Policy Brief

Salt Lake County Homeless Services: Challenges and Options

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Summary

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute has prepared this policy brief on homeless housing services at the request of Salt Lake County. This brief examines the feasibility of alternative initiatives—those that could be developed as new programs or achieved through the realignment of existing resources—that Salt Lake County may consider as it works to address some of the root challenges and systemic gaps within the homeless housing and services system.

The Policy Institute has identified the following areas as the most pressing challenges faced by the homeless housing and services system: (1) Homelessness includes a complex set of interrelated, and often, intergenerational challenges that require the integration of housing and supportive services to promote stability; (2) the primary emergency shelter, The Road Home, serves individuals and families for longer periods than was originally intended. In addition, it operates as the primary access point for homelessness support services within Salt Lake County. A person or family at risk of homelessness, i.e., not literally homeless, cannot receive these services; and (3) there is a substantial gap in the number of affordable apartments for individuals and families with extremely low income levels, and this lack of supply contributes to households experiencing homelessness due to a disproportionately high cost burden.

The challenges identified are systemic issues that reflect existing inefficiencies in the program structure, gaps within housing and services, and areas where over-capacity signals a significant but unmet need. There is an opportunity to realign the current homeless housing and services system, not only in terms of the physical location(s) of housing and services, but also in the coordination of intake services that could provide opportunities for prevention and diversion interventions earlier in crisis situations. The Policy Institute provides a range of options for addressing the current homelessness housing system, including: (1) development of purpose-built shelter facilities at multiple sites or campuses; (2) targeting gaps in affordable housing development; (3) allocating resources to bolster existing housing assistance efforts that focus on rapidly re-housing individuals and families; and (4) a blended model that incorporates some elements from each of the other options based upon an incremental approach.

Introduction

Salt Lake County recognizes that the current system to provide emergency housing and services for individuals and families at crisis and experiencing homelessness is overwhelmed. A core challenge is how the system is organized currently with services and facilities centralized around a main emergency shelter, The Road Home. Serving as the primary intake center where all individuals and families go to access services through the system, the use of this facility has evolved beyond its original intent. This reality, however, is not unique to The Road Home nor to Salt Lake County; over time, publicly-funded shelters have become institutionalized, expanded their rehabilitative services, and served individuals and families for longer periods of time.[1]

In this context, the key research question for this initiative is to examine the feasibility of alternatives that address root challenges and systematic gaps while avoiding potential pitfalls that could contribute to undermine performance and efficacy in the current system.

Understanding the Population At-Risk of or Experiencing Crisis

To understand the current system it is necessary first to define the terminology used to determine housing supports as well as the appropriate "wrap-around services" (e.g. supportive services for mental and behavioral health, substance use disorder treatment, physical therapy, primary supportive life skills training, workforce development, etc.) that further support the stability of the individual or family at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. Understanding the terminology, and how such terms and classifications draw down various federal, state, local, and private resources, serves as the basis for thoughtful examination of the challenges as well as opportunities for system realignment and resource allocation.

Housing Status

The following are several classifications of housing status, used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), applied to individuals and families who are currently or at-risk of experiencing homelessness:[2]

Category 1: Literally Homeless

Literally homeless means that an individual or family spends a night in a place that is not designed to be suitable for regular sleeping accommodation of human beings. This term includes a range of situations from outdoor camping (e.g. parks or campgrounds), residing within a car, or other buildings that are unsuitable (e.g. abandoned buildings) or not designed for human habitat (e.g. transit stations or airports). This status includes also those individuals and families that are living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements—including short-term hotel or motel rooms paid for using public funds—as well as places such as hospitals or other institutions where the individual or family was not stably housed immediately prior to this condition.

The criteria for literally homeless requires that one of three conditions are met: (1) the primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (2) an individual or family is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed for temporary living arrangements; or (3) an individual or family is exiting an institution where the duration is less than 90 days and resided in either of the two conditions above. To establish eligibility, written documentation is required from an outreach worker, housing or service provider, or certification by the head of household that (s)he was previously living on the streets or in shelter. For those exiting an institution, additional documentation is required that clearly defines the previous living condition was met.

Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Individuals and families who are immediately at-risk of losing their housing include those without a subsequent housing option identified and do not have the resources (i.e. through income, support networks, or public subsidy) to retain current housing or obtain temporary or permanent housing. These situations range from pending eviction or condemnation of current housing, to other situations such as pending discharge from a hospital or prison/jail. In terms of the latter, incarcerated individuals represent a significant pressure upon the homelessness housing and services systems in cases where stable housing situations are not an immediate option. Persons facing this status may regain stability in the short-term if these conditions are addressed immediately or within a short time frame

The criteria for "imminent risk of homelessness" requires three criteria be met: (1) individuals and families who are at imminent risk of losing their primary nighttime residence within 14 days; (2) the individual or family is unable to identify subsequent residence; and (3) the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

Written documentation includes: (1) court order for an eviction action of permanent residence, evidence of insufficient financial resources to remain in a hotel or motel, or a documented and verified oral statement; (2) verification that no subsequent residence has been identified; and (3) verified self-certification or other documentation that the individual or family lacks the financial resources to obtain and support other permanent housing.

