

FINAL REPORT

HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY COUNCIL



February 2021

City of Richmond, Virginia

900 E. Broad Street, 23219

RVA.gov

Letter from Mayor Levar Stoney

Dear Richmonders:

My heart breaks for the men, women, and children who face the crisis of homelessness in our community. Most of the people who find themselves in this crisis in Richmond are not strangers to us. They are our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins, classmates, and our friends. Each of their stories is unique. However, one significant fact is consistent. None of them had the resources to maintain their housing, and there was no member of their family or member of their congregation or a friend who had the capacity to provide housing for them. When that occurred, those persons turned to the system of homeless service providers for lifesaving assistance.

The Richmond region has an impressive, caring network of agencies, nonprofits, and ministries who are working collaboratively to help hundreds of people in need every day. As a testament to their excellent work and evidence-informed strategies, thousands of people currently living in our region have been able to successfully navigate out of the crisis of homelessness and find the pathway to housing stability.

That being said, I am aware that the system does not always meet the needs of every person. The challenges in the system need to be addressed in a constructive manner. The Homelessness Advisory Council was tasked with helping our community understand what is working and where we have opportunities for improvement within the homeless services system.

I am grateful to the 20 members of the Homelessness Advisory Council who took the time to intensely focus on homelessness in Richmond. They read, listened to presentations about the regional homeless services system, absorbed what they had learned, and then crafted the recommendations you will find in this report. The terms that best summarize their findings are prevention, collaboration, and affordable housing.

I was also encouraged by their additional recommendations that underscore the importance of incorporating consumers of the services and those who are formerly homeless into planning conversations and program development.

We all want to meet the needs of those who need us the most, which is why I encourage you to review this report which capitalizes on recommendations catered to our city. Please visit our website and review all of our presentations and notes from the meeting of the Homelessness Advisory Council, so you can track the journey that led to the recommendations. Please read the City Council-approved Strategic Plan to End Homelessness so that you can be an advocate for solutions. It is my hope that you will engage with this report as guiding principles for cohesion and coordinated outreach. As always, we need the support of passionate residents like yourselves as we continue to build One Richmond.

Sincerely,


A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Stoney', is positioned below the text 'Sincerely,'.

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Background: The Reason the Mayor Created the HAC

For decades, Richmond residents have demonstrated their heartfelt compassion for those in a housing crisis. Our city and our region have well established nonprofits, ministries, agencies and a continuum of care that have a mission to provide housing and supportive services to those who find themselves in the crisis of homelessness. The good news for our region is that we have a coordinated system of service delivery for individuals and families who find themselves in a housing crisis. Thousands of people, including single adults and families with children, have been able to receive life transforming assistance from the existing network of nonprofits, ministries and agencies. The unfortunate news is that each day in our region, hundreds of people are either unsheltered, living in temporary housing or on the verge of being evicted from their current housing with no safety net of family or friends that have the ability or capacity to help them. The economic pressures brought on by the pandemic have further increased the number of people who find themselves in a housing crisis in the Richmond region. The system, under the coordination of Homeward, recalibrated, expanded and further collaborated to accommodate the influx of people. Nonetheless, it has been a period of high stress for the providers and the people who needed help. This pressure and anxiety sometimes erupted into statements on social or local print media about mistrust of the providers and frustration about the current system. Because of the serious nature of this crisis and the heightened tension, the Mayor wanted a group of stakeholders to come together and assess what, if any, improvements needed to be made to the system so that the pathways to housing stability and hope are made straighter and broader for all residents.

HAC Objective and Deliverable

The special Advisory Council was created to provide advice to the Mayor and City Council about issues related to the homeless services system in the Richmond community. The HAC had thirty (30) days to review information and create a list of recommendations. The HAC was asked to absorb a great deal of information about a complex, multilayered social issue.

The underlying framework for their work was the city's Homelessness Strategic Plan. In that plan, there are seven strategies that have been identified by the Department of Housing and Community Development and Social Services staffs to reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. The HAC focused on four of those strategies:

- Increase financial support to the City's homeless services providers to ensure appropriate supportive services are available to every homeless person;
- Provide additional supportive services and housing for populations that are experiencing homelessness that are currently underserved;

- Promote connections to comprehensive services including employment resources and behavioral health services for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless; and,
- Educate our residents on homelessness and provide collaborative leadership to all city homeless service and housing providers to ensure homeless programs are coordinated and effective.

By letter to the Richmond City Council dated December 14, 2020, the Mayor announced his desire to create the HAC. He asked for the City Council president to suggest two members of the City Council for the HAC and to ask all Council members to offer names for consideration for prospective members. In response, suggestions for membership came from members of City Council, the Administration and those who called the Mayor's office with a desire to be included on the Council. The final list of potential members for the HAC was approved by the Mayor. Twenty (20) people were selected from a wide variety of backgrounds. Most importantly, at least five (5) of the members of the HAC were either formally or currently in a housing crisis. All of the perspectives of the Council were valuable; however, the persons who had personal experience with the local homeless services system were deemed to be the credible, subject matter experts.

Composition of the HAC

The HAC had representation from the faith community, the health system, nonprofits, Richmond City Council, the Latino/Hispanic community, the LGBTQ+ community, the academic community, Richmond Public Library, the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care, Homeward, NAACP, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority and Richmond advocates.

Information for the HAC

Each member of the HAC received a workbook and a map of services throughout the region and a copy of the City Council approved Strategic Plan to End Homelessness (2020 – 2030). On February 22, 2021, during their introductory virtual meeting, each member of the HAC was encouraged to review the list of homeless service providers and services, explore their respective websites, take a driving tour throughout the region of the service delivery sites on the map provided to them and/or visit Help1RVA.org and search for the list of homeless services in the region.

Each member of the HAC received an email in advance of the meeting with a digital copy of the "Homeless Advisory Council Workbook". The workbook was also mailed to each member of the HAC. The workbook provided an overview, schedule and other pertinent information. The Strategic Plan, approved by Richmond City Council in May 2020, provided the framework for the work of the HAC. The goal of the process was to give the HAC as much information as possible in the first few meetings, so that the group would be prepared to make evidence informed recommendations by the end of February.

