people from a combined total of thirty-two organizations, including City staff, non-profit human services organizations, housing providers, and the **Three-County Continuum of Care** (CoC). Discussions centered around pressing needs, priorities, anticipated challenges, and models of HRC facilities in other jurisdictions. The team also conducted two community meetings at the end of April, organized by **ServiceNet** and the **Cathedral of the Beloved**, to consult with people experiencing homelessness in Pittsfield. Zion Lutheran Church gave the consultants a tour of the site (pre- construction) in April to understand existing conditions, create a photo inventory, and receive updates from recent meetings with the architects.

Case Studies

Barrett Planning Group contacted several national, state, and county-level agencies and organizations operating facilities similar to the HRC planned for Pittsfield.¹ Collecting case study information allowed the consultants to understand trends for these types of facilities and programs and how they have evolved over time. Knowing that basics such as showers and kitchen facilities will be needed, the consultants sought information about programming and policies that have been instituted at established HRC facilities. Five providers provided information in varying levels of detail.

HUDSON RIVER HOUSING, POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK

Hudson River Housing operates a center led by their Housing Navigation team, i.e., staff that oversee emergency rent relief, housing vouchers, and housing applications. It also hosts the street outreach team, consisting of street outreach staff and care managers, and a drop-in center. The drop-in center has a small computer room, a bathroom with a shower, a small kitchen, and a donations area. The facility has two entrances, one for the drop-in center and one for housing services. Like BHDC's plans for the HRC in Pittsfield, the resource center in Poughkeepsie is located downtown and near other services, including Hudson River Housing's administrative offices. The main resource center is in an older building with some layout challenges that forced them to adapt to the "quirks" of the site. Because of this, the contact person for Hudson River Housing said their floor plans would be not useful to the consultants.²

¹ Special thanks to Trisha Guditz, NeighborWorks America, and Natalie Matthews, Abt Associates, for referrals to several of the case study organizations.

² Elizabeth Celaya, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Hudson River Housing, Inc., to Fiona Coughlan, Barrett Planning Group LLC, April 10, 2022.

AMHERST SURVIVAL CENTER, AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

The Amherst Survival Center offers several free services for the community including meals, fresh produce and baked goods, a food pantry, curbside pick-up, grocery delivery, an off-site mobile pantry. For people experiencing homelessness, the Amherst facility offers a warming center, breakfast bar, showers, laundry, facilities, lockers, computers, mail service, and charging stations during the day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.



Amherst Survival Center Floor Plan

The Amherst Survival Center has a free, walk-in medical clinic that is open to all and free, regardless of insurance status. A separate but related Resource Center provides Salvation Army vouchers, fuel assistance, SNAP enrollment, job search support, and similar resources. Building amenities include a certified kitchen; gender-neutral bathrooms with access to pads, tampons, and condoms; public phone and computers; printing/faxing; an accessible entryway; mailbox access; a language line; walk-in freezers/coolers; onsite parking; and a basement warehouse.

Staff said that some services are not currently operating, including a community store and daily activities such as sewing workshops, yoga classes, movie nights, live music, cooking classes, and their lunchtime Feed Democracy program (voter registration, office hours with elected officials, advocacy opportunities, etc.).³

NORTHAMPTON HUB, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

The Northampton HUB does not yet have space in which to operate, but the project's organizers have conducted a comprehensive planning and community engagement process to decide what the HUB should offer and how space should be allocated to various needs. The floor plans have been designed to accommodate needs for mental health services, social distancing, accessibly, and gender flexibility. Based on a study by Jones Whitsett Architects, the potential space will have large passageways, connected common spaces, and organized storage. The architects recommended a modular structure that can be adapted over time to avoid investment in a "fixed end" result. The final site may be a smaller community "living room" HUB (5,500 sq. ft.) or a

³ Lev Ben-Ezra, Executive Director, Amherst Survival Center, to Fiona Coughlan, Barrett Planning Group LLC, April 10, 2022.

medium-sized central outreach HUB (10,500 sq. ft.). The “living room” would be equipped with basic resources and an outreach contact, a community room, a small kitchen, a pantry area for store donations and volunteers, and some resilience sheltering. The larger central outreach HUB would include all the above, plus additional program area space and staff/ clinic space.⁴

Preliminary Program
Northampton Community & Resilience Hub

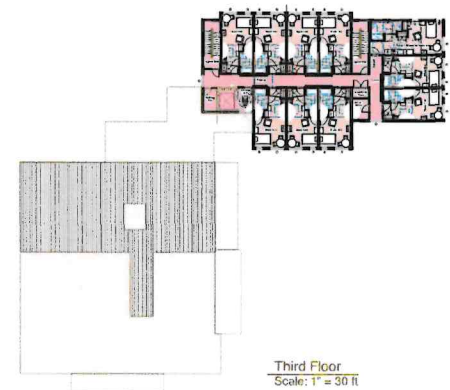
		SMALL			MEDIUM				
		ROOM NFA.T	# OF RMS	area totals	ROOM NFA.T	# OF RMS	area totals		
P U B L I C	Normal Use				Disruption Use				
	Vestibule	Vestibule	70	1	70	70	1	70	
	Lobby	Emergency Communications	250	1	250	250	1	250	
	Reception		150	1	150	150	1	150	
	Info Board/Kiosk		40	1	40	40	1	40	
	Charging Kiosk	Charging Kiosk	40	1	40	40	1	40	
	Reading Room/Computer Rm	Flexible Community Gathering /	300	1	300	300	1	300	
	Community/Lecture Room	Shelter	800	1	800	800	1	900	
	Art Classroom		650	1	650	650	1	650	
	Add. Public Meeting/Classrooms								
	Public Lockers	Public Lockers	80	1	80	120	1	120	
	Restrooms	Restrooms	65	3	195	65	4	260	
			Subtotal			2575	Subtotal		
						2780			
P A T R O N	Normal Use				Disruption Use				
	Food Pantry + Clothing Exchange	Food/Supply Distribution	80	1	80	200	1	200	
	Mail Area	Mail Area	40	1	40	40	1	40	
	Sm Counseling	Flexible Exam/Counseling/Isolation	145	1	145	145	2	290	
	Gr Counseling	Rooms				225	1	225	
	Exam Rm	Exam Room / First Aid	160	1	160	160	2	320	
	Triage/Nurse Station	Triage/Nurse Station	120	1	120	120	1	120	
	Pharmacy	EM Dist. and Prescription Storage				145	1	145	
	Shower Rm	Public Showers	60	1	60	60	3	180	
	Laundry Rm	Public Laundry	80	1	80	150	1	150	
	Restrooms	Public Restrooms				65	2	130	
	Kitchen	Emergency Food Preparation	250	1	250	450	1	450	
	Offices	EM Staff Offices	135	2	270	135	3	405	
	Director								
			Subtotal			1645	Subtotal		
							3160		
	S T R U C T U R E	Normal Use				Disruption Use			
Additional Belongings Storage		Patron Storage During Disruption				300	1	300	
Donations Processing		EM Supply Storage, Distribution, Flex				200	1	200	
EM Shelter Storage		Space	300	1	300	300	1	300	
Food/Water Storage						250	1	250	
Custodial Storage		Custodial Storage	120	1	120	200	1	200	
Office/Dry Storage		Stor. for Normal Use Office in Disrup				80	1	80	
Mechanical Rm		Mechanical Rm	200	1	200	225	1	225	
EM Electrical Room		EM Electrical Room	70	1	70	70	1	70	
Data Closet		Data Closet	70	1	70	70	1	70	
Water/Graywater/FP Systems		Water/Graywater/FP Systems				100	1	100	
Loading Dock		Loading Dock				200	1	200	
Waste/Recycling		Waste/Recycling	40	1	40	80	1	80	
Pet Area	Pet Area				65	1	65		
		Subtotal			800	Subtotal			
						2140			
Total Building Net Floor Area (NFA)					5,020				
Grossing factor					1.3				
Total Gross Building Area					6,526				