Category 3: Homeless under Other Federal Statutes

Sometimes referred to as the "education definition of homelessness", this category includes families with children and youth, and young adults (i.e. under 25 years of age) who do not otherwise qualify as homeless. This category affects services provided through schools (e.g., Head Start, public education, higher education) as well as Violence Against Women Act programs. Individuals must meet the following criteria: (1) are defined as homeless under separate federal statutes; (2) have not had a lease or occupancy agreement during the 60 days prior to applying for homeless assistance; (3) have experienced housing instability as measured by two physical moves within the preceding 60 days; and (4) are expected to continue to experience instability due to special needs or other defined barriers.

Documentation required for this category is complex insofar that the certification of (1) and/or (4) may be conducted outside of the homeless housing and services system. For example, in the case of (4), this may include outside consultation with case workers within a referral network (e.g. service providers) but may not be at the point of contact with the system. For youths, young adults, and families, the documentation process may create complexity and inefficiency, particularly at a point of economic or other hardship.

Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence

Individuals and families that require a safe haven in situations where domestic violence is a presenting factor fit this category. Three criteria must be met in these situations: (1) an individual or family is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking; (2) the individual or family has no other residence; and (3) the individual or family has no resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

For documentation, there are two primary means by which an individual or family can seek support. If the contact with the system is with victim service providers, an oral statement by the individual or head of household for the criteria listed above can be documented by self-certification or certification by an intake worker. For non-victim service providers,

self-certification or certification by a caseworker that a fleeing situation is presented and the above criteria are met is sufficient; however, where the safety of the individual or family is not in jeopardy, an oral statement must be verified by a caseworker. When these situations are presented, there is a narrower set of intervention options, and the response typically focuses on separation of the individual or family from the situation.

At-Risk of Homelessness

In addition to the four primary categories for homelessness, an additional term at-risk of homelessness was introduced in 2011. This new category extends eligibility for certain homelessness prevention programs and targets individuals and families at extremely low-income levels. Within this definition, there are three sub-categories, with Category 1 serving primarily for individuals and families (see endnote for Categories 2 and 3).[3]

For Category 1 individuals and families, two primary criteria are applied: (1) annual income is below 30 percent of area median family income; (2) the individual or family does not have sufficient resources or networks to prevent transition to an emergency shelter or other places as described in Category 1 of HUD's four primary homeless definitions. In addition, an individual or family must meet at least one of the following conditions: has moved at least twice during the previous 60 days due to economic hardship; has "doubled up" with a friend or relative temporarily; has received notice of eviction within 21 days; lives in hotel or motel without public or private subsidy; lives in an overcrowded unit as defined by the U.S. Census (e.g. efficiency apartment with at least 2 persons or larger units with more than 1.5 persons per room); is exiting a publicly funded institution; or otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and risk as defined in the local jurisdiction's Consolidated Plan.

Individual Characteristics and Conditions Informing Supportive Services

In addition to the classifications above, there is a set of disability definitions that provide insight into the complexity of those at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. These conditions, when identified, provide access to wrap-around services that support an individual or family's path to stability where such services exist. These conditions may be co-occurring and individuals may qualify for more than one program.

A condition must be documented to be of long duration that (1) "substantially impedes an individual's ability to live independently" and (2) "of such a nature that such ability could be improved by more suitable housing conditions."[4] There is a range of presenting conditions outlined by the following HMIS definitions and meeting the two preceding criteria:

- Physical disability—a physical impairment that affects and impedes an individual's ability to live independent-

ly and that could be improved by more suitable housing conditions;

- Developmental disability—severe and chronic disability that affects an individual's mental and/or physical health occurring before 22 years of age and limits independent living and economic self-sufficiency;

- Chronic health condition—persisting for more than 3 months in duration, is either[5] not curable or has residual effects that negatively impact daily living and requires adaptation in function or special assistance; and

- Mental and behavioral health—may include serious/severe depression, anxiety, substance use disorder(s), hallucination, violent behavior, or thoughts of suicide.

In order to receive assistance, these conditions must be documented prior to receiving assistance. A significant challenge within the homelessness housing and services system is that this documentation is often not available at the point of crisis.

How the System Supports Individuals and Families

In an attempt to unravel the complexity of homelessness services in Salt Lake County, this analysis describes the types of assistance provided for homeless individuals and families.