Homelessness Advisory Council Members

Member Appointments	
Individual	Organization Affiliation
Reverend Dwylene Butler	Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Katie Chlan	RBHA Representative
Annette Cousins	Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond
Christine Elwell	Greater Richmond Regional Collaborative
Scott Firestine	Richmond Public Library
Tracey Hardney-Scott	Richmond VA Branch NAACP
Bonita Hogue	VCU Health – Department of Care Coordination
Natasha Lemus	Waymakers Foundation
Stephanie Lynch	Richmond City Council
Nadine Marsh-Carter	Children’s Home Society of Virginia
Ricky Martin	Fit-to-G0
Zakia McKensey	NationZ Foundation
Nury Mojica	Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation
Ellen Robertson	Richmond City Council
Michael Rogers	Homeward
Diana Thomas	CARITAS
Timika Vincent	Wealth Building Solutions, Inc.
Dr. Alex Wagaman	VCU School of Social Work
Thomas Washington	Richmond Public Schools
Charles Willis	Community Advocate

All of the meetings of the HAC were virtual. Although not open to the public, notes from the educational sessions for the HAC (Sessions 1 through 5) were made available on the city’s website, RVA.gov.

Session Timeline



Report: Executive Summary

The Homelessness Advisory Council (HAC) met to review the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC) structure and process, gain a better understanding of the current system and to reach consensus on recommendations. HAC members agreed that the recommendations should be action-oriented and should demonstrate impact, even if incremental, immediately. In reviewing the City's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, receiving input from people with lived experience of homelessness and a wide range of GRCoC and community providers, and after establishing common knowledge of the function of the GRCoC's role as the regional homeless service system and its strengths and opportunities, HAC members formulated the following recommendations:

- 1) The City of Richmond should establish a walk-in Community Resource Center where Richmond City residents, whether housed or experiencing a housing crisis, can connect with triage, case management, and mainstream resources¹ and services to meet their identified needs. Additionally, the Community Resource Center can assist in making connections to other systems of care located throughout the region, including coordinated homeless services, affordable housing resources, and eviction prevention/diversion programs.
- 2) The City should formally recognize Permanent Supportive Housing² (PSH) as a funding priority. Funding from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and other City sources should be prioritized for locally established PSH providers to leverage federal and private dollars in order to meet the local need for 300 new units of PSH. This investment would also address the need for additional behavioral health supports. Current and future PSH units are most effective in serving chronically homeless Richmonders if clients are referred through the GRCoC's Coordinated Entry System.
- 3) The City of Richmond should institute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the GRCoC and the designated Collaborative Applicant³ in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party in the funding and delivery of homeless services in the City. This MOU would also provide an opportunity to define the

¹ TANF, SNAP, WIC, SSI and SSDI

² "Permanent supportive housing is permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability." (<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-program-eligibility-requirements/>)

³ The Collaborative Applicant is the eligible applicant designated by the local Continuum of Care (CoC) to register the CoC with the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development, and to submit collaborative federal funding application on behalf of the CoC. The GRCoC has designated Homeward as the Collaborative Applicant since 1998.

GRCoC's partnership with the Community Resource Center, and how the City connects its residents with the GRCoC's Coordinated Entry System.

Recommendation 1 – Create a Community Resource Center:

The city and the region have a wide array of resources and services to help those who are experiencing the crisis of homelessness or at risk of experiencing the crisis of homelessness. Nonprofits, community based organizations, government and quasi-governmental agencies, ministries and sometimes lone individuals provide assistance such as food, counseling, case management, outreach, job training programs, substance abuse recovery programs, healthcare, medical respite or a continuum of housing from emergency overnight shelter to permanent supportive housing. Although the Richmond region has a long and ever growing list of entities with a mission to provide relief and support to those in a housing crisis, accessing the appropriate resources and services can be complicated and confusing. Elusive or inconsistent information is at the root of the feelings of mistrust and frustration with the current system. Even some of the HAC members recounted stories of unsatisfactory experiences accessing the information that they needed regarding the current system.

Solution and Action Plan: The HAC supports the concept of a Community Resource Center, staffed by expert Human Services Navigators. The Community Resource Center becomes the starting point for those who are in need of support or answers to their questions about housing and human services and who is best equipped to help them in the community. It is critical that the Community Resource Center be accessible, safe and accommodating to all members of the community regardless of their length of time as a resident in Richmond, their socio-economic level, their sexual orientation or gender identity, their documentation status or their age. The HAC particularly stressed the importance of understanding the needs of the Latino/Hispanic community, including those who are undocumented, and the LGBTQ+ community.

The Community Resource Center should be fully integrated with existing information hubs, Connection Points and data systems. The intent is to provide an easily recognizable, non-threatening environment for anyone to tell their story to a well-informed human services navigator and receive a warm referral to the entity that is best equipped to help them with their unique need. We anticipate that an adjunct, dedicated corps of case managers from behavioral health, social services and the homeless services system will work in concert with the navigators. The navigators will be resource people for City Council Liaisons and the Administration, in addition to the general public. It is anticipated that navigators would be in regular contact with hospital case workers, staff from local congregations and individuals who want to expand their knowledge of human services in Richmond. The proficiency, resourcefulness and disposition of the navigators is the key to positive outcomes for the Resource Center.

Proposed location for the Community Resource Center is City Hall at 900 East Broad Street. The preliminary design would incorporate comfortable sitting areas, computer self-serve work stations or kiosks, office space for three Human Services Navigators, a

private meeting room, a canteen area and space for printed information. The proposed hours of operation would be 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. during the week and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

At the time of the drafting of this report, a specific location in City Hall is under consideration. The preceding photos (Figure 1 through 4) were taken on February 21, 2021. The site is on the corner of East Broad Street and 9th Streets. The space, which was formerly used as a delicatessen establishment, is now vacant. The site is easily visible and accessible from Broad Street. It is in close proximity to the Pulse. Moreover, locating the Community Resource Center within City Hall will make it easier for residents

and visitors to the center to access the Department of Social Services and the Office of Community Wealth Building one block away at 900 East Marshall Street.

Next steps for Recommendation 1 are as follows: work with the Administration to secure the space for use as a Community Resource Center; sketch out a plan to retrofit the space; discuss the concept with key stakeholders that will be critical referral partners; review the idea with the members of the Human Services Cabinet (a preexisting entity comprised of backbone organizations in human services); and explore opportunities with the Salvation Army and other organizations to align this Community Resource Center with the development of a GRCoC approved, extended hours, coordinated entry intake process and location.

The problem solved by the Community Resource Center is the creation of a one stop shop to provide help and guidance to individuals and households facing a housing crisis including eviction prevention and diversion, how to find support for a family member who in a housing crisis, how to enter into the homeless and human services systems, and how to find affordable housing within the city. The Community Resource Center would also help in connecting individuals to human services systems.

The proficiency of the navigators will be key to the success of the Community Resource Center. By creating a Community Resource Center, with a commitment from the city to have bilingual, culturally sensitive and compassionate staff, we will finally have an immediate way for any person to connect to existing resources. A community resource center at City Hall is a natural and convenient location, working closely with existing Connection Points for information throughout the city and region.

