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Sub 1 to 2021 Res-156
Pursuing Temporary and Permanent Housing Solutions for People
Experiencing Homelessness and Authorizing Funding

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Dane County has prioritized safe sheltering and eviction prevention throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The County committed funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES”) Act to eviction prevention and has partnered with Tenant Resource Center and Urban Triage to administer Emergency Rent Assistance program funds allocated to the County through federal COVID relief legislation. The County funded Occupy Madison to support the creation of 28 tinier houses for people who had been living outside in 2020 to prevent them from having to live outside during the cold winter months. The County has also funded expanded housing navigation and launched a rapid rehousing program to provide more stable housing options to people experiencing homelessness. The County has funded a hotel sheltering program for families due to the capacity limitations at the family shelter and for individuals who are especially vulnerable to serious illness if infected by COVID-19 (“vulnerable population”) and not sufficiently protected in congregate shelter facilities. At its peak, the hotel sheltering program provided safe shelter to approximately 300 households.

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Vulnerable Population Hotel Sheltering

As local public health emergency orders were lifted in June, 2021, it became more difficult for Dane County to secure long term room availability with local hotels who were partnering in the vulnerable population hotel (VPH) sheltering program. In mid-July, the VPH stopped taking new referrals due to the program ending in August, 2021. Currently, there are 139 people in the hotels designated as VPH and 60 people are on the waitlist. The last two VPH contracts end on August 25 and August 30, 2021. Neither of the VP hotels are interested in extending the contracts. Housing navigation, hotel sheltering case management partners, and supportive housing providers are working to find permanent housing for the people that remain in the county-funded hotel sheltering and are placing some people. The County is also working to secure new hotel partners. The shelter available to single women operated by The Salvation Army is at capacity. Many people sheltered in VPH were previously living outside in encampments at McPike Park and Reindahl Park.

The County has not yet spent \$2.4M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds it allocated for hotel sheltering in 2021, but will use these funds for quarantine shelter and new VPH contracts if secured. The County also has allocated funds in the amount of \$2,659,760 for the Hotels to Housing program in 2021 and \$1,624,252 is unspent. While 90 persons in the Hotel to Housing program have executed leases and more will lease up in the coming months, estimates show there will be unused funding that can be reprogrammed to support additional services and housing options for individuals and couples experiencing homelessness.

Ongoing Need for Supportive Services and Housing for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

45 The Dane County Homeless Services Consortium, our Continuum of Care for U.S. Department
46 of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homelessness assistance grants maintains a
47 coordinated entry lists (aka “by-name” lists) for housing for all the families and individuals who
48 have been identified through our coordinated entry system as experiencing “literal
49 homelessness” (also known as “category 1”). Persons are placed on this list according to a
50 common assessment tool and the length of time they have experienced homelessness. In order
51 to be assessed and placed on the coordinated entry “by-name” list for housing, the person must
52 have been sleeping in a shelter or another place not meant for human habitation (like an
53 encampment) for at least 7 days in a row prior to their assessment. Persons are experiencing
54 chronic homelessness, according to HUD, if they have a verifiable disabling condition and have
55 experienced homelessness for a total of at least 12 months in the last three years.

56
57 As of August 11, 2021, there are 508 individuals on the coordinated entry list in Dane County
58 who are currently experiencing homelessness and almost half of those persons, 238 people, are
59 experiencing chronic homelessness. Racial disparities are significant. Black, Indigenous and
60 People of Color (BIPOC) make up the majority of the people on the coordinated entry list and
61 221 people (43%) identify as Black. 142 people are seniors (55 and over), 29 are veterans, and
62 43 are youth (18-24 yrs old) on the list. The average length of time of individuals on the list
63 waiting for a housing placement is 470 days.

64 65 ***Thousands in Dane County at Risk of Eviction Due to Rent Owed***

66
67 As of July 5, 2021, 8,573 renters (9.2% of 93,189 total renters) in Dane County are at risk of
68 eviction due to owing back rent.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on
69 August 3, 2021, issued a new Order which applies in counties with a substantial or high rate of
70 community transmission. This Order is in effect for 60 days and protects renters from being
71 evicted due to non-payment of rent through October 3, 2021 so long as Dane County remains at
72 a substantial or high rate of community transmission. When the Order is no longer applicable, a
73 significant increase in eviction filings is expected. More evictions will also add pressure on our
74 sheltering and homeless services system.