Northampton HUB Final Program Design for the Living Room and Outreach HUBs

FATHER BILLS/MAINSRING (FBMS), QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS

FBMS has worked extensively with the City of Quincy and other partners to create a new HRC that includes both Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Emergency Shelter components. Following an assessment of their shelter population and service needs by Brandeis University’s Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP), Father Bill’s began pursuing a community center

⁴ Jones Whitsett Architects (JWA), *Planning the Northampton Resilience HUB*, May 5-June 8, 2020.



FBMS HRC Final Program Design
First, Second and Third Floors

model that incorporates the report's recommendations. The space and basic needs recommendations included providing a comfortable daytime space with computers, charging stations, laundry, a space to watch TV/read, an exercise room, and showers; and separate spaces for young people, elders, and women due to their specific needs.⁵ Today, the project is almost complete and will offer day services, emergency shelter, and PSH. Day services will include addiction recovery support, private meeting areas, conference rooms (flexible), a medical clinic, technology use, a library, commercial kitchen space, and day lockers.

In addition, Father Bill's will provide two dormitories with 75 bunks for clients. This area will also include showers, lockers, laundry, and access to day services. There will be 20-30 efficiency apartments for chronically homeless individuals with separate access and on-site case management. Accessible studio units will also be available. Program support will concentrate on prevention, Rapid Rehousing, and ongoing case management, and funding will come from a Sustainability Fund that covers maintenance, capital improvements, program innovation, and a flexible funding source, and acts as a safety net in an emergency.⁶

⁵ *Planning for a new Community Center for Homeless Individuals: Stakeholders Reflect on Services and the Need for System Change*, Prepared for Father Bill's and MainSpring by Institute on Assets and Social Policy Heller School for Social Policy and Management/Brandeis University, December 2015.

⁶ April Connolly, "Father Bills and MainSpring HRC Overview," presented to Manet Community Health Center by Father Bills and MainSpring. PowerPoint, 2022.

Outreach and Engagement

Following the project Community Engagement Plan, Barrett Planning Group's work pivoted to understanding the daily challenges faced by people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness in Pittsfield. In consultation with BHDC, these challenges included social inclusion, equity, health care, faith, employment, sustainability, and housing access. Accordingly, the engagement process was guided by seven goals (listed on the right).

Service Provider and Municipal Interviews Summary

Barrett Planning Group conducted thirty-two interviews with municipal staff, service agencies, housing providers, Board/Commission members, and other relevant stakeholders between February and May 2022. The team tried to contact an additional twelve groups that did not respond or declined to be interviewed. During the interviews, the consulting team asked attendees about their experiences with homelessness in Pittsfield, what the HRC should include, anticipated challenges with programming and design, and goals and strategies for success. The interview questions focused on each organization's experience, roles, and clientele served. Following these meetings, the consultants made requests for additional information to the interviewees.

- *That all persons at risk of or experiencing homelessness are welcome in the community, can secure a job, access services, connect with family and friends, personal interests, and the local community; deal with personal issues and crises and have their voices heard.*
- *To be part of a community that recognizes impartiality, fairness, and justice for all and to work to eliminate social inequalities to ensure everyone in the community has access to the same opportunities and outcomes.*
- *To have access to and utilize a local health care system that is capable, competent, and adequately resourced to deliver medical, dental, cognitive and behavioral health, and counseling and support services to people experiencing homelessness, especially long-term homelessness;*
- *To connect to the faith community in Pittsfield and coordinate with the service-oriented mission of that community.*
- *To find if needed, educational, job training, work preparedness, and childcare resources to become self-supporting.*
- *That the needs of today's Berkshire County residents can be met without compromising the ability of its future residents to meet*

Members of the following organizations participated in the engagement process:

- 18 Degrees
- Abt Associates
- Amherst Survival Center
- Berkshire Community Action Council
- Berkshire Community Health Programs
- Berkshire United Way
- Cathedral of the Beloved
- Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds
- ServiceNet
- Solider On
- The Berkshire Athenaeum (Pittsfield Public Library)
- The Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority
- The Brien Center
- The Christian Center
- The Elizabeth Freeman Center
- City of Pittsfield Community Development Department
- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- Community Action Pioneer Valley / Three County Continuum of Care
- Father Bill's/MainSpring
- Hudson River Housing/Porchlight
- The Errera Center
- The Northampton Hub
- The Pittsfield Fire Department
- The Pittsfield Homeless Advisory Committee
- The Pittsfield Police Department
- Western MA Regional Network to End Homelessness
- Worcester Housing Authority
- Zion Lutheran Church of Pittsfield

The interviews highlighted important points about the HRC and its potential clientele that will affect operations in the short and long-term. The organizations consulted during this process mentioned anticipated barriers to consider, and solutions. Insight into the daily challenges faced by long-standing providers in Pittsfield influenced some of the recommendations found at the end of this report. Recurring topics of concern included the extremely limited housing market in and around Pittsfield, lack of transportation services, the need to avoid duplication of benefits, the importance of relationship-building, and bridging service delivery gaps. Several interviewees said the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Pittsfield gradually worsened after the complete closure of General Electric's facilities. There is frustration around the fragmentation of support and lack of basic facilities to help people out of homelessness. Participants agreed that new and creative solutions are required to make measurable change in the community. Most said that if done correctly, a Housing Resource Center could be the ideal starting point.

HOUSING

Housing availability, staff, and subsidies for people with low incomes are inadequate in Berkshire County. A recently released report about housing problems in the Berkshires indicates that older adults, lower-income workers, extremely low-income people, and middle-income professionals are all affected by the extremely limited inventory of affordable housing.⁷ COVID-19 exacerbated existing challenges across the county and hindered placement by creating little movement in the market, making it even more difficult to find available

"What should drive this entity is 'How quickly and comprehensively can this person be rehoused?'"