The Community Resource Center would be a place where any resident could go to get their housing questions answered and to get educated about the various organizations and agencies that are poised to provide housing and human service assistance. The navigators would give specific instructions about how to access those services. The coordination with the homeless services system is of paramount importance.

Recommendation 2 – Expansion of Affordable Housing Options:

The HAC quickly reached consensus that the best way to decrease the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the city and the region would be to expand the stock of and access to affordable housing for persons with very low incomes.

Affordable housing is homeless adjacent. In order to have an effective homeless services system, there must be exit routes that lead to permanent stability. Due to the lack of supply of affordable housing units for residents earning below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), exits from homelessness are clogged, making it more likely for those leaving shelter to be rerouted to instability.

Here is what 30% AMI means in the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area:	
A one-person household	\$18,800
A two-person household	\$21,450
A three-person household	\$24,150
A four-person household	\$26,800
A five-person household	\$30,680
A six-person household	\$35,160

Today, the city of Richmond has a gap of more than 10,000 units for households earning below 30% AMI. This shortage makes rapid rehousing, reduced shelter times, and shelter bed availability all the more difficult. The fewer affordable units that are available means that fewer individuals will be able to exit shelter and obtain housing stability.

In addition to increasing the stock of affordable options to those earning below 30% AMI, the HAC also is recommending the creation of additional Permanent Supportive Housing Units (PSH). PSH is a type of affordable housing that serves households who are earning below 30% AMI, but who also have experienced long-term homelessness or housing instability. In addition, households must have a diagnosed disability that makes the challenge of obtaining and maintaining permanent housing even more insurmountable. PSH is an evidence-based practice that couples safe, permanent, affordable housing with recovery-focused, individualized support services to increase both short and long term housing stability goals.

Solution and Action Plan: The Richmond Region has a robust array of entities focusing on affordable housing as well as Permanent Supportive Housing solutions in the area. Rather than create any new strategies, the HAC encourages and supports the work of existing entities. The HAC was particularly supportive of the City of Richmond’s recent efforts to increase funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The HAC recommends that the city prioritize PSH and other projects targeting incomes under 30% AMI, in future rounds of Affordable Housing Trust Fund grants. The HAC also recommends that the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO) for Economic Development convene an Affordable Housing Cabinet to tether the city of Richmond to the strategies and development plans for affordable housing that have been identified by the Partnership for Housing Affordability. In order to avoid redundancy and overlap, the DCAO will convene the group in response to the recommendation of the HAC, but will acquiesce and join an existing forum or workgroup on strategic planning for increasing the stock of affordable housing, if that would be more appropriate. The goal is to make sure that the city is engaged in the planning and provides sustained or increased funding for affordable

housing options including permanent supportive housing strategies and developments in the region.

An example of a successful permanent supportive housing development in Richmond, the HAC had two presentations regarding best practices from Virginia Supportive Housing.



Figure 5: New Clay House

Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) opened New Clay House in 1992 as the first permanent supportive housing community in Virginia. At the time, the former Home Brewing property in Richmond's Carver neighborhood was more than 60 years old. VSH made basic renovations to the property to house 47 homeless single adults. Each of the 47 units was about 150 square feet with only a sink and toilet and shared community kitchens and bathrooms.

Since developing New Clay House, VSH has become the largest developer of permanent supportive housing state-wide, and our model for successful client outcomes has evolved dramatically. We now develop larger fully furnished studio apartments that foster greater independence as well as community spaces that promote social integration and activities.

VSH's evidenced-based supportive housing model works: more than 97% of individuals we serve do not return to homelessness.

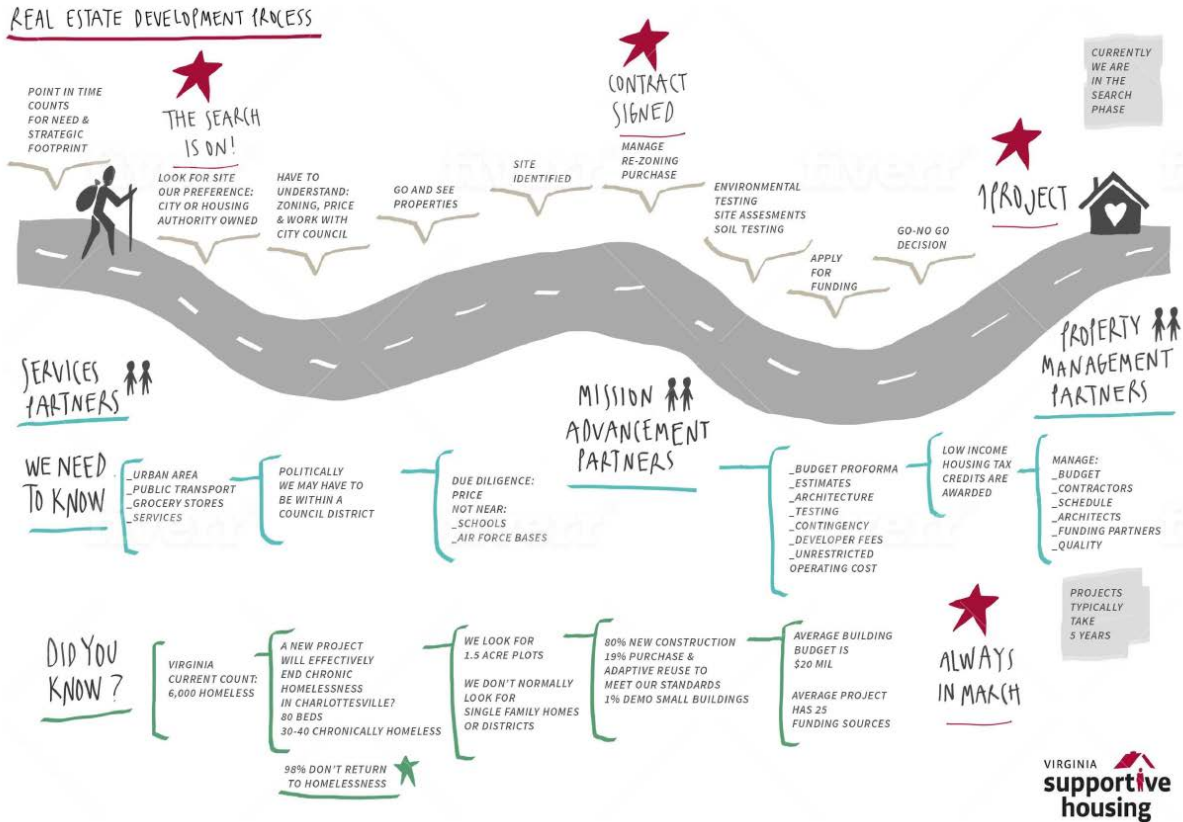


Figure 6: Real Estate Development Process

Figure 6, created by Virginia Supportive Housing, diagrams the real estate development journey that is required to create permanent supportive housing in our region. It will be necessary for many people to rally together to embrace the development of permanent supportive housing throughout the region. The expansion of the stock of affordable housing requires the active support and advocacy of civic associations, neighborhood groups, the faith community and elected officials.