75 76 ***Growing Number of People Living in Encampments and Cars***

77
78 Some of the people who had been in the hotels and who are on the coordinated entry list were
79 previously living in encampments, including but not limited to McPike Park and Reindahl Park in
80 the City of Madison. For much of the pandemic, the City of Madison followed CDC [guidance](#) to
81 leave encampments in place. The City of Madison also authorized temporary permitted
82 encampments in a few locations. One of those temporary permanent encampments (TPE) was
83 at Reindahl Park. While the authorization for the TPE expired, the City of Madison, through
84 direction by the Common Council, is allowing the encampment to remain in place while the City
85 pursues alternatives to the Reindahl site. Outreach staff have estimated that as of early August,
86 2021, they have connected with approximately 125 people who are currently living outside in

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/28/opinion/covid-eviction-moratorium.html>

87 encampments. The actual number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living
88 outside or in cars is expected to be higher.

89
90 ~~State licensed campgrounds operated by the Dane County Parks Department are one of very~~
91 ~~few lawful alternatives for people experiencing homelessness who lack access to permanent~~
92 ~~housing. Dane County Ordinances, at sec. 53.07, regulate the campgrounds. Requirements in~~
93 ~~the ordinances which place limits on reservations, require online reservations, and require~~
94 ~~payment for reservation fees are particularly burdensome to people who are using the~~
95 ~~campground as their primary residence because they have no other housing available.~~

96
97 In July, 2012, in response to a request from the Dane County Board, Madison-area Urban
98 Ministry (now known as Just Dane), issued a report to the Dane County Board on alternative
99 sites for Occupy Madison. Occupy Madison had been operating an encampment in an
100 abandoned car lot on East Washington Ave. The Report provided immediate, intermediate, and
101 long term “responses and strategies to address needs and gaps in services”. One of the
102 immediate responses and strategies was related to car-camping. The report recommended the
103 following to the County Board over 9 years ago:

- 104
105 Establish car camping sites or parking spots for those living in their cars;
- 106 1. Identify spots on county owned property, businesses and faith communities
107 parking lots;
 - 108 2. Follow other successful car camping models from around the United States.
109 Examples include Santa Barbara, CA, Eugene, OR, Portland, OR, Los Angeles,
110 CA;
 - 111 3. Create a registration process for those who would like to camp in the available
112 car camping spots;
 - 113 4. Develop a community outreach program to engage neighbors and address
114 concerns regarding car camping in the neighborhood.

115
116 ***The Delta Variant and High Rate of Community Transmission in Dane County***

117
118 In early August, the CDC determined that Dane County, like much of the country, was at a high
119 rate of community transmission. On August 17, 2021, PHMDC issued an emergency order,
120 effective August 19, 2021, which requires that everyone age 2 and older wear a face covering or
121 mask when in any enclosed building where other people, except for members of the person’s
122 own household or living unit, could be present. The high rate of community transmission in
123 Dane County and throughout much of Wisconsin due to the Delta Variant necessitates
124 alternatives to congregate shelter for persons who are particularly vulnerable to serious illness
125 from COVID-19.

126
127 ***Opportunities for Collaboration with City of Madison on Temporary and Permanent***
128 ***Housing Solutions***

129

130 The challenges around unsheltered homelessness in Dane County are not new but, like in
131 communities around the country, they have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. One
132 of the issues the community is struggling with is a growing reluctance to use group shelter
133 settings, in part, for fear of exposure to COVID. As a result, more and more people
134 experiencing homelessness are choosing to live outdoors, in conditions that are both unsafe
135 and unsustainable. The City of Madison has allocated \$2M in ARPA funds for strategies to
136 provide support outside of the shelter system. Funds provided in this proposal are intended for
137 use to support one or more strategies for people currently living outdoors. Money could be used
138 for such things as purchasing property for use as an encampment; installing basic services like
139 running water, bathrooms or electricity; establishing “tiny homes” or similar structures for use by
140 campers: and paying for on-site staff to support and monitor an encampment site. Additional
141 funds are needed to support the purchase, and operation of the tiny house village community
142 and additional sites to support safe and healthy living arrangements for people experiencing
143 homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness. Additional options are also needed for
144 people who are car-camping as that is not included in potential encampment sites.