-HRC Interview Participant

⁷ Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1Berkshire, *Berkshire County Regional Housing Strategy*, March 2022.

apartments. Meanwhile, shelters were forced to cut hours and staff, and service programs cut back or ceased operations entirely. Although the health of the city has improved since 2020, housing waitlists continue to have a backlog of several years, the supply remains constrained, and providers continue to struggle with Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and other online applications through the BHDC.

All income groups, including median-income households, are stressed as financial resources provided during the pandemic deplete. Some agencies have become savvy about accessing vouchers and subsidies, but still run into the issue of finding a home for their client. Many have tried to bolster their services by applying for resources to help clients with direct expenses, utilities, relocation costs, and safety measures e.g., locks and security systems. Providers are constantly struggling to have an “upstream look,” according to a representative from the **Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority**, because the focus is primarily on early intervention and prevention. If someone loses her housing or can't be rapidly rehoused before she becomes homeless, the chance of an elongated period of homelessness is significant. The extremely low or very-low income are at an extraordinarily high risk. There is a steep climb for the homeless to obtain permanent, affordable, decent housing. More chronic, high-barrier households with problem CORIs and SORIs, poor or no credit histories, and bad landlord references require special help. A challenging market and being on the lowest end of the spectrum for selection make that household unfavorable to rental property owners. The need for a resource center connected to housing should help to develop “housing resumes” and increase the likelihood of finding a solution for people with multiple barriers to stable, affordable housing.

Homelessness and housing are challenges “across the board” for young adults, minors, domestic violence victims, the elderly, disabled adults, and people with substance abuse issues; each has various challenges, be it affording rent, finding a safe location, or conforming to policies with landlords. The **Elizabeth Freeman Center** has developed specialized access projects for the LGBTQ community, domestic violence survivors, people with disabilities, immigrants, and children through their Homelessness Response Program. One participant shared dismay about what children exiting foster care go through to be self-sufficient and find permanent, stable housing. Intervention and education are critical when working with young people so they can understand how to connect to secure housing, as children who experience foster care often become homeless adults at disproportionately high rates. There have been efforts by several agencies to develop stronger relationships with local landlords with suitable properties, but they say it remains difficult. Some clients, especially young people, may have verbal agreements with landlords who have then increased their rent, did not respond to a maintenance request, or done something they should not have. Many do not want to jeopardize their situation and are uncomfortable speaking up because they lack a binding lease agreement. **18 Degrees** works with housing committees in the area on tenant advocacy and communicating with landlords about tenant rights and the legal responsibilities of landlords.

The HRC is about more than finding housing, but it could play a major role in terms of referrals and information-sharing. One of the most important aspects of the future space could be equipping people with the skills to find, maintain, and improve their housing, e.g., life skills training, connections to attorneys, employment search, and ways to appropriately express grief and suffering so one can “keep finding the rent.” A representative from the **Western Massachusetts**

Regional Network to End Homelessness summarized it as, “the question becomes - how do we house people outside of a shelter that need aggressive services and are in survival mode?”

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing and economic development are inextricably linked to transportation, and transportation is a huge barrier in Pittsfield and Berkshire County. Existing systems do not operate on Sundays or at night. Bus transportation is very limited, with restricted routes to other major areas with services such as Springfield. Uber and Lyft are not available. This makes it hard for providers to get clients to appointments and back in one day. Service options are widely disbursed across the county and hard to get to, in Pittsfield, South County, and North County. Staff at the **Elizabeth Freeman Center** noted that South County - a relatively wealthy region - has more homelessness than many people realize due to the area’s very high housing costs. South County residents and homeless individuals cannot easily travel to Pittsfield for assistance. Freeman Center representatives said it is worth thinking about promoting a transportation option with an emphasis on Downtown, including locating near a bus stop or having carpool available. **Soldier On** recently received a grant for electric vans to transport its clients to VA and medical appointments, which involved decreasing their current vehicle fleet by two gas-powered vehicles. The vans are driven by volunteers, and they are reimbursed by both the grant and the VA for providing the service. Broadband and fiber optics add another layer of challenges, as cell coverage can be unreliable and more affordable phones may not have internet access. Track phones run on minutes if a client even has a cell phone.

MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

In addition to physical infrastructure, there is a shortage of mental, behavioral, and physical health services in Pittsfield. Mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness are often intertwined, and having appropriate response mechanisms in place would benefit the HRC. Healthcare was identified as an area that the HRC could support on a referral basis. Young people, immigrants, the undocumented, and those without insurance especially need health services. Currently, the waitlist is extensive, but **18 Degrees** welcomed the opportunity for referrals from the HRC, and its operation as a one-stop-shop for linking spaces and providers. Many agreed the HRC should be a place where people can go when they need help, if they need to ask questions, and where they can get answers. **The Brien Center** also offered to connect the HRC with their nursing services, which administers medications, takes blood pressure, and offers other services. The success of their nursing program has been attributed to scheduling consistency, which allows clients to spread the word.

The Brien Center works closely with respite programs. Individuals with mental illness and addiction live with a stigma that acts as a barrier to finding support. If there are problems where they live, they are often targeted even though they may not have caused a particular issue. This jeopardizes their housing situation and contributes to the cycle of homelessness. Some individuals face an added barrier of an arrest-record or were brought into the Pittsfield system from some other group quarters setting. People with chronic histories or who struggle with substance abuse require intensive support, running the risk of disproportionately taking away resources from other people who need help. Interviewees said the HRC will need ways to avoid excluding clients who need considerable help whenever possible. Still, they also said if someone presents a significant risk to themselves or others, they may need a more suitable situation, as it can be unfair

to others who are extraordinarily vulnerable. ServiceNet said that adults without children experience a different type of trauma and demonstrate different behavioral effects of that trauma. Some interviewees noted that mental health is a major issue for the region's homeless. Building trust and progressive engagement help to understand the challenges households face. Ideally, staff will get to know a household and identify issues causing instability while confirming what steps a household has completed so far (e.g., have they met eligibility factors of the By-Names list, etc.). Having or being connected to a comprehensive assessment tool ensures "you are doing what needs to be done." The **Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority** and BHDC utilize a catch-all assessment entitled the HCEC Customer Assessment Form for their clientele. It provides a snapshot of what people are identifying as challenges and what they're looking for. From there, staff connect the client to programs such as housing or legal counseling and can conduct a more detailed assessment based on the general assessment. BHDC will need to decide if this is workable at the HRC and something the operator is willing or able to do. Regarding mental health and substance use, interviewees said it is important for the HRC to act as a conduit to other resources, making referrals seamlessly so people do not feel as if they are being handed-off.

DUPLICATION OF BENEFITS AND BRIDGING SERVICE GAPS

Many interviewees expressed concern over a duplication of benefits regarding services at the HRC. Homelessness is a glaring problem and the pushback on homelessness services is intense. Residents, providers, and City staff report frustration from attending meetings and not seeing results. However, many said there are parallel initiatives in Pittsfield, including the **Christian Center's HRC**, **Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seed's Artists Relax Lounge**, and **Second Street Second Chances** for people re- entering or who have already re-entered the community from incarceration. Providers cautioned to avoid significant duplication and stretching agencies/resources across different initiatives, as BHDC and **Zion Lutheran Church** will have their own commitments to meet relative to grants and their mission. Existing agencies have finite resources and if they are spread too thin, the result could be less effective or ineffective programming and inadequate levels of coverage. According to people interviewed by the consultants, this, coupled with a lack of communication, has historically been an issue in Berkshire County.