Recommendation 3 – Highlight Role of the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care:

Some people in the community feel that there is no coordinated strategy to solve the issue of homelessness. There are questions about accountability, metrics and how dollars are spent. This report provides clarification. The GRCoC is the regional decision making entity regarding homelessness.

GRCoC Purpose and Structure

A ***Continuum of Care (CoC) is a broad group of stakeholders working together to end homelessness in their community.*** The U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) requires communities to establish a local CoC in order to apply for targeted funding for homeless services and to develop a portfolio of homeless assistance programs to address local needs. Currently, there are close to 400 CoC's across the country. There are 16 CoC's in the Commonwealth of Virginia; all but one of these are regional or multi-jurisdictional. ***Federal and state funding targeted to fight homelessness are allocated to these regional coalitions to make the best decisions based on community needs.*** The Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC) is the Richmond region's local version of the CoC model that meets or exceeds federal requirements. The GRCoC was established in 1997 and ***Homeward was created in 1998 to facilitate and support the planning and decision-making of the GRCoC.***

A CoC is not required to be a legal entity, and the GRCoC is not a legal entity. This means there is no dues or fees for membership, the GRCoC is not a 501(c)(3), there is no organizational budget or staff, and all board, sub-committee, and general members participate on a voluntary basis. However, the GRCoC is governed through locally-developed bylaws, and board and committee members are nominated and selected through community recruitment and voting processes.

The GRCoC board is the governing and decision-making body that works with people experiencing homelessness, GRCoC member agencies, public sector agencies, and other community programs to guide and oversee our regional coordinated network of homeless services. The GRCoC board reviews and approves community goals and community funding priorities and sets performance measurements to measure the impact of homeless service programs in the community. The GRCoC board also ensures that federal and state collaborative funding applications are on time and of good quality, and that the funding applications are based on collaboratively-established recommendations. Additionally, the GRCoC board oversees CoC operations and designates a planning agency.

Homeward is the designated planning, or backbone, agency for the GRCoC. This role is formalized by written agreement between the GRCoC board and Homeward. In this role, Homeward tracks and evaluates data on key trends and indicators in homelessness and

homeless services in the Richmond region. This analysis is used to facilitate partnerships, support the programs, and improve the outcomes of organizations working together to end homelessness in Greater Richmond. The primary data sources are the Homeward Community Information System (HCIS) and the point-in-time count (PIT).

The Homeward Community Information System (HCIS) is our local implementation of the federally required Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). An ***HMIS is a confidential, database that is easily accessible for local partner programs to utilize and provides a longer-term picture of client needs and program impact.*** This data is actively utilized by service providers to coordinate services for people experiencing homelessness across different programs and for GRCoC committees to review program impacts and service gaps in the community.

The Point-in-time Count (PIT) is an annual, one-day census of people experiencing homelessness in our community, and is a requirement for our community to receive federal funding for homeless services. Through the PIT count, Homeward coordinates the GRCoC's effort to get information on specific regional subpopulations including chronically homeless persons, veterans, and unaccompanied youth by administering a voluntary survey to people age 18 and over. This single day count provides a useful measurement of changes over time and is not meant to replace other data collection efforts such as consumer focus groups and HCIS.

Homeward also facilitates coordinated funding applications for more than \$6 million in federal and state funding annually for certain types of homeless assistance programs.

GRCoC Committees

The GRCoC has established committees to provide oversight of the programs receiving coordinated funding, and to make specific recommendations to the GRCoC board concerning policy, processes, and CoC operations and infrastructure. Recruitment and application processes for committees are established and approved by the GRCoC board. These committees include:

The HMIS Policy Committee provides information and guidance to the related to the implementation of the Homeless Management Information System (known locally as the HCIS). This committee ensures that all funded organizations are trained in and fully utilizing HMI and follow client confidentiality regulations. The committee also works to ensure that the GRCoC's implementation of HMIS (HCIS) meets or exceeds all applicable regulations. This committee also coordinates with agencies serving households fleeing sexual and domestic violence which are not permitted to use HCIS and use a comparable database in order to protect the confidentiality of survivors.

The **System Policy and Process Committee (SPP)** is responsible for reviewing and updating system and project policies to maximize the resources and programs available to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This committee also makes

sure that programs meet federal and state requirements, including those regarding Coordinated Entry (described below.) The Ranking Program committee coordinates and reviews the GRCoC's funding applications for targeted federal and state funding. In coordination with the Homeward as the designated planning agency, this committee establishes and oversees the process to evaluate the performance of CoC member agencies applying for these funds. No member agency that is applying for CoC funds serves on this committee.

The **Governance Committee** is charged with recruiting qualified, willing members of the CoC to serve as Board members in accordance with the desired composition as outlined in relevant federal and/or state regulations.

The **Quality Improvement Leadership (QIL)** Committee is composed of organizations in the GRCoC that receive targeted federal and state funding. QIL identifies and discusses programmatic quality issues in the coordinated homeless services network and proposes options for filling service gaps or program enhancements

General Membership in the Greater Richmond CoC includes individuals and agencies concerned with the development and coordination of homeless assistance programs. ***The GRCoC is open to new members who are interested in joining this collaborative effort to fight homelessness.*** Membership is open and there are no fees to participate. Interested parties can learn more about becoming a member at www.endhomelessnessrva.org.

Requirements and responsibilities of CoC members:

- Participate in service coordination and collaborative planning. (Some committees have defined composition requirements according to the by-laws.)
- Agree to abide by conflict of interest policies.
- Respect client confidentiality.
- Funded agencies have additional requirements based on the source of funding.
- Follow local, state, and federal regulations including financial reporting, as applicable

System Flow/Design

The GRCoC's Coordinated Entry System (CES) uses a unified approach (policies and processes) that govern how people experiencing homelessness access the services available to them. As a best practice in human services and a requirement for homeless programs receiving federal or state funding, Coordinated Entry simplifies access for households in crisis, ensures fairness and transparency, speeds exits to housing from homelessness, targets limited resources more efficiently, allows housing interventions to

be matched to client needs, and provides data to track system outcomes and unmet needs. The development and use of a Coordinated Entry System is a requirement for communities and programs to receive federal and state funding targeted to address homelessness.

