



A Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness in Rochester and Olmsted County

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Dear Rochester and Olmsted County Policy-makers and Citizens,

The face of the homeless is not always recognizable to the public, but for those that work with poverty, youth, veterans, mental illness, chemical dependency and persons being released from prison, the deficiencies are known.

The Heading Home Olmsted Committee involved a diverse cross section of individuals from the private, private non-profit, and public sector. We are grateful to all the partners that helped formulate this plan, and are proud of the final document. We have developed a road map that will make a life altering difference to people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness within our county.

Olmsted County has made a commitment to address important issues in our community such as homelessness, and we are proud to have developed a plan that aligns Olmsted County with the Governor's goal to end long-term homelessness by 2010. The outcome will not only benefit the homeless, but the quality of life for all the residents in the county and the state.

Please join our efforts to help make "Heading Home Olmsted" a success!

Respectfully,

Judy Ohly
Heading Home Olmsted Committee
Olmsted County Commissioner
Rental Property Owner
Olmsted County Housing and Redevelopment Authority Commissioner

Executive Summary

The *Heading Home Olmsted* plan seeks to prevent and end long-term homelessness in Rochester and Olmsted County by using evidence-based service models and combining public-private resources. Our vision is a community where all persons have options for safe temporary or emergency housing and choices for a permanent place to live.

According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, there are approximately 2 million homeless Americans during the course of a year. In Minnesota, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation has conducted a comprehensive *Statewide Survey of People Without Permanent Shelter* every three years since 1991. The most recent Wilder survey (October 2006)¹ reports there are 9,200 persons who are homeless or precariously housed on any given night in Minnesota. According to the Rochester/Southeast Minnesota Continuum of Care², on the night of the most recent homeless survey, there were 458 persons in our region experiencing homelessness. A large proportion of these persons are in Rochester or Olmsted County.

The crisis of homelessness has not been ignored by localities or the nation. In fact, over the past two decades much has been learned from the private and public agencies working to prevent homelessness and helping to move people out of long-term despair. And what we have learned is that we can go beyond *managing homelessness* to actually *ending it*.

Heading Home Olmsted sets forth five goals focused on three populations³ who are currently faced with the greatest challenges in temporary and permanent housing choices in Rochester/Olmsted County. *Heading Home Olmsted* also suggests ways to strengthen community and public policy support for ending homelessness.

¹ Wilder Research, <http://www.wilderresearch.org>

² SEMN Regional Plan to End Long-term Homelessness

³ Chronic homeless adults with disabilities; unaccompanied minors and homeless youth; homeless offenders re-entering community after prison release

Heading Home Olmsted Goals:

1. Expand resources to fund supportive services, outreach services, case management and housing subsidies for adults with chronic disabilities living in community scattered sites
2. Develop an on-site housing option for homeless youth and secure funding for supportive and outreach services
3. Develop a housing site option for homeless sex-offenders with appropriate support services and expand supportive services for non-sex offenders in generic community housing
4. Educate and build Neighborhood Support for Housing Solutions
5. Increase and leverage public investment and promote affirmative public policies that sustain adequate housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

Persons experiencing homelessness have a variety of needs. Our community is recognized for its proactive, innovative approaches to community problems. Now is the time to move forward and end homelessness in Rochester and Olmsted County.

"Ending homelessness is the right thing to do and makes great economic sense."

- Governor Tim Pawlenty