A cross-pollination of resources, boards, committees, and so on is important so groups know about each other. **Berkshire Community Health Programs** suggested the HRC act as a connection facilitator to service delivery providers to avoid confusion. For example, an in-house nurse may say one thing, but a client's health care provider said something else. The nurse may not realize this, and it becomes difficult for that information to be communicated if the client cannot explain it. Another common instance of duplication is a household having numerous case managers. It is hard to have a deeper relationship with multiple case managers and messages are often mixed unintentionally. The **Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority** has a partnership with **Berkshire Health Systems**, which has dedicated case managers that have been continuously working to build relationships with their clients to expand on, rather than duplicate, their work. The HRC staff could consult with the case manager and the client household together to address highly technical issues and trying to be the relationship in lieu of that case manager.

There was consensus that the HRC should bring fragmented resources together to provide a larger collective impact rather than incremental support. Interviewees said that an upfront and ongoing engagement effort on behalf of BHDC and the future operator will be necessary to accomplish

this, including a substantive public relations campaign among health care providers, nonprofits, the rental property community, shelters, the court system, public safety, and the CoC. Acting in this role will also build credibility and trust, fortify relationship-building, and enhance the HRC's longevity.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING, COMMUNICATION, AND TRUST

Trust, communication, mutual respect, and relationships will be instrumental to the HRC's success. **ServiceNet** said the space should be open and engaging (in harmony with private options), as the population to be served includes people who have had little or no luck in other places. Interviewees said there should be clinically trained staff that do not have the stereotypical clinical "look." Staff should conduct assessment, triage, and diagnosis informally while having coffee with the client or as they are helping them with laundry. Many other agencies emphasized that a nontraditional approach is extremely effective as there is a climate of fear and safety. Clients are afraid they will have their children taken away if they tell someone they are homeless, or they are afraid they may go somewhere unsafe. This presents a barrier to discovering who needs services.

"The bottom line is that engagement is the first step - that folks walking in the door are feeling seen, heard, and cared for. That has to be the basis of anything we're doing. Then frankly, everything that comes after that is a perk."

-HRC Interview Participant

While the HRC should not have its services "plastered on the door," it should be a space providers identify as safe, where there will not be repercussions when they are honest, as they ultimately risk giving up the right to their personal information upon entry. Another ServiceNet staff member said when clients warm to established, trusted, respectful relationships, they become more comfortable asking for help.

The **Zion Lutheran Church** emphasized that no one should feel intimidated about coming to the HRC, whether it is someone experiencing homelessness, or someone in the congregation bringing their kids to the Common Room. It is important to them that the outside space is welcoming, while the inside is safe and secure. The facility has visitors including groups hosting concerts, theater productions, meetings, and more. The HRC will be for the community at-large, so communication and relationship-building will be important. One participant said that people utilizing the space also must own it; they will create norms that are protective of the whole. Developing a sense of community and giving people ownership in what they have informs them that "we are not doing this for you, you're doing this for yourself. We are just helping you get there."

Some commented on the difficulty of gaining community acceptance in Downtown Pittsfield. Business owners object to the foot traffic near their storefronts. The HRC staff need to be prepared to defend themselves and their clients from current perceptions of homelessness. There is also a notable lack of cultural competency about cultural, historic, or gender challenges of homeless individuals i.e., young women and transgender individuals forced to walk the streets. **Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds** reported more displacement among their low-income Latino and African American members. They continuously look at different ways to be sustainable through the food justice. The Brien Center has hosted public meetings in the past to open a dialogue and

address concerns. The **Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness** commented on the necessity of systems building when faced with these challenges – how can the HRC ensure its clients are homeless for a short period and are non-recurring, while building trust among naysayers.

Building Skills and Trust through Volunteerism

HRC participants may lack social and technical life skills such as cooking/using a kitchen or applying for a job. They may benefit from communication and development of “soft skills” such as appropriate work attire, hair acceptance for minorities, interview skills, how to properly shower, and self-advocacy. Staff should seek the expertise of a diverse group of volunteers to assist with soft skill education and client engagement. The **Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds Artists Relax Lounge** offers Community Conversations each Saturday - a place where attendees can work with volunteers on art projects, write poetry, play music, or simply talk while staying warm and getting a meal. Many nonprofits rely on donations of time and volunteer support, and the most successful are those that are inclusive to clients and volunteers.

“The community can be so therapeutic in and of itself.”

-HRC Interview Participant

Community volunteers can bring to light many truths hidden behind the scenes. Several providers mentioned volunteers are often the ones most able to build trusting relationships, learning about things going on in the household, such as which families are couch-surfing. Based on this trusted relationship, staff can then offer resources through a community volunteer liaison.

Community Meetings Summary

On April 26, 2022, **BHDC**, **ServiceNet**, and the **Cathedral of the Beloved** hosted two “open house-style” community meetings for people experiencing homelessness in Pittsfield. The first meeting was at 11 am in the Berkshire Atheneum Auditorium and the second was at 2 pm at ServiceNet’s emergency shelter, the former Saint Joseph’s High School. ServiceNet provided refreshments for attendees. Barrett Planning Group designed the meetings, provided all meeting materials, and compiled the following summary of both events.

Each meeting had three discussion and comment stations: a **cultural** station, and **environmental** station, and a **private meeting** station for people who wanted to speak to staff separately. The consultants wrote questions on large sheets taped to the wall or tables and provided large post-it notes and pens to fill in responses. The cultural station’s questions sought to understand how the HRC can support clients, foster a sense of belonging, provide safety, be welcoming, and encourage people to come back. The environmental station’s questions sought to understand what the HRC needs in terms of programming, logistics, and physical requirements. Participants were asked what they would like to see in the space, how could the space be flexible, how they would use the space, and how often.

Each station had an open-air design and the opportunity for dialogue with a staff member from one of the host organizations. Attendees were asked to answer a survey card upon entering the meeting to provide more information about HRC spatial requirements. The first meeting evolved

into an open forum-style event, with attendees discussing in a large group what they would like to see. Over the course of two, hour-and-a-half events, there were approximately thirty attendees, not including the five staff members. Attendees said they were unaware of the HRC project, and many requested more information or clarification. A summary of the feedback from each meeting by question is below.