The GRCoC Coordinated Entry System (CES) has multiple components including

- three multi-agency collaborative Access Points (Homeless Crisis Line, Coordinated Outreach, Regional Sexual and Domestic Violence Hotline)
 - a common homelessness assessment tool and process,
 - coordinated referrals for emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing, and
 - prioritization policies to target these resources to the most vulnerable.
- The GRCoC CES is governed by the community-developed policies and procedures: http://endhomelessnessrva.org/images/Committees/SPP/2019/CE_PP_May_2019_Updates.pdf

Key functions of Access Points:

- Assessment of housing and related service needs
- Required data collection
- Referral to resources (which may include referrals to shelters or other programs)

The Access Points act as the “front door” to coordinated homeless services. The Homeless Crisis Line (HCL) is the GRCoC’s designated primary Access Point and receives more than 5,000 phone calls each month. The HCL staff work to help households within 3 days of losing their housing to connect with their natural support systems and to divert them from homelessness if possible. The HCL collects data on the needs of callers and indicates whether the callers still have a need for emergency shelter or other homeless resources such as rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing.

Coordinated Outreach team members work to engage people living outdoors or staying in places not meant for human habitation (like cars, tents, abandoned buildings, and other places) and to assist in connecting to other services including emergency shelter, public benefits, and healthcare services. The Coordinated Outreach team works to build trust and to connect unsheltered households with emergency resources and information.

The Regional Sexual and Domestic Violence (DV) Hotline serves as an Access Point for those fleeing or attempting to flee sexual and domestic violence. Similar to the HCL, the DV hotline seeks to understand the needs and resources of callers and performs intake and assessment. A primary focus of the DV Hotline is to ensure that callers are safe and referrals are made to safe shelters and other relevant resources including counseling.

This multi-agency collaborative approach provides assistance to help households avoid homelessness and provides person-centered connections to shelter and housing resources. Beyond compliance with regulations, our Coordinated Entry work allows our community to meet our shared goal of serving the most vulnerable residents in the community who lack a safe and stable place to stay.

In addition to these Access Points, the GRCoC has established Connection Points to ensure that people experiencing homelessness have access to timely and accurate information. Connection Points provide light-touch assistance and connections for individuals and families experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness. Typically, Connection Points are community-based organizations which already serve people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in some capacity. All 3 Virginia CareerWorks Centers, OAR, Real Life, the Richmond Public Library's Main branch, RVA Light Café, and Commonwealth Catholic Charities' Housing Resource Center are some of our existing Connection Point partners. (See Appendix for a complete list of Connection Points.)

Success/Performance

The primary goal of the GRCoC is to assist households in shelters or staying in places not meant for human habitation to secure stable housing. The GRCoC board and committees solicit input from people experiencing homelessness, homeless services staff, and similar programs in other communities in order to set local funding priorities. The GRCoC develops performance measurements and benchmarks using these funding priorities that also meet or exceed to specific requirement of each funding program.

Measurements include:

- How long people experience homelessness
- Whether people return to homelessness after securing stable housing
- Overall reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness
- Increase in jobs and income for people experiencing homelessness
- Reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time
- Expenditure of public funds and other financial management goals
- Compliance with local, state, and federal requirements

With the exception of providers primarily serving survivors of domestic violence, all programs use HCIS/HMIS to collect data and monitor program outcomes. Additionally, funded programs are monitored by local, state, and federal funding agencies and submit annual audits and financial reports and tax filings (for non-profits.)

Accountability/Oversight

While the majority of funding for homeless services comes from private fundraising from individuals, foundations, congregations, corporations, and other sources, the single largest funder of homeless services is the US Department of Housing and Urban

Development's Special Needs Assistance Program, followed by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Homeless and Special Needs Housing division (VaDHCD.) The City of Richmond provides homeless services funding in three primary ways: Emergency Solutions Grant funding (which comes from HUD and is coordinated with other HUD funding in the region), the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and non-departmental support.

In order to receive public funding from these and other sources, agencies submit applications outlining program operations, the target populations to be served, specific services provided, proposed budget expenditures, and data collection methods. Applications for the public sector funding described above as well as federal pandemic resources (including CARES ACT funding for homeless programs) are reviewed by the GRCoC Ranking Committee and endorsed by the GRCoC Board. Some funding applications are further approved by the governing body of a local jurisdiction (such as the Richmond City Council) before receiving final approval from HUD or VaDHCD.

All funded agencies are accountable to these funding programs for complying with relevant regulations and program guidelines include data collection and quality, client confidentiality, recordkeeping, adherence to written program standards, and financial management and reporting. Funders may also investigate complaints about homeless service programs and work to ensure that resources are used as outlined in funding applications and award announcements.

Each year the GRCoC develops performance measures that allow it to evaluate how well the system, as a whole, and individual projects are meeting the goal of preventing and ending homelessness for our neighbors. The project performance measures also evaluate the performance of individual programs. This ensures that each program and the homeless services network as a whole meets locally established outcome benchmarks, as well as federal and state funding guidelines.

System Enhancements

The GRCoC is a learning community that seeks to expand access and resources to address the crisis of homelessness. This includes targeting efforts to address the needs of critical and underserved subpopulations.

In recent years, the GRCoC's Coordinated Entry System has seen a steep increase in the number of older adults (age 55+) experiencing homelessness. Through the cross-sector Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness (OAEH) Coalition, the GRCoC works to build partnerships to increase resources for older adults experiencing homelessness through service coordination, specialized case management, and targeted housing resources.

In September 2017, the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care passed a non-discrimination and an Equal Access Policy. The Equal Access Policy is drawn from the 2016 HUD policy that protects transgender people from discrimination in emergency

homelessness services. The Board again endorsed this policy in the May 2019 revision of our Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures. In 2021, the GRCoC will reconvene the Equal Access Committee to review this policy and assess community resources to meet the housing needs of LGBTQ+ populations with an emphasis on the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and transgender individuals. The GRCoC will invite stakeholders from LGBTQ+ serving organizations to review GRCoC policies, practices, trainings, and data collection.

As the designated planning agency for the GRCoC, Homeward has contracted a consultant to prepare our community for a federal funding opportunity to address youth and young adult homelessness (age 18-24). The inclusive planning process allows the GRCoC, youth-serving organizations, public sector agencies serving youth and young adults, and youth with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability to assess the community needs, collaborative infrastructure, partnerships, and programs needed to reduce homelessness among youth and young adults.