145
146 The City has also allocated \$2.5M in ARPA funds for the purchase of a hotel to convert to
147 housing, with some units designated as permanent supportive housing for people who have
148 been experiencing chronic homelessness. Through the ARPA, Dane County has received a
149 \$2.25M allocation of funds targeted to the expansion of housing. Dane County’s allocation was
150 determined using the HUD’s formula used to allocate annual HOME Investment Partnerships
151 Program funds. While federal guidance for the use of these funds is forthcoming, national
152 webinars regarding best practices for the use of these funds have encouraged the purchase and
153 conversion of hotels for supportive housing for persons who have experienced homelessness.

154
155 ***Precedent for Making Exceptions and Waiving Fees to Mitigate COVID-19 Hardship***

156
157 Throughout the pandemic, Dane County has offered support for property owners and
158 businesses to mitigate COVID-related burdens. In 2020, the County adopted 2020 Res 20
159 allowing municipalities to delay property tax payments and waive penalties and fees on their
160 property taxes. In 2021, the County adopted 2020 Res. 442 which allowed Public Health
161 Madison Dane County to provide a 30% rebate for license fees for businesses. The rebate
162 saves business owners with the most common license \$165.

163
164 NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Dane County shall continue to pursue hotel
165 partnerships to provide safe shelter with previously allocated funds to persons designated in the
166 “vulnerable population” and to avoid returning vulnerable individuals to congregate shelter,
167 unsheltered homelessness, or other unsafe living arrangements.

168
169 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Dane County allocates \$7M in American Rescue Plan Act funds,
170 to support additional strategies to serve people experiencing homelessness, particularly those
171 experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living in encampments, with expanded services
172 and housing options as follows:

- 173 - \$250,000 to expand outreach services to people experiencing unsheltered
- 174 homelessness;
- 175 - \$1.5M for land acquisition, planning, development and operation of one or more
- 176 permanent tiny house village(s);
- 177 - \$5.25M for purchase and renovation of one or more hotels or multi-unit buildings
- 178 to provide supportive, low-barrier housing for people on the coordinated entry by-
- 179 name list.

180
181 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, provided it is a permitted expenditure under forthcoming federal
182 guidance, Dane County designates its additional \$2.25M allocation under the federal HOME
183 funds formula to contribute to the purchase of a hotel to convert to supportive housing for
184 individuals or couples who have experienced homelessness and are on the coordinated entry
185 “by-name” list. If allowable under forthcoming federal guidance, funds may be used to support
186 the acquisition of a hotel in partnership with the City of Madison. Dane County should also
187 consider authorizing additional ARPA funds or funding in the 2022 Capital Budget for a hotel
188 purchase outside the City of Madison.

189
190 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Departments of Human Services, Land and Water
191 Resources, Planning and Development, Department of Administration, and Public Health shall
192 convene a staff team to prepare a report on implementation of lawful camping and car-camping
193 options in Dane County as first recommended to the County Board in July, 2012. The report
194 shall be presented to the City-County Homelessness Issues Committee no later than 60 days
195 after the adoption of this resolution.

196
197 ~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Dane County shall temporarily waive the requirements of ss.~~
198 ~~53.07(1),(2), (3), and (5), Dane Co. Ords., for people experiencing homelessness, following a~~
199 ~~referral from outreach workers, and camping in Dane County campgrounds through March 31,~~
200 ~~2022.~~

201
202 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Dane County will continue to pursue reimbursement, to the
203 greatest extent possible, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for
204 expenditures on non-congregate hotel sheltering, particularly for the sheltering of people
205 particularly vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19 infection and those in quarantine.

206
207 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Dane County, in its 2022 Capital Budget affordable housing
208 development commitment, will prioritize partnerships with nonprofits committed to providing
209 transitional and permanent housing to people who are currently experiencing homelessness,
210 with a strong preference for set asides for persons and families experiencing chronic
211 homelessness.

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