SURVEY CARD RESULTS

Would it be helpful if the space had?	Number of "Yes" Checkmarks
Cell Phone Charging Stations	15
Showers and Shower Supplies	16
Lockers Or Storage Spaces	13
Wi-Fi/Internet Access	13
Mailboxes	11
A Rest Area	11
Computers	12
Common Spaces/Community Meeting Spaces	10
Spaces for Art, Music, Extracurriculars	11
Private Offices/Meeting Spaces/Counseling Rooms	11
An Information Board/Kiosk	10
Laundry Area	15
Microwave	13
Nursing Area/Health Clinic	11
Total Cards Collected	17

An “other thoughts” option was provided on the back of the cards. Six attendees responded:

- In Albany County, NY, there is a daytime drop-in where if homeless people sleep outside, they can shower, eat breakfast, wash clothes, etc.;
- Housing/new job advice;
- Adult day care, video games, La-Z-Boy recliner, and EBT PTA info;
- Weekly job fair;
- Counseling, email, and Wi-Fi for work; and
- There needs to be more than one shelter in Pittsfield.

MORNING AND AFTERNOON MEETING RESULTS

TOPIC STATION 1: HOW CAN THE CENTER SUPPORT YOU?


Question 1: Would you like to see a place where you could go during the day to take a shower? Get a meal? Charge your phone? Etc.

- Kitchen and solid place that is a meal site
- Basic supplies such as reading glasses, basic medical supplies
- Connection to services for those who have been incarcerated
- Shower makes difference when applying for jobs
- Need address and apartment that isn't the shelter to get a job
- Medical assistance, first aid, vaccines, BPV/light- touch visits/exams

Question 2: Would you use a place like this? Why? How often? When? What times should it be open?

- Job hours are conflicting with shelter hours- worried about losing your spot
- Council on aging 9-2 pm and \$3 every time - not disability friendly right now
- \$5 from shelter to warming center
- Long waiting times
- Greenville United Miniseries
- Optional toiletries
- Perfect model - mail address, long-term lockers, showers
- Open all day/job training and chances to work there
- A place to go during the day with:
- Dog sitting/laying area on site
- A large floor space for people to lay down and rest when tired (or sit up)
- Advocate assistance to help with benefits, emergency contacts, ID, and other necessary documents
- Transportation assistance in emergencies
- Clothing (in emergency) or "clothing closet" (regularly)
- Showers with supplies provided
- Sit in out of the cold weather or otherwise during the day
- Counseling assistance
- Local phone calls for emergencies
- Laundry assistance
- Coffee and donuts
- Computer access
- Apartments (housing) assistance
- Cell phone charging station
- Some people need sectional space for overnight sleep at each person's bedside, for those who feel harassed or annoyed
- Cubical separation walls around some beds
- 6 month waiting list issue, waiting to become a resident - place to fill gap

Topic Station 1:
How Can the Center Support You?



1. *Would you like to see a place where you could go during the day to take a shower? Get a meal? Charge your phone? Use a computer? etc.*

2. *Would you use a place like this? Why? How often? When? What times should it be open?*

3. *What would make you feel welcome and want to come in?*

4. *What would keep you coming back?*


5. *What should the space have to foster a sense of belonging?*

6. *What would make you feel safe in a place like this?*

7. *What would you need/like the staff to be like?*

8. *What would you need/like the staff to be able to do to help you best use the facility?*

Please fill out a sticky note responding to each question and attach it to the sheets provided. If you need assistance, please ask a staff member. Thank you!



Question 3: What would make you feel welcome and want to come in?

- More long-term space
- Place for those recovering from injury or illness
- Ease of transportation
- COVID posed challenges, in busy season is extra difficult
- 55+ shelter for different needs - rest on Sundays, not looking for jobs, most know how to take care of themselves
- More facilities with room and key while wait for housing - cheap rates for hotels, meals only downstairs

Question 4: What would keep you coming back?

- Nap room
- Women's center near Newbury St (example)
- Grab and go food
- Was staying at hotels until money ran out
- Long term lockers for storage
- Near the bus route
- Shower, clothes, washing, place to plan the day and regroup

Question 5: What should the space have to foster a sense of belonging?

- More leniency, more open, less strict sign in and out rules
- Need help with filling out forms
- More people with canes, need to be accessible
- Transportation needs, limited options, need to be central (north street), issues with stairs, walking/standing too long, spending too much on taxis- increase Uber and Lyft
- Space or mats to work out
- Physical therapy
- Family counseling
- Confidence building
- Following through
- Creating hope to break bad habits

Question 6: What would make you feel safe in a place like this?

- Back up location/counseling someone on call for those in crisis
- Place to store and access expensive items, need to lock up large items
- Community-center feel
- Place where things can be kept
- Mitigating fighting and other problems
- Need to feel accepted, not constantly feeling like need to earn acceptance
- Need to not feel like everyone is against us

Question 7: What would you need/like the staff to be like?

- Weekly bible study, optional, and free with coffee
- Job fairs and counseling
- Many trying to overcome addiction - affects housing and jobs

- Spiritual options - group of people but don't have a set religion
- Provide tools to get and keep a job, and if can't get job in 2 months, have to leave

Question 8: What would you need/like the staff to be able to do to help you best use the facility?

- Mail when you are ready to get it
- Overlap hours with the shelters
- Need assistance for those with housing instability and couch surfing
- Connections to other services, YMCA passes, etc.
- People who know what is around
- Barrier of bus schedule
- Need job support and application help
- Mental health counseling for vets
- Many folks dealing with life challenges and ability to help them
- Need to not be intrusive regarding where people are going/making people feel like nothing

TOPIC STATION 2: HOW CAN THE CENTER SUPPORT YOU?


Question 1: What would you need/like for space in the facility?

- Laundry area and laundry supplies
- Gym or recreational area, YMCA connection
- Bike rentals (free) for errands, etc.
- Videos and media space
- Showers, lockers, computers, WIFI
- Television and opportunity to play video games
- Offer weekly on-site job fairs
- Hire people for the shelter
- Space for kids, media space for entertainment
- Answering service and assistance on-site
- Recreation options, Roku
- Private meeting spaces
- Senior outreach
- "Telephone booth" space
- Zoom meeting space
- Collapsible wall
- Secure phone charging station
- Cleanliness - sanitation of bedding
- Ample laundry service

Question 2: How would you use the space provided?

- Free laundry area
- Storage bins - stackable but private and unable to be stolen
- Daytime showers, mail, shower supplies
- Charging phones

Topic Station 2:
What Does the Center Need?



1. What would you need/like for space in the facility?

2. How would you use the space provided?


3. How often would you use the space?

4. What would you like to see provided in the space? (for example, charging stations, computers, lockers, etc.)


5. What would you like and dislike about a facility like this?

6. What aspects of the space need to be flexible?


Please fill out a sticky note responding to each question and attach it to the sheets provided. If you need assistance, please ask a staff member.
Thank you!



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UNITED BY LOVE



servicenet



BARDU

Question 3: How often would you use the space?

- Have open space available 24/7
- Open on Sundays, open @ least 3 or 4 days a week
- Open 24/7 including holidays

Question 4: What would you like to see provided in the space (for example, charging stations, computers, lockers, etc.)?