Housing assistance in Salt Lake County ranges from temporary shelters, to transitional supportive housing, to subsidized government-owned housing units, to rent subsidies for permanent supportive housing. Appendix A at the end of this policy brief lists organizations in Salt Lake County that administer housing programs, identify the specific programs they operate, and identify the populations that are served by the various programs. Support services targeted toward needs of certain populations, such as individuals with disabilities, are provided in many of the housing programs, and these services are described in Appendix A. Housing may generally fall under three conventional terms: emergency shelter, transitional, or permanent supportive.

Emergency Shelters

The primary emergency shelter in Salt Lake County is operated by The Road Home, a not-for-profit organization that contracts with Salt Lake County. This public shelter provides beds with separate quarters for single men, single women, and families with special needs (such as a mother with a newborn). The Road Home shelter is located in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City. The Road Home also operates a Youth Services program in a different location for youth/young adults between ages 18-25. Youth younger than 18 may seek shelter at this facility on a temporary basis but the program may not "shelter" youth aged 17 or younger for more than 24 hours.

Salt Lake County has five other shelters including Family Promise for single or 2-parent families with children, Rescue Haven for single women, Rescue Mission for single men,

and two organizations for victims of domestic violence. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) serves women who are victims of domestic violence and their children; South Valley Sanctuary serves both women and men who are victims of domestic violence and their children.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing[6] is designed for individuals or families who have moved out of shelter and require housing for longer periods than allowed at a shelter, but is still time limited. Certain populations considered to be appropriate for transitional housing are homeless youth and female victims of domestic violence and their children, or individuals released from an institution such as jail/prison. In Salt Lake County two transitional housing programs are Volunteers of America that operates a home for young men, and YWCA that operates the Kathleen Robison Huntsman Residential Self-Sufficiency Program for women who are victims of domestic violence and their children.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing is considered a long-term residence for individuals who need intensive case management and supportive services to enable them to live independently. As opposed to temporary housing, these housing units are considered permanent in that the individual or family is not given a time limit to move out. Examples of these populations include homeless or chronically homeless individuals with disabilities such as mental illness, developmental disabilities, or AIDS. Permanent supportive housing is provided through three local housing authorities in Salt Lake County through either the Public Housing programs or the Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers described below.

Housing Assistance through Housing Authorities

Housing assistance is administered by housing authorities, i.e., quasi-governmental entities that support the programs with a combination of federal, state, and local taxpayer funding as well as charitable contributions and tenant rents. Salt Lake County has three housing authorities in its jurisdiction: Housing Authority of Salt Lake County (HASLC), Salt Lake City Housing Authority (SLCHA), and West Valley City Housing Authority (WVCHA). Housing assistance for low income and vulnerable populations is provided through three major program types: Public housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, and Permanent Supportive Housing.

Public Housing

Public Housing consists of rental units that are owned by the housing authorities and rented to eligible individuals and families at affordable rates based on their household income. Residents have access to supportive services depending on the unit or complex in which they live. These are described in Appendix A. The Housing Authority of Salt Lake County owns 626 units of Public Housing. Salt Lake City Housing Authority owns and operates 389 units of Public Housing with 180 new units scheduled to open in 2016. Of the new units, 112 are designated for individuals age 55 and over, and 68 are designated for families.

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

The Housing Choice Voucher Program allows very low income families the ability to choose their own apartment in Salt Lake County, and rent at rates based on their household income. Most vouchers are used in the private housing market in units operated by private landlords. However, due to the shortage of low cost units in the market, voucher-holders may choose an apartment in one of the existing tax-credit subsidized projects. In these circumstances the system provides the low income voucher-holder a double subsidy.[7] Utah law prevents landlords from discriminating against renters on the basis of source of income. This means that landlords are obligated to rent to voucher-holders if the applicant is otherwise qualified for the unit. The Housing Choice Voucher is very popular with consumers because the program allows individuals and families more choice in selecting the location and price of the housing units. The voucher program continues to experience high demand and has large waiting lists for these subsidies.

Housing Authority of Salt Lake County currently has 2,408 vouchers and over 11,000 applicants on a waiting list for a voucher.[8] Salt Lake City Housing Authority currently provides 2,728 vouchers and has a similarly large percentage of applicants waiting.

Veteran Housing

Homeless Veterans who have a disability such as serious mental illness, substance use disorder history, or physical disability, and who need case management services, are candidates for a HUD-VASH voucher. HUD-VASH provides permanent housing for eligible homeless Veterans who are single or eligible homeless Veterans with families. The program is developed for the homeless Veteran, so eligible Veteran families must include the Veteran. Eligible Veterans must be able to complete activities of daily living and live independently in the community with case management and supportive services.