Solution and Action Plan: MOU with the City of Richmond and the GRCoC to be drafted within ninety (90) days. The MOU will outline expectations for provision of care and services for people experiencing the crisis of homelessness and roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

The leadership of the GRCoC and the leaders from the city will work together to draft and execute a MOU that aligns with jurisdictional and regional goals and expectations. Examples of MOUs from other jurisdictions in Virginia have been presented to the GRCoC as a template.

Greater Richmond Continuum of Care

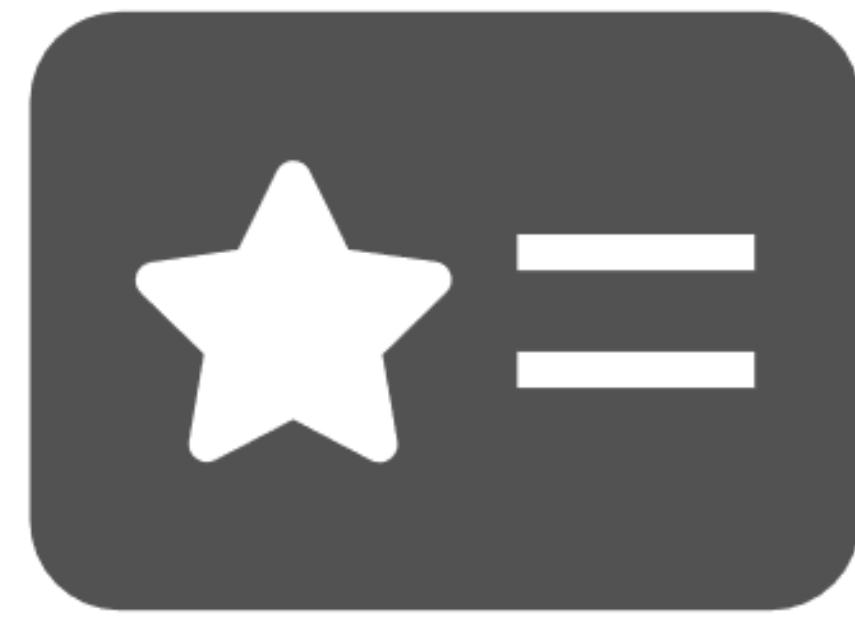
How the GRCoC is structured for Engagement, Leadership, and Feedback

Board



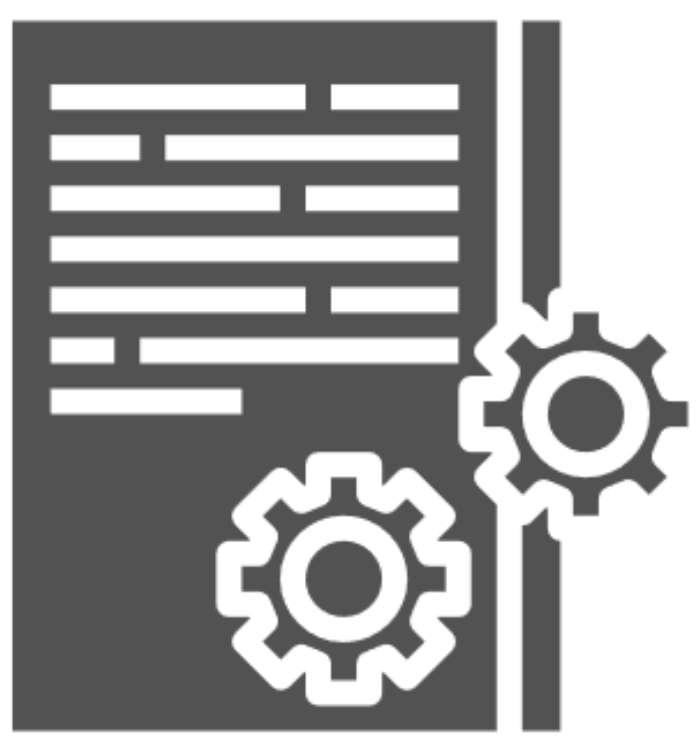
- Elected by CoC membership.
- Up to 1/3 of board members can be funded providers.
- Approves policies and committee appointments.

Membership



- Express interest to join.
- Active Members: Attend membership meetings; 75% agencies, 50% individuals.
- Active Members can vote on Board elections and by-law changes.

System Policy and Process (SPP)



- Representative of program types.
- Recommend policies on Coordinated Entry and Prioritization.
- Oversee provider MOUs.

Quality Improvement Leadership Committee



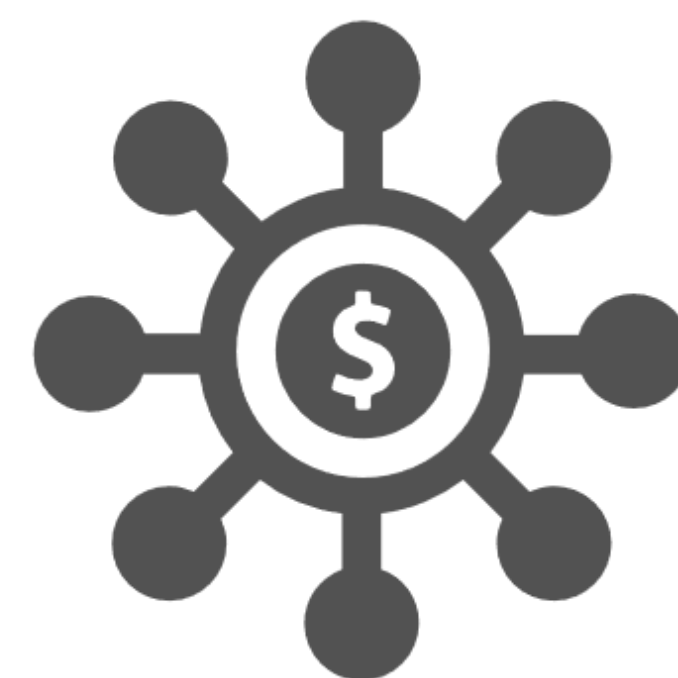
- Leadership from providers funded by HUD, VHSP, & ESG.
- Peer exchange with a focus on quality improvement across project types.

Governance Committee



- Board recruitment
- Committee membership process
- Bylaws updates

Coordinated Funding Process



- Providers apply for funding to meet community need.
- Community-led Ranking and Review process
- Providers implement programs using coordinated funding & best practices.