- Locker with key
- Microwave and microwavable food
- Transportation to and from
- Sports equipment storage - basketball, soccer
- Locker rooms big enough to fit duffle bag
- Food and water provided
- Community kitchen and opportunity to refrigerate food items like milk products
- "For special circumstances" sectional areas
- The rest who have no problem being harassed, annoyed, or uncomfortable around others, lodge in the "main" area floor space
- A large floor space for people in day shelter to lay down and rest, or sit up and stay out of the cold (or whatever) (because most people are tired from the experience of homelessness and sometimes want to rest or sleep a little while) Without being told "you need to sit up inside (during the day)!"
- WIFI hotspot rentals
- Need WIFI
- Laundry spaces
- Padlocks for stuff
- Printers and updated tech



Question 5: What do you think you would like/dislike about a facility like this? See examples.

- 6 votes for better transportation, unreliable bus schedule
- Look to the living room as a model (can only sign in @ certain hours)
- Lack of options for elderly and disabled
- Housing search help and help securing a space quickly
- Discrimination and barriers in place, especially after the pandemic - no way out feeling and need to stop that
- Help with CORI

Question 6: What aspects of the space need to be flexible?

- Showers/individual lockers
- Should be flexible hours due to varied people's schedules, work, appointments, etc.
- Being able to cook and make food for others x2
- Open 24 hours
- Rest rooms with recliners -place to rest before work

Summary of Observations from Interviews

- Relationship building, trust, and ongoing engagement and communications are very important for working with clients, providers, and other stakeholders. These elements can make the difference between a space that benefits the community versus being another building people visit on occasion.
- The HRC should be a trusted space where people can "just be" and "meet people where they are." Without the trust element, the HRC could fail.
- There needs to be a balance between duplicating benefits and availability of on-site services. Providing health services on-site may trigger formal licensing requirements that vary based on the types of services involved. Additionally, there are significant staff shortages in the health care and social assistance fields in Berkshire County. Contracting options exist with the Brien Center for behavioral health, mental health, and addiction services as well as nursing.
- The HRC should be a community-based center that engages everyone with a stake in its success – clients, staff, clergy, volunteers, and visitors – in policy-setting and operations. Similar facilities such as the Northampton HUB and the Amherst Survival Center follow this approach, although a facility that is volunteer-intensive and relies to some extent on private philanthropy and municipal resources will need an active operations team to manage it.
- The transportation gap for potential clients of the HRC will remain a significant problem. The HRC will need to incorporate feasible means to address that, whether that is purchasing a van, subsidized bus passes, or setting up a carpool system.
- There is a trend toward non-mandated sobriety in HRC facilities. Future operators will need to evaluate what that looks like in the context of this HRC. There were multiple reports of difficulties with upstairs living arrangements in this kind of environment, the presence of children, and open community spaces and how those suffering with substance abuse will interface with those in recovery and others present on-site.
- There are different levels of program eligibility for homeless youth/young adults. Specific accommodations may be needed to address their unique mental and physical needs.
- Racial and ethnic minorities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and LGBTQIA+ homeless populations are disproportionately affected by limited access to services. For example, the homeless LGBTQIA+ need greater access to inclusive medical services, while the immigrant population need greater access to safety and legal services, as most do not wish to call the police or the Department of Children and Families. There should be a language line for translation and interpretation, coupled with bilingual staff at the HRC.

- Many (chronically) homeless clients struggle to pass CORIs, SORIs, and other eligibility requirements for housing, continuing the cycle of homelessness. There is a very high likelihood that these populations are already working with a case manager. Having connection to that case manager could help to avoid duplicating efforts.
- The Worcester Housing Authority's (WHA) Chief Operations Officer highlighted "stations" with providers for those waiting for housing, with an alternative online version. Soldier On has digital kiosks in on-site, and private meeting rooms to connect clients to professionals who had not previously sought out services. Providers could rotate their presence on-site using available meeting spaces. There is a notable lack of meeting space in Pittsfield, and several interviewees said that is one of the most valuable assets the HRC could offer.
- Father Bill's/MainSpring emphasized the importance of establishing a physical separation between the housing units at the facility and the HRC to best serve vulnerable upstairs tenants and avoid unnecessary problems with unvetted visitors.
- There needs to be an investment in basic security measures for tenants and day-program clients bringing their belongings into storage, including but not limited to locks and cameras. Some facilities such as the Brien Center have implemented a fob/key-based access system or buzz-in system, to grant access to sensitive spaces. At minimum, there should be staff monitoring a "sign-in, sign-out" system.
- Minimum requirements for spatial programming should include secure storage spaces/lockers, laundry facilities, showers and shower supplies, a kitchen with available food, cell phone charging stations and chargers, WIFI, access to a computer and printer, accessible bathrooms, private meeting rooms, and a multipurpose common space. Other high-ranking needs included a mail area, basic kitchen appliances such as a microwave and refrigerator, a rest/nap area, and entertainment options such as a TV. Community meeting attendees discussed having a reception area or information kiosk to learn about what the facility has to offer and its connection to other programs/services.
- Many commented on the need for the HRC to be open 24 hours a day or a minimum four days a week, including Sundays and holidays.
- Zion Lutheran Church should not feel like a stranger in their space. It needs to be understood that they are not the final solution to homelessness, but part of the longer-term solution. Ongoing communication involving all parties will achieve these goals.
- HRC staff should be able to contact police in the event a client is undergoing crisis, but not encourage a strong police presence on site. Police presence should be a last resort and if contact must be made, the HRC staff should be working directly with officers participating in the Pittsfield HUB program.
- The HRC and the future staffing team should encourage many forms of creative self-expression and investment in the arts at the HRC, e.g., music, art, poetry, and reading. This may encourage self-development and more productive outlets in group settings.

Recommendations

FACILITY DESIGN

- Build dignity and community “ownership” into the HRC by educating business owners and neighbors that the success of this project is a community-wide benefit.
- Clearly define what the space is and what it is hoping to become, starting with an agreed-upon name. State the HRC’s goals, objectives, and a vision in a Strategic Plan that is publicly available. Define roles of the Zion team, BHDC, the operating staff, and volunteers and how they fit into the larger landscape of addressing homelessness in tandem with existing providers. Potential partners may become confused if the facility lacks a clear statement of purpose.
- Assess the feasibility of installing security measures for the on-site units and in storage / locker spaces.
- The space should include a kitchen with access to microwavable or refrigerated food at all hours. The HRC should also examine working with local food providers/farms to offer nutritional meals at certain times throughout the day. The operator should address this in responding to BHDC’s Request for Proposals. Meals and kitchen access was the most popular response from participants answering the question, “what should be in the HRC.” This was followed by showers and bathrooms, laundry, storage, Wi-Fi access, and charging stations.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITY OPERATOR

- Consider building the following preferences or requirements into the Request for Proposals (RFP) for an entity to manage the HRC. For example, respondents should:
 - Submit a proposed operating plan, budget, and staffing plan, based on the information provided in this report.
 - Have existing connections with or demonstrate capacity to connect with providers with experience in age-based programming that accounts for the needs of elderly versus youth clients.
 - Establish an advisory board that includes representatives from other housing and social service organizations in Pittsfield, representatives of the City’s business community, and people experiencing homelessness.
 - Provide access to a vehicle for carpooling at certain times of the day.
 - Explain how they will provide for adequate staff support to “keep a pulse on what everyone is doing” - what services are being offered, where, and when things are open.