Housing Authority of Salt Lake County has enough VASH vouchers presently to allow them to claim in July of 2014 that Salt Lake County has "effectively ended chronic homelessness among veterans."[9]

Gaps in Affordable Housing

One of the significant—if not the most significant—challenge for individuals and families experiencing homelessness is the short supply of affordable housing. The term "affordable housing" may be perceived as a catch-all term insofar that it is not well-understood that it covers a wide range of personal

and household income levels. To provide clarity as to what affordable housing means and for whom it is intended, the following HUD definitions are useful:

- *Very low income*—a four-person household with an income less than 50 percent of the local area median family income. In this category, a four-person household with less than 30 percent of the local area median family income is considered "extremely low-income."

- *Other low income*—A four-person household with an income from 50 to 80 percent of the local area median income.

- *Moderate income*—A four-person household with an income from 80 to 95 of the local area median income.

Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing across various income levels is a challenge. There are a variety of public subsidies (e.g. federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs, Utah's Olene Walker Housing Fund, State of Utah Housing Tax Credit Program) that are available to build affordable units. For Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs in particular, there are limited number of 9 percent credits available each year; in addition, the competitive process through which tax credits are awarded through the Utah Housing Corporation balances need statewide. A third, and very significant, challenge exists in terms of building units for extremely low-income[10] households as these units are often not economically sustainable long-term.

The challenges faced by the State of Utah and, in particular, Salt Lake County may be best characterized as a significant gap for extremely low-income renters. Based on a 2013 housing market study for Salt Lake City alone, in 2011 there was a gap of 8,241 units for households with incomes below $20,000.[11] In contrast, the same study found that, for household incomes between $20,000 and $50,000, there were 13,597 more units than renters. Putting this into context for Salt Lake County, a 2015 report by the Urban Institute ranked Salt Lake County at 72 out of the 100 largest U.S. counties in 2013 with 17.9 affordable units for every 100 extremely low-income renter households.[12] These figures suggest that there are two primary issues of mismatched demand and supply. First, there is a potential issue with financing insofar that these extremely low-income units do not pencil out for developers, and second, a significant concern is the potential lack of units designed to be suitable for families with children.

Concerning this first issue, there is a very real disconnect between the amount of financing available using tax credits and other loan programs and the monthly rental rates necessary to maintain these units. For example, under the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, developers apply for tax credits that can be sold (through a process called syndication) to provide funds to build rental units targeting specific income brackets—using a calculation based on a percentage of an area's median income (AMI).

For these units, rents are capped based on each household's size and income, and those rents are used to support project expenses over time, such as debt service, capital expenditures, maintenance, taxes, etc. Under the LIHTC program, the tax credits that can be leveraged in support of a unit for 30 percent AMI is the same as 40 percent, 50 percent, or 60 percent AMI. Thus, in order to create incentives for developers to build more units targeting extremely low income households (30 percent and below), additional subsidies must be made available to support operations and maintenance (O&M) expenses sustaining these properties over time.

Second, the housing market study referenced above points out a shortage of units for extremely low income households, but does not address the number of bedrooms—particularly in regard to families at-risk of experiencing homelessness. The second issue is a potential mismatch between unit size and household income—this is particularly concerning for extremely low-income households with children. To put this in perspective, an adult without children with the same income as a family with one or more children has a similar ability to pay for housing. However, in reality an individual's ability to support a family with children incurs additional costs as well.

While programs such as LIHTC do account for unit size and number of bedrooms in the allocation of tax credits, there is a very real question as to whether this accounting structure adequately addresses this gap (i.e. properly incentivizes the construction of units with multiple bedrooms). It would seem, though not readily apparent using current data, that one if not both of these primary concerns are contributing to the lack of extremely low-income units.

Efforts to Address Homelessness

There are several issues that reduce the system's efficacy and efficiency in supporting individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The first issue is the extent to which individuals and families at-risk of experiencing a housing crisis can be prevented or diverted from entering the system. A second issue is the complexity of meeting the needs of a wide range of populations entering the system. A third issue is the requirement for individuals and families to provide documentation to access services once in the system. Parts of the current system can be categorized as inefficient, non-existent (gap), or at overcapacity. In terms of the latter, this might reflect an inefficient or inappropriate use of program and/or funding that, if addressed, the results might help the system achieve greater balance.

When the State of Utah embarked on a campaign to end chronic homelessness in ten years, one of the key factors supporting this effort was the recognition that, by prioritizing high-cost populations, permanent supportive housing with wrap-around services were seen as a cost-effective solution.