APPENDIX

Additional Recommendations

Acknowledgements

Homeless Services in the Richmond Region (Homeward)

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing: City of Richmond (2019 Issue Brief from the Partnership for Housing Affordability)

Additional Recommendations:

A) Establish a Consumer Advisory Council with peer-led support based on the Office of Community Wealth Building Ambassadors program to provide input and feedback on homeless assistance strategies and affordable housing development.

➤ *Follow up and next steps: HAC member and GRCoC*

B) Establish a mentorship program with people with previous experience of homelessness to provide peer support and encouragement to people who are currently experiencing the crisis. Develop both formal and informal ways to provide support and encouragement.

➤ *Follow up and next steps: HAC member and GRCoC*

C) Recommend that the GRCoC establish additional workgroups to build the community partnerships, education, and engagement to expand access to supportive services and to address gaps in the community's network of homelessness and human services. Potential workgroups could reflect issues raised by the HAC and might include:

- 1) Connections to NA/ AA and other resources for recovery.
- 2) Support for Families and Children
- 3) Engaging communities of faith and faith-based organizations in filling gaps in homelessness and human services.
- 4) Supporting youth and young adults who are not yet homeless but are experiencing housing instability or are at great risk for housing instability.

➤ *Follow up and next steps: HAC member and GRCoC*

D) Work with the local faith community to establish a mechanism to share pertinent updates, needs and a step by step process to help individuals who turn to them for assistance during a housing crisis. The information for congregations would be maintained by the navigators in the Resource Center. The printed and digital guide would provide clear steps that can be taken when someone:

- 1) is in need of emergency shelter
- 2) has a housing crisis and is facing eviction (not evicted yet)
- 3) has been evicted
- 4) has found permanent housing (and needs support in keeping it)

➤ *Follow up and next steps: HAC member and GRCoC*

E) HAC members are encouraged to stay engaged as valuable community experts on the system. Perhaps the HAC can meet quarterly for a year to monitor the progress on their recommendations.

F) As the planning agency of the GRCoC, Homeward has raised funding to significantly expand Homeless Crisis Line (HCL) hours and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current HCL hours are Monday-Friday 8am-9pm and Saturday and Sunday 1pm-9pm. This expansion has greatly reduced the number of calls that go to voicemail during operating hours. The program currently has an annual funding gap of \$125,000 to permanently operate at this expanded capacity. Given that this program serves clients facing a housing crisis in nine jurisdictions in the region, this action would require regional cooperation. (The current funding for the expansion of services was pandemic related. The city and counties need to work with Homeward to institutionalize funding to maintain this level of service after the pandemic.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Presenters

Stephen Batsche, Executive Director of Program Services, The Salvation Army

Anita Bennett, Acting CEO, Daily Planet Health Services

Jovan Burton, Director of Implementation, Partnership for Housing Affordability

Alison Bogdanovic, Executive Director, Virginia Supportive Housing

Jay Brown, Executive Director, Commonwealth Catholic Charities

Nichele Carver, Associate Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Annette Cousin, VP, Community Engagement, Community Foundation for a greater Richmond

Sharon Ebert, DCAO of Economic Development, City of Richmond

Marvin Green, Richmond Urban Ministry Institute

Fred Karnas, Senior Fellow, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation

Officer Jason Kuti, Richmond Police Department – HOPE Unit

Terri Lawson, Coordinated Entry System Administrator, Homeward

Michael Rogers, Continuum of Care Director, Homeward

Nan Roman, President and CEO, National Alliance to End Homelessness (Washington D.C.)

Rhonda Sneed, Founder, Blessing Warriors RVA Inc. (Hanover, VA)

Karen Stanley, President and CEO, CARITAS

Alicia Sykes, Richmond Urban Ministry Institute

Beth Vann Turnbull, Executive Director, Housing Families First

Eleanor Vincent, COO Pathway Homes, Inc. (Fairfax, VA)

Bridget Whitaker Williams, Blessing Warriors RVA Inc. (Hanover, VA)

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Maggie Anderson, Mayor's Office

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Reggie Gordon, Human Services

Patricia Parks, Human Services

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Sophia Stephens, Human Services

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SYSTEMS COORDINATION

Homeward coordinates and facilitates collaboration among agencies to ensure successful planning and a collaborative homeless services system serving those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the Greater Richmond region (City of Richmond, Town of Ashland, and Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan.) Staff work with more than 30 community partners to provide subject matter expertise and guidance, technical competency, and administrative support for community coalitions and workgroups working to prevent and end homelessness.



Homeless Services in the Richmond Region

12/04/20

Access Points
Coordinated entry points into the region's network of homeless services

- Homeless Crisis Line
- Domestic Violence Hotlines
- Coordinated Outreach: RBHA, Daily Planet Health Services, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, McGuire VA Homeless OutreachRichmond DSS, St. Joseph's Villa (youth)

Connection Points
Light-touch assistance and connection to Access Points

- Chesterfield DSS
- Commonwealth Catholic Charities
- Goochland CARES
- OAR
- Powhatan Free Clinic
- REAL Life Community Center
- Richmond Public Library, Main Branch
- RVA Light Café
- Virginia Career Works Centers

Connected Agencies and Groups
Mainstream resources provided to community members including persons experiencing homelessness

- Departments of Social Services
- Public School Systems
- Community Services Boards
- Police Departments/Sherrifs
- Community Meal Programs/Congregations
- Free Clinics

Community-based outreach & services
Additional agencies providing homeless services

- Focused Outreach Richmond
- Veteran Affairs Medical Center
- VETLINK

Pandemic Response Programs

- Daily Planet (COVID-19 testing)
- Homeward (non-congregate shelter)
- RUMI (residential workforce program)

Shelter
Emergency shelter for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Families and individuals are referred to emergency shelter through Access Points.

- CARITAS (men, & women)
- Daily Planet (Medical, Mental Health)
- Hanover Safe Place (domestic violence)
- HomeAgain (men, family, vets)
- Housing Families First (family)
- Goochland Cares
- Liberation Veteran Services
- Safe Harbor (domestic violence)
- RBHA Transitional Units
- Salvation Army (men, family)
- YWCA (domestic violence)

Homeward
Lead agency for Greater Richmond Continuum of Care

- Collaborative applicant for federal & state funding
- Provides technical support and best practices to CoC member organizations
- Manages Homeward Community Information System (HCIS)
- Coordinates bi-annual Point-in-Time Counts
- Hosts Best Practices Conference & Project Homeless Connect
- Coordinates 15+ local workgroups and committees
- Cross-sector partnership development

Rapid Rehousing
Permanent housing for families/individuals who need assistance in securing and maintaining stable housing

- Hanover Safe Place
- HomeAgain
- Housing Families First
- St. Joseph's Villa
- Virginia Supportive Housing (for veterans)

Permanent Supportive Housing
Permanent housing for families/individuals who need long-term housing that is connected to on-going supportive services

- HomeAgain
- HUD-VASH (for veterans)
- Richmond Behavioral Health Authority
- Virginia Supportive Housing

Targeted Recovery Services
Substance Use Disorder recovery providers with an emphasis on persons experiencing homelessness

- The Healing Place
- Good Samaritan Ministries
- Daily Planet Health Services
- Salvation Army ARC

Agencies represented here participate in the GRCoC through the point-in-time count, the Housing Inventory Count, or a committee. If your agency is not shown, please contact Michael Rogers at mrogers@homewardva.org. If you are experiencing homelessness and need help, call the Homeless Crisis Line at 804-972-0813.

