



# **Ending Homelessness In Ten Years**

The City of Springfield launched its 10-year-plan to end homelessness, Homes Within Reach, in January 2007. Springfield has also joined with other cities and towns in the Pioneer Valley in a coordinated, regional plan to end homelessness.

We have made significant progress.



# Report to the Community

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### Accomplishments To Date:

- In its first year, Homes Within Reach reduced the number of homeless individuals living on the streets by 39%. The total number of homeless individuals in the city (on the streets and in shelters) declined 9%.
- 70 chronically homeless individuals and 24 chronically homeless families have been housed.
- Multiple agencies are collaborating on creative ways to provide supportive housing. For example, the city combines **tenant vouchers** with services from the Mental Health Association. The Springfield Housing Authority gives vouchers to landlords who rent apartments to formerly homeless people, who then receive **intensive support services** in their own homes.
- The second **Project Homeless Connect** was held in June 2008 at the MassMutual Center. The gathering provided one-day, one-stop access to resources to more than 600 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Construction will soon begin on a 24-hour **Homeless Resource Center** on Worthington Street. The center will provide health and social services and training programs to enable people to move from homelessness to education to employment and stability.
- Springfield collaborated with neighboring communities to launch a **regional plan** to end homelessness.
- The **Rapid Re-House Program** provided security deposits or first-month rent to assist 93 individuals and 62 families to move from homeless to housed.
- Springfield has upheld its commitment to provide **Emergency Shelter Capacity** to the homeless until the need diminishes.
- New committees are working to improve **job training, employment opportunities and supportive housing** for homeless people throughout the region.
- **Outreach services** for homeless individuals have been strengthened.





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### We Can End Homelessness

**The prevailing belief** of many living, working or serving in urban areas is that homelessness is a permanent condition. It isn't. Today, in Springfield and throughout the region, we see homelessness as a problem that can be solved, not just managed. Our federal, state and city governments, nonprofit agencies, business and civic leaders, grassroots advocates and faith groups are uniting to end homelessness in Springfield and neighboring communities.

Springfield's efforts are in the forefront of a new nationwide approach that emphasizes long-term solutions to homelessness. Studies across the country show that it costs communities less — and gives people a greater chance of success — when a homeless person is given a stable place to live and help moving ahead to a new self-sufficient life than it does to continue to provide temporary shelters and emergency services for homeless people. Public and private cooperation is key to the success of Springfield's initiative, which has been called a model plan for cities its size. As part of this plan, Springfield is one of 325 cities across the United States moving homeless people directly into permanent housing. This approach is finding great success in other cities, including in Portland, Oregon, where there was a 77 percent decrease in the homeless population, in San Francisco a 28 percent decrease, and in Philadelphia a 50 percent decrease.

Here in Springfield, there are already 39 percent fewer people living on the streets compared to a year ago. But no one should ever sleep on our streets. And no one should have to stay in our shelters for more than a few nights. We can and we will end the tragedy of homelessness in Springfield.

**Domenic J. Sarno**  
Mayor, City of Springfield

**Robert Schwarz**  
Chairman, Homes Within Reach Implementation Committee  
Executive Vice President, Peter Pan Bus Lines

*" Implementation of the 10-year plan is having noticeable impact. There are fewer homeless individuals congregating downtown, and this is creating a more positive outlook for downtown businesses. "*

**Russell Denver**  
President, Affiliated Chambers of  
Commerce of Greater Springfield  
Executive Director, Springfield Chamber







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### Where We've Been



**For five long months in 2004**, as many as 400 homeless people lived in tents on the grounds of St. Michael's Cathedral on State Street and then in a nearby vacant lot. The existence of this "Sanctuary City" shattered the belief that our region was responding appropriately to the needs of the homeless population. Community leaders rededicated their efforts to find better ways to put an end to the indignity of homelessness.

### Where We're Going



***A planned new homeless resource center will help move individuals out of homelessness.***

A vital component of the quest to end homelessness in Springfield is the anticipated late 2009 opening of a new homeless resource center on Worthington Street to be operated by Friends of the Homeless, Inc. The new facility will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will include single room occupancy apartments, a medical/dental clinic, literacy and job training and related resources. The renovations to the existing center and construction of the new facility will be accomplished through a combination of public funds and private equity investment. In addition, a fundraising campaign spearheaded by local business leaders has already provided substantial assistance.



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### Project Homeless Connect

For the past two years a remarkable and rewarding community event has been held at the MassMutual Center in Downtown Springfield. Through Project Homeless Connect, hundreds of people in need get real help in one place at one time. Homeless advocates, providers, business leaders and volunteers provide vital resources to homeless individuals and families and to those on the cusp of homelessness. The services offered include housing and employment assistance, medical and mental health care, legal assistance, transportation assistance, food, clothing and even haircuts and massages.

This year, more than 600 people attended. Nineteen homeless people were provided with housing, 275 completed applications for public and subsidized housing and 220 completed job applications.



### The True Cost of Homelessness

Homeless people need much more than a bowl of soup and a blanket. Temporary housing for the homeless and crisis services such as emergency room treatment, substance abuse and mental health care, police and court costs, can range from \$35,000 to \$150,000 per person, per year.

In contrast, giving a homeless person a permanent place to live and the support services they need to keep from ending up back on the streets costs between \$13,000 and \$25,000 per person per year.

### Who Are the Homeless? How Can We Help?

Each year in Springfield, more than 1,200 individuals and more than 500 families suffer a period of homelessness. The great majority of these homeless people are poor and have lost their homes because of job loss, illness or other economic problems. They are the **CRISIS HOMELESS**. The crisis homeless usually have one relatively short-term spell of homelessness. About 10 percent of the poor become homeless each year. For people experiencing crisis homelessness, the goal is to assist them in returning to stability as quickly as possible.

The most visible group of homeless people constitutes only 20 percent of the homeless population. They are the **CHRONIC HOMELESS**, who usually suffer from mental illness, substance abuse problems or debilitating health problems. The goal is to provide the chronic homeless with affordable housing combined with intensive support services to help them maintain their housing.





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### We're United Under One Roof To End Homelessness.

- Pioneer Valley Committee to End Homelessness, chaired by mayors of Holyoke and Northampton with input from Easthampton, Greenfield, Springfield and West Springfield
- Springfield Housing Authority
- Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield, Inc.
- Homes Within Reach Implementation Committee
- Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc.
- Hampden County Sheriff's Department
- Health New England
- Williams Distributing Corp.
- US Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno
- Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
- Office of Congressman Richard E. Neal
- Office of Congressman John W. Olver
- Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development
- Peter Pan Bus Lines
- United Way of Pioneer Valley
- The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
- The Community Foundation of Western Mass.
- U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Former Springfield Mayor Charles V. Ryan
- Office of Senator John Kerry
- Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness
- Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance
- Springfield Technical Community College
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's Plan for Progress
- Springfield Finance Control Board

■ Multiple homeless service providers throughout the region

#### Awards received by the Initiative to End Homelessness:

- ★ US Interagency Council on Homelessness: "Home for Every American Award" (to Bob Schwarz of Peter Pan Bus Lines for his outstanding leadership regarding homelessness)
- ★ United Way of Pioneer Valley: "Kevin Hamel Community Building Award"
- ★ The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission: "Outstanding Regional Service Award"
- ★ The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance: "Cornerstone Award"
- ★ Massachusetts Department of Mental Health: Certificate of Appreciation