However, for families with children, transitional and episodic populations, the question may be more about capacity building in meeting the targeted needs of those currently using the shelter for longer-than intended stays. With the current system, this is very likely a key contributor to the perception that the system is unbalanced. The inefficient use of existing resources can be viewed both in terms of gaps within the system as well as the inefficient allocation of resources for shelter use that does not best support stability in the long-term. For example, for individuals and families that can qualify for housing assistance, but where there is a lack of vouchers as well as lack of housing units that accept some if not all types housing vouchers, the likely result is that emergency shelters are relied upon for longer stays than what the shelter is intended to provide. This is one of several components that represent the strongest set of opportunities to consider in developing a strategy for addressing the homelessness challenge in the short-term.

In examining the alternatives to be considered, there exists a range of positive "Housing First" approaches supported by research and practice.[13] Permanent supportive housing represents the highest level of intervention, and it is best suited for individuals and families that fall under the definition of chronic homelessness.[14] These groups represent not only those with the greatest need in terms of wrap-around services, but are also the highest users of services in terms of per-capita shelter stays and other system touches.[15] At the other end of the spectrum, prevention through community-based programs such as Rapid Re-housing are a "lighter touch,"[16] and, if coordinated assessments are part of the system, this approach may occur before an individual or family actually becomes homeless. Such approaches are most suitable for those imminently at-risk of becoming homeless. In between these methods of intervention, emergency shelters can provide a housing option intended to be short in duration while exploring client-centered options such as diversion, relocation, and transitional rental assistance. Typically, those groups with episodic crisis events are well suited for this level of intervention.

Throughout Utah, and particularly within Salt Lake County, the long-term effort to address chronic homelessness has seen strong, positive outcomes in terms of greatly reducing its prevalence.[17] Success in this area has provided the opportunity to consider alternatives that can realign resources to prevent homelessness and support individuals and families, targeting specifically those imminently at-risk of becoming homeless. This is a recognition that the current system is at overcapacity due to emergency shelters being used as a longer-term intervention. Building system capacity that supports the at-risk populations may alleviate pressure in emergency shelters, and provide a better match between the needs of the population and level of service.

Should this focus be the identified strategy, it is important to understand the differences between the current and proposed system—some actions are short-term and support longer-term systemic changes. Longer-term actions can be best described as those that create additional capacity throughout the system, such as scattered-site, purpose-built facilities as well as increases in the stock of affordable housing at a variety of affordability rates. Short-term actions may include additional resources allocated towards programs such as Rapid Re-housing in the absence of a longer-term, sustainable system that has sufficient capacity to meet a wide range of needs for this population.

System Realignment

Salt Lake County is in the process of transitioning to a system of decentralized coordinated intake and access. The fundamental flaw of the centralized approach is that individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis cannot be served until they need emergency shelter. The current system responds primarily to the classifications discussed earlier and separates populations within the shelter. The shelter system serves two purposes: providing emergency shelter and directing individuals and families to appropriate resources. This places a burden not only on those experiencing homelessness, but it also creates the need for additional shelter resources and staff to support the pathways to stability through ongoing case management.

A coordinated intake system where there is "no wrong door" is the ultimate goal for meeting the needs of individuals and families across a large geography such as Salt Lake County.[18] In a decentralized coordinated entry system, individuals and families still must initiate and resolve their housing need, but there are additional support structures and just-in-time intervention points that can provide opportunities for prevention and diversion. In coordinated intake, a network of providers use standardized assessments to determine how to meet needs based on capacity throughout the system. This is ideal for large geographies where intake and assessment provide multiple pathways and a range of options, such as prevention, diversion, and rapid re-housing.[19] The path from shelter to stable housing is based upon meeting the needs of individuals and families for a range of needs and support mechanisms, but there are many more opportunities and points in time where prevention and/or diversion strategies could be applied.

For an individual or family experiencing a housing crisis, there are some key points in time at which preventative measures can be considered. Literal "prevention," or intervening at a point before a household loses their nighttime residence, requires the ability to identify those who are imminently at-risk and could potentially benefit from housing assistance. Research on the efficiency and effectiveness of preventative approaches is mixed—and it appears to depend on how the

intervention is designed. Term-limited, shallow funding that provides short-term relief is often compared with programs that provide longer-term housing assistance with supportive services.[20] For a one-time rental assistance program, the study of household outcomes found that 79 percent of people who received assistance retained housing while 71 percent of households who did not receive assistance also retained housing.[21] Other programs have been more promising, but studies often lack a counterfactual or ability to track recipients long-term. A potential pitfall in these studies is identifying households that will become homeless while not identifying those that will manage to avoid homelessness. Focusing on the development of criteria to establish who is *most at-risk* is one option to consider; another option is to use a "priority need" approach to defining groups, such as families and youth exiting foster care, for whom to prioritize resources.[22]