The position should coordinate directly with providers interested in using space at the HRC and work with interested providers to find avenues to lower overall cost.

- Provide staff who are well-versed in housing application assistance and placement services.
- Explain how they will collect, corroborate, synthesize, and report client data. This could be a crucial component to securing future funding and tracking progress.

ONGOING OPERATIONS

- BHDC should plan on hosting periodic tenant meetings with Zion staff, BHDC, and the operating agency to discuss issues and build community.
- Examine the possibility of hosting a licensed recovery coordinator at the HRC who is connected to a larger peer support network.
- Teamwork, stakeholder collaboration, and communication among agencies, clients, BHDC, and the facility operator will affect the success of this project. More transparency is needed on a going-forward basis. This could be accomplished through a public meeting, community conversation, or similar forum. Many agencies and organizations contacted by the consulting team said they were unaware of BHDC's plans and they wished they had been consulted sooner.

Appendix I: Data Provided by Interviewees

The Three County CoC maintains information about sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire counties. This information includes annual Point-In-Time (PIT) counts and Housing Inventory Counts (HIC) for the region. Each year, CoCs conducts the PIT count of people experiencing homelessness and maintains HIC counts of residential resources for people experiencing homelessness. In addition, the CoC is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. All CoC-funded projects are required to enter data in the HMIS. The HMIS is also used for local shelters. Below is a summary of the 2021 data the consulting team received from the Three-County CoC.

POINT-IN-TIME DATA SUMMARY: 2021, COMPARISON CITIES

2021 Totals	Northampton /Leeds	Amherst	Pittsfield	Greenfield
People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness on a Single Night:	7	5	18	11
People experiencing sheltered homelessness on a single night:	100	54	92	49
2021 Shelter Capacity	264	56	182	84

Source: Three County CoC and Community Action Programs, 2021 PIT Counts, and Barrett Planning Group LLC

POINT-IN-TIME DATA REPORT 2021: DEMOGRAPHICS

2021 PIT Counts	Pittsfield	Berkshire County
Total Persons	18	23
Adults (18+)	18	23
Children (Under 18)	0	0
Ages 18-24	1	1
Unknown Age	0	0
Unknown Age - Believe to be Adult	0	0
Unknown Age - Believe to be Child	0	0
Young Adults (18-24)	1	1
Unaccompanied Youth	1	1
Female	2	7
Male	14	14
Transgender	0	0
Chronically Homeless	7	7
Veterans	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	0	0
White	15	20
Black or African American	2	2
Asian	0	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0
Multiple Races	0	0
Serious Mental Illness	7	9
Substance Use Disorder	11	11
HIV/AIDS	0	0
Survivors of Domestic Violence (Optional)	1	3

Source: Three County CoC and Community Action Programs, 2021 PIT Counts, and Barrett Planning Group LLC

HIC AND HMIS DATA

Client Income by Facility Type

Facilities	Clients > 17	Monthly Income at Entry	Monthly Income at Exit	Change in Monthly Income
Emergency Shelter	1,275	\$375.91	\$413.77	\$36.24
Homeless Prevention	266	\$657.90	\$625.44	-\$41.26
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required)	265	\$1,237.67	\$676.47	-\$571.78
Transitional Housing	575	\$446.16	\$704.17	\$256.35

Source: Three-County CoC HIC and HMIS Data, and Barrett Planning Group LLC.

Household Composition by Facility Type

Households	Emergency Shelter	Homeless Prevention	PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required)	Transitional Housing
Household Type	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients
Single Adult	1,226	73	198	455
Household with Children	20	207	106	158
Household without Children	16	91	14	38
Indeterminable Household	14	-	-	2

Source: Three County CoC and Community Action Programs, 2021 PIT Counts, and Barrett Planning Group LLC.

Age Cohort and Facility Type

Age	Emergency Shelter	Homeless Prevention	PH - Permanent Supportive Housing*	Transitional Housing
Age Tier	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients
0 to 17	6	110	55	84
18 to 24	64	48	14	36
25 to 34	251	44	37	154
35 to 44	357	62	50	141
45 to 54	270	51	48	106
55 to 64	221	44	60	88
65 and over	98	17	56	48
Undefined	14	-	-	2

Source: Three County CoC and Community Action Programs, 2021 PIT Counts, and Barrett Planning Group LLC

*Disability Required

Race and Ethnicity by Facility Type

Reported Demographics		Emergency Shelter	Homeless Prevention	PH - Permanent Supportive Housing*	Transitional Housing
Race	Ethnicity	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients	# Clients
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	Hispanic	3			1
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	Non-Hispanic	13		2	3
Asian or Asian American	Non-Hispanic	6			2
Asian or Asian American	Hispanic				3
Black, African American, or African	Hispanic	12	5	6	6
Black, African American, or African	Non-Hispanic	177	74	47	75
Black, African American, or African	Unknown/Refused	3		1	
Multi-Racial	Hispanic	1	1		4
Multi-Racial	Non-Hispanic	17	4	13	11
Multi-Racial	Unknown/Refused	2			
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	2			1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Non-Hispanic)	3		1	
Unknown/Refused/Not Collected	Hispanic	23			1
Unknown/Refused/Not Collected	Non-Hispanic	5	1		2
Unknown/Refused/Not Collected	Unknown/Refused	6	1	3	3
White	Hispanic	65	28	16	26
White	Non-Hispanic	932	262	229	520
White	Unknown/Refused	11		2	1

Source: Three County CoC and Community Action Programs, 2021 PIT Counts, and Barrett Planning Group LLC

Appendix 2: Organizations Contacted by Consultants

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Joel Bergeland, James McGrath, David Reinhart
March 29, 2022

Zion Lutheran Church has operated in Pittsfield since 1859. For more information on the Zion Lutheran Church, please visit: www.zionlutheranpittsfield.org

THE ELIZABETH FREEMAN CENTER

Janice Broderick
March 18, 2022

The result of a 1974 merger of two like-minded groups, the Elizabeth Freeman Center has been at the forefront of addressing and helping people facing domestic and sexual violence across Berkshire County. This is the core of the Center's wider mission to end cycles of violence through solidarity and social justice.

For more information on the Elizabeth Freeman Center, please visit <https://elizabethfreemancenter.org/>

CATHEDRAL OF THE BELOVED

Rev. Jennifer Gregg
March 18, 2022

Since 2014, the Cathedral of the Beloved has offered outdoor worship, hot meals, and, through the Laundry Love initiative, clothes-cleaning assistance to people struggling financially.

For more information on the Cathedral of the Beloved, please visit: <https://www.cathedralofthebeloved.org/>

SERVICENET

Erin Forbush, Jay Sacchetti
March 18, 2022

ServiceNet provides human and mental health services to people facing challenges throughout Western Massachusetts. This includes brain injury services, housing maintenance programs, vocational training, and substance misuse counseling.