Homelessness Services in the Richmond Region



Partnership for Housing Affordability

Richmond Regional Housing Framework

REGIONAL HOUSING FRAMEWORK Issue Brief

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing: City of Richmond

Overview/Issue⁴ –

- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) are rental properties with no federal subsidy attached.
- The units are affordable to households earning 80% AMI and below (\$62,200 for a family of 3).
- NOAH is a segment of the housing market that needs to be preserved.

Key Facts⁵ –

- Richmond has **336 NOAH properties**, totaling **29,703 units**.
- The average Richmond NOAH property is **30 years old**.
- **There are 31 NOAH properties affordable to households earning 30% AMI (\$23,350) and below in Richmond.**

Policy Recommendations –

1. Establish a NOAH preservation program to encourage owners to preserve the quality and affordability of their units, employing both incentives (performance grants, tax rebates) and penalties (code enforcement, fines).
2. Create a system to monitor and track NOAH.
3. Community development organizations should explore acquisition of NOAH through special loan and equity funds.

Implications –

- NOAH owners face market pressures to add improvements and increase rents or to defer maintenance and preserve affordability.
- NOAH owners may prioritize cash flow over housing quality.
- Preserving NOAH can help owners ensure their housing is maintained in good condition, and that the monthly cost of housing is not burdensome.

NOAH IN RICHMOND

91 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to a 1 person household earning **80% AMI (\$48,400)**

55 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to a 1 person household earning **60% AMI (\$36,300)**

48 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to a 2 person household earning **50% AMI (\$34,600)**

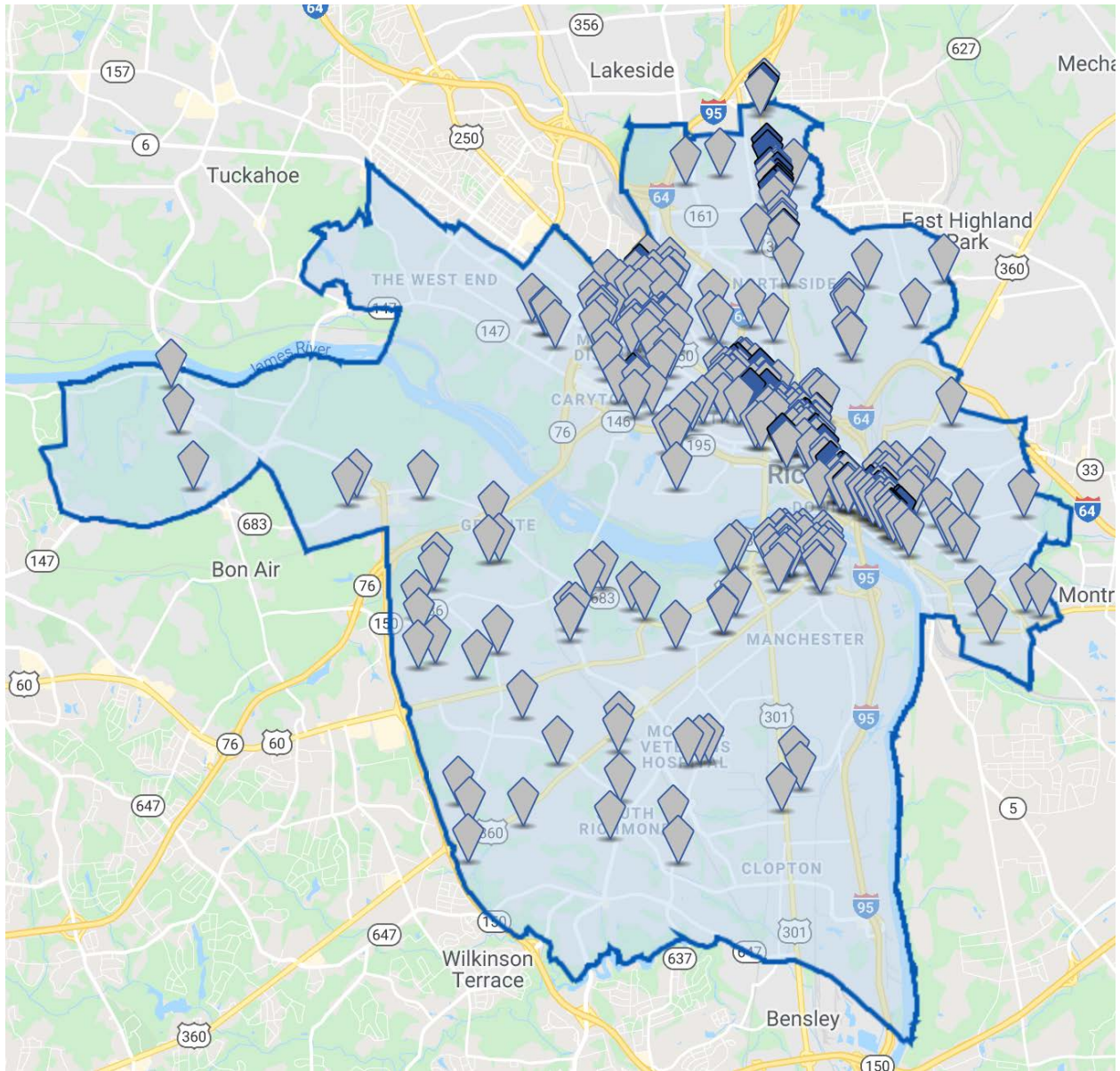
32 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to 3 person household earning **40% AMI (\$31,120)**

11 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to a 1 person household earning **40% AMI (\$24,200)**

9 percent of NOAH properties are affordable to households earning **30% AMI (\$23,350)**

⁴ Costar Property Search.

⁵ Costar Property Search, as of November 2019.



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⁶ Costar Property Search. The properties in this brief only include multi-family properties of 5 units or more. Single-family rental properties are not included this brief.