The Salt Lake County system has a strong foundation upon which additional improvements are achievable. It is important to note that Rapid Re-housing is a temporary program for individuals and families who are residing in emergency or transitional shelters or on the street and need temporary assistance in order to obtain housing and retain it.[23] While it may take a period of time to find a vacant unit where a household can be placed, the primary goals are to help individuals and families obtain permanent housing. This program does not require classes or other training for housing "readiness" or "suitability" while living in temporary housing—housing first is the primary strategy, acknowledging that some skills may be acquired over time. These programs are best suited for those who are currently homeless but have maintained some independent living conditions at some point in time. In addition, some will face challenges beyond economic hardship such as disabilities or chronic conditions, but most homeless households for which needs are established as appropriate for this type of intervention do not require permanent supports to remain in housing.[24]

Options for Addressing Gaps in Housing and Support Services

In order to achieve sustainability that supports the long-term stability of individuals and families experiencing homelessness, there are many indications that housing affordability is a central issue—particularly for extremely low-income units. Responding to this need is fundamentally about how to best align resources—primarily funding, but site location as well—that creates a sufficient stock of affordable housing units throughout Salt Lake County.

One of the primary questions facing Salt Lake County is how best to address affordability gaps in the short-term while creating a substantial pipeline that supports long-term stability across a range of household income levels. Even though State law requires cities in Utah to develop housing affordability plans,[25] these efforts have not been adequate to

address the gaps.[26] A current analysis of affordable housing could be useful —not only in terms of the number of units for targeted income levels, but one that analyzes the household sizes that can be accommodated at each level. Such study would establish baseline data not only in terms of actual unit counts but the locations as well. However, to provide immediate guidance for the short-term, several options or strategic alternatives are offered.

Strategic Option #1 – Development of Housing Services at Multiple Sites / Campuses

Salt Lake County has many opportunities to consider in terms of resolving problems and inefficiencies within the current system. The primary emergency shelter is over-capacity based on a variety of factors: first, there are individuals and families that are relying on the shelter as a medium- to long-term housing support; second, there are populations within the shelter that would be better served if physically separated. Families with children require a different level of service and set of support services than do adult males and females. The development of new, purpose-built facilities—each of which targets specific household types and need profiles—that provide housing and support services could alleviate capacity pressures at emergency shelters. There are many factors to take into account; however, one of the more important considerations is to identify where the co-location of housing and services are both effective and efficient, versus opportunities to leverage capacity and/or critical mass of support systems within the current system.

Strategic Option #2 – Targeting Gaps in Affordable Housing Development

There are some clear gaps or mismatches within the range of affordable housing units in Salt Lake County. The most pressing challenge is the very limited supply of units that are affordable for extremely low-income households, which may be attributed, in part, to insufficient incentives for developers and owners to provide these units. The 2013 data for Salt Lake County indicates 17.9 units for every 100 extremely low-income renters. There is a difference between what upfront versus continuation funds could support. In short, the cost of construction is roughly the same for units of the same size across affordability levels (i.e. taking into account per-unit caps for tax credit programs), but there may be insufficient incentive(s) to motivate developer construction of extremely low-income units. In particular, there may be some areas where there are substantial gaps (e.g. multi-bedroom units for extremely low-income renters) where the capital expenditures far exceed the gross potential income. To properly incentivize the construction of these units, a long-term commitment of set-aside funds may be required. For example, Rapid Re-housing programs require subsidies to meet market rate rent levels. In comparison, tax credits for new construction of extremely low income (ELI) households require a long-

term commitment to the developer for supporting ongoing operations and maintenance costs of the units. It is possible that the ongoing commitment of funds for tax credits on a per-unit basis could be lower, more sustainable, and able to serve a greater number of ELI households in a given year than Rapid Re-housing.

Strategic Option #3 – Allocate Resources to Housing Assistance Programs (Vouchers)

The strategic option that provides the most immediate relief is to allocate funds and resources to housing assistance programs. While this relies heavily on further developing relationships with landlords to encourage the use of housing assistance, this avoids the delay between the allocation of resources and the completion of capital projects. To further enhance this diversion/prevention approach, Salt Lake County could adopt the use of assessment tools to identify individuals and families most likely to succeed without support services provided within the homelessness services system (i.e. those that may already find their needs being met by mainstream systems). In this approach, however, Salt Lake County could find that significant ongoing commitments from public, private, and philanthropic partners are necessary to support housing stability in the absence of other capacity-focused alternatives.

Strategic Option #4 – Blended Model with Incremental Adjustments

Combining strategies in a multi-pronged approach may be both feasible and desirable such that (1) some funding is allocated for purpose-built facilities while (2) ongoing rental subsidies (e.g. Rapid Re-housing) bridge the gap in the absence of a sufficient supply of deeply affordable housing. Longer-term, if it is possible to resolve the mismatch between the supply and demand of affordable units, the alignment of the need for rental subsidies may be alleviated and shifted towards operations and maintenance subsidies. Further study of the economics of this alternative is needed.