For more information on ServiceNet, please visit: www.servicenet.org

18 DEGREES

Sarah Cook, Jenny Glockner (s?), Shanice Jones, Gail Krumholtz

18 Degrees has been supporting stability and opportunity for young people and their families in Berkshire County and the Pioneer Valley for over 130 years. This is done through advocacy, early intervention, and education that meets these people where they are.

For more information on 18 Degrees, please visit: www.18degreesma.org

ROOTS & DREAMS AND MUSTARD SEEDS/MANOS UNIDAS

Nicole Fecteau
March 25, 2022

Manos Unidas is a Pittsfield-based multicultural organization that seeks to popularize the worker-owned cooperative business model through popular education and mutual aid. Roots & Dreams and Mustard Seeds was founded as an off-shoot of Manos Unidas, which focuses on applying these cooperative methods to the development and management of housing cooperatives and community-owned real estate.

For more information on Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds/Manos Unidos, please visit: www.rootsandmustardseeds.com and <https://manos-unidas.wixsite.com/manos-unidas->

SOLDIER ON

Bruce Buckley
March 30, 2022

Founded in 1994, Soldier On provides safe, affordable, and sustainable housing to veterans in Berkshire County, both along transitional and cooperative lines. As part of its commitment to ending veteran homelessness, Soldier On also offers supportive services to clients with focuses that include life skills, financial management, mental wellness, and substance misuse treatment.

For more information on Soldier On, please visit: www.wesoldieron.org

BERKSHIRE UNITED WAY

Tom Bernard
March 10, 2022

The Berkshire chapter of United Way is dedicated to fostering a positive family environment for the County's children and their parents/guardians. Through early education opportunities and parenting initiatives, Berkshire United Way takes a community-first attitude toward guaranteeing greater opportunity for all.

For more information on Berkshire United Way, please visit: www.berkshireunitedway.org

COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER VALLEY

Elaine Davenport (March 24, 2022), Keleigh Pereira (March 21, 2022)

Community Action Pioneer Valley helps low-income people throughout Franklin and Hampden Counties and the North Quabbin Region. To foster individual and community stability, CAPV offers over forty programs that range from benefits assistance and housing programs to childcare and adult education.

For more information on Community Action Pioneer Valley, please visit: www.communityaction.us.

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY AND RESILIENCE HUB

For more information on the Northampton Community and Resilience Hub, please visit: www.northamptonma.gov/2166/Community-Resilience-Hub

THE BRIEN CENTER

Denise Galvagni, Catherine MacBeth
March 31, 2022

With 25 sites across Berkshire County, The Brien Center provides a continuum of behavioral care and health services for children, adolescents, adults, and families. Using a service model built around the "community-based care" concept, The Brien Center addresses the needs of their clients in the spaces where they live, work, and worship.

For more information on the Brien Center, please visit: www.briencenter.org

BERKSHIRE COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Kim Barden, Brad Gordon
March 18, 2022

Organized in 1980, the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority (BCRHA) addresses housing instability in western Massachusetts through a continuum of services, including tenant/landlord dispute mediation, affordable housing programs, and consumer advocacy.

For more information on the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority, please visit:
www.bcrha.com

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS – BERKSHIRE

Lia Spiliotes
April 4, 2022

Community Health Programs provides a wide variety of critical medical, dental, nutritional, and behavioral health services to the over 35,000 families across the Berkshires. Since its beginnings in 1975, CHP has been at the forefront of delivering quality and sustainable care to those in need of it, with the compassion and dignity that all deserve.

For more information on Community Health Programs – Berkshire, please visit:
www.chpberkshires.org

FATHER BILL’S & MAINSPRING

April Connolly (March 4, 2022)
Liz Rogers (March 22, 2022)

Since the 1980’s, Father Bill’s & MainSpring have followed a “housing first” policy towards homelessness prevention in Southern Massachusetts, doing so with programs that provide emergency and permanent housing to those risking displacement. In addition to these programs, FBMS also helps provide job training and food assistance.

For more information on Father Bill’s & MainSpring, please visit: www.helpfbms.org

THE CITY OF QUINCY

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Sean Glennon (March 4, 2022)

The Community Development Division of The City of Quincy’s Department of Planning Community Development administers a variety of community planning, development, and housing programs that receive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These include funds from the Community Development Block Grant program, the HOME Investment Partnership Program, the Emergency Solutions Grant, and the HEARTH Act/Continuum of Care program.

For more information on the City of Quincy’s Community Development division, please visit:
www.quincyma.gov/departments/planning_and_community_development/

WORCESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY

Peter Proulx
March 14, 2022

The Worcester Housing Authority provides affordable housing both through the Section 8 voucher program and in publicly owned properties.

For more information on the Worcester Housing Authority, please visit: www.worcesterha.org

ERRERA COMMUNITY CARE CENTER

Debbie Deegan

March 6, 2022

Named for the noted mental health advocate Dr. Paul Errera, The Errera Community Care Center is a VA-run clinic in West Haven, CT that provides medical, educational, and vocational services for veterans in need. This includes art therapy, crisis intervention and substance misuse treatment. In the words of the Center: "The goal is to maximize independence through recovery and rehabilitation plans designed to meet each individual's needs."

For more information on the Errera Community Care Center, please visit: www.erreraccc.com

AMHERST SURVIVAL CENTER

Lev Ben-Ezra

April 8, 2022

Founded in 1976, the Amherst Survival Center has been dedicated to helping residents of Franklin and Hampshire Counties meet their basic living needs. Whether it be the food pantry or the warming center, none are turned away. This is done through generous donations from local businesses, civic organizations, non-profits, and everyday people.

For more information on the Amherst Survival Center, please visit: www.amherstsurvival.org

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL NETWORK TO END HOMELESSNESS

Pamela Schwartz

April 4, 2022

The Network seeks to end homelessness across all the counties of Western Massachusetts through a collaborative "housing first" effort. The Network is connected to hundreds of people and organizations in the region and across the Commonwealth, including elected officials and state agencies. In recognition of its efforts, the Network was recently awarded the Cornerstone Award by the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance.

For more information on the Western Massachusetts Regional Network to End Homelessness, please visit: www.westernmasshousingfirst.org

COLORADO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Deanne Witzke or Christina Garcia

February 2022

For over thirty years, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has partnered with local service providers to bring housing, healthcare, and service programs to assist families, children and individuals across the state that are either experiencing or at the risk of experiencing homelessness.

For more information on the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, please visit:
www.coloradocoalition.org

THE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Karen Ryan

Thursday, May 12, 2022

The Christian Center offers clothing, food, and access to essential services to families and individuals in Pittsfield that are facing insecurity. The Christian Center seeks to “uplift the community by empowering individuals with dignity, nourishment, and hope.”

For more information on The Christian Center, please visit: <https://christiancenterpittsfield.org/>