To help alleviate these pressures, tailoring responses based on assessments of need and vulnerability for each population is considered a best practice.[27] These assessments are designed to be used by a range of providers—not simply a primary or centralized intake center—to assess the health and social needs of individuals and families to match appropriate support and housing interventions based on what is available currently within the system. As an example of how this can be put into practice, these assessment tools can help to determine whether an individual or family is a good candidate for diversion or prevention interventions (i.e. such as Rapid Re-housing) versus those populations that may be better suited for longer-term supportive housing solutions with wrap-around support services.

By alleviating pressures while at the same time identifying the demand for different types of housing supports (e.g. Rapid Re-housing versus scattered site shelter and long-term assistance-based housing facilities), it is possible to obtain greater clarity about the use of funds for capital projects. For lower-vulnerability populations, funds for Rapid Re-housing—which is based upon providing financial assistance for affordable and market-rate units—could be realigned over time to provide smaller subsidies if greater numbers of extremely low-income units are constructed. In short, higher per-unit subsidies may be reduced as subsidies for operations and maintenance of extremely low-income units are lower in comparison. For higher-vulnerability populations, understanding the need for purpose-built scattered site solutions may reveal how the economics of this need varies based on the populations served.

Summary

The Policy Institute has identified some of the foundational issues and challenges faced by the homelessness housing and services system in Salt Lake County. In some ways, the ability to be effective in reducing homelessness is limited by rigid definitions that can be barriers in accessing services; in other ways, the centralized orientation of the system is a challenge, especially given the large geography across which people seek assistance at a crisis point in time. Realigning and, potentially, reallocating resources to better serve those within the community will take time—as well as an ability to measure whether changes are effective.

There is a range of options to consider and a substantial amount of stakeholder input and support will be necessary to achieve some long-range outcomes. A key challenge facing decision makers is how to achieve the impact needed to sustain support over time.

To review, the Policy Institute has identified four options: (1) development of purpose-built homelessness housing facilities at multiple sites or campuses; (2) targeting gaps in affordable housing development; (3) allocating resources to bolster existing housing assistance efforts that focus on rapidly re-housing individuals and families; and (4) a blended model that incorporates some elements from each of the other options based upon an incremental approach. These are a starting point—to understand better how to assess the short- and long-term impacts of these options, more work is needed. In particular, a study on the affordability issue could be very insightful, not only in understanding where the system is mismatched at various affordability levels, but also in where these units exist throughout Salt Lake County. This provides a foundation for a second piece on the economic structure of the system as a whole; this could provide an understanding of the affordability component as well as the potential cost efficiencies that could be realized through the realignment and reallocation of resources over time.

Appendix A: Housing and Support Services

Housing Services

Emergency Shelters[28]

Organization	Eligible Population
Family Promise – Salt Lake	Single or 2-parent families with children
Rescue Haven	Single women
Rescue Mission	Single men (check in at 6 PM)
The Road Home	Single men, women, and families
South Valley Sanctuary	Female and male victims of domestic violence and their children
Youth Services	Crisis/shelter/transitional
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Female victims of domestic violence and their children

Transitional Housing[29]

Organization	Program Name	Eligible Population
Volunteers of America	Transition Home	Young men
Volunteers of America	Young Women's Transition Home	Women 16 to 19
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Kathleen Robison Huntsman Residential Self-Sufficiency Program	Female victims of domestic violence and their children
Salt Lake County Youth Services	Milestone Transitional Living Program	Young adults ages 18-21

Public Housing

Organization	Program Name	Units/Beds
Housing Authority of County of Salt Lake (HACSL)[32]	High Rise	149
HACSL	Valley Fair Village	100
HACSL	East	108

Public Housing (Continued)

Organization	Program Name	Units/Beds
Housing Authority of County of Salt Lake (HACSL)[32]	High Rise	149
HACSL	Valley Fair Village	100
HACSL	East	108
HACSL	West	138
HACSL	Scattered Site - HACSL	131
Salt Lake Housing Authority (SLCHA)	[Existing]	389
SLCHA	[New in 2016] (55 and Over)	112
SLCHA	[New in 2016] (Transitional Development)	68
HACSL	Housing Choice Vouchers	2,408
SLCHA	Housing Choice Vouchers	2,728
TOTAL		**6,331**

Support Services

Resident Services

Organization	Project Name	Eligible Population	Services	Metrics
Housing Authority of County of Salt Lake (**HACSL**)[32]	Bud Bailey Apartments	Families/Individuals	After school program for 5-12; tutoring for teens; ESL classes; +	136 apartments/ 414 people housed
HACSL	Housing Retention Program (HRP)	'At risk' Sec. 8 and Public Housing families	Case management to prevent homelessness	357 assessments; 227 received case management; 98% maintained subsidized housing
HACSL	Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS)	Sec. 8 and Public Housing Families	Long term case management to empower Sec. 8 and PH residents to increase self-reliance	245 families served; 11 households became self-sufficient; 6 purchased first home

Resident Services (Continued)

Organization	Project Name	Eligible Population	Services	Metrics
HACSL	Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (ROSS)	Sec. 8 and Public Housing Families	Help finding and maintaining employment	245 individuals served; 46 received 'in depth' case management
HACSL	Grace Mary Manor	Grace Mary Manor	On site services to unique populations who live there	
HACSL	Kelly Benson Apartments	Project residents	On site services to unique populations who live there	
HACSL	Too Good for Drugs and Violence Kids Program	Sec. 8 and Public Housing Families	Free after school programming to kids ages 5-12 on-site at HA public housing, and Bud Bailey Apts.	268 kids attended; 90% reported they will not use alcohol or drugs in future; 89% parents report seeing improvement in homework
HACSL	Leadership Resiliency Program	Teens 12-18	Goal setting, healthy relationships through weekly peer groups, twice monthly service learning & adventure activities	

Day Centers

Organization	Services
Catholic Community Services	Shower Laundry, phone, bag storage, haircuts, referrals to other assistance
Rescue Mission of Salt Lake City	Open 8 am to 6 pm during inclement weather

Medical, Dental and Counseling Services

Organization/Program	Services
Fourth Street Clinic	Medical
Salt Lake Donated Dental Services	Dental
Valley Behavioral Health Intake Line	Mental Health

Prepared Meals/Groceries

Organization	Meals	Days/Times
Eagle Ranch	Breakfast	7 – 11 am
Good Samaritan	Sack lunches	9 am to 8 pm daily
Rescue Mission	Breakfast Dinner	Monday-Saturday, 8 to 9 am Daily following 7 PM chapel service
St. Vincent DePaul Center	Lunch Dinner Brunch	Monday – Friday, 11:30 am to 1 pm Daily 5 to 6 pm Saturday, 10 to 11 am
Emergency food/ groceries	Food Pantries	Referral through 2-1-1

Appendix B: References

[1] Dennis Culhane and Metraux, Stephan. 2008. Rearranging the Deck Chairs or Reallocating the Lifeboats?: Homelessness Assistance and Its Alternatives. Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 74, No. 1. Direct quote that provides content on the institutionalization of emergency shelters over the past several decades. "Over time, public shelters have become institutionalized, drawing in vulnerable and marginally housed people. Many other social welfare institutions use this system as a regular and ongoing destination for clientele leaving their care. Residential programs for homeless families and single adults almost tripled between 1984 and 1988, and again more than doubled between 1988 and 1996 (Burt et al., 1999; HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, 1984, 1989). At each of these points, emergency shelter has accounted for smaller proportions of the overall shelter beds, with transitional housing programs (featuring longer stays and expanded availability of services) increasing over 60% since 1996 (Burt, 2006; Hoch, 2000; Wong, Park, & Nemon, 2006). Rather than crisis housing, shelters have become more rehabilitative, with households served for longer periods of time and at greater cost. Consequently, this expanding homelessness system cannot reduce the prevalence of homelessness because through its institutionalization it has increased the number of people who, for lack of better alternatives, turn to it for assistance and who remain in the system for increasing lengths of time."

[2] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2015. HMIS Data Standards, Version 3.1. Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Dictionary.pdf

[3] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2012. At Risk of Homelessness. Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/AtRiskofHomelessness-Definition_Criteria.pdf; Category 2 applies to an unaccompanied child or youth that does not qualify as homeless under the four primary categories, but does qualify under another federal statute; Category 3 applies to families with children and youth qualifying under section 752(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

[4] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2012. The Homeless Definition and Eligibility for SHP, SPC, and ESG. Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefEligibility%20_SHP_SPC_ESG.pdf

[5] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2012. Criteria and Recordkeeping Requirements for Defining Homeless. Available at https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

[6] "Salt Lake Area Homeless Resource List," Salt Lake County 2-1-1. Available at http://www.uw.org/211/resources/resources-by-need/oct-2015/salt-lake-area-homeless-resource-list-2015-en.pdf

[7] Interview with Pauline Zvonkovic, Utah Office of HUD, October 26, 2015.

[8] Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake (HACSL), 2014 Annual Report, http://www.hacsl.org/about/annual-report.

[9] Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake (HACSL), 2015 Annual PHA Plan and 2015-2020 5 Year PHA Plan, http://www.hacsl.org/about/annual-plan-for-fiscal-year-2011-2012

[10] Extremely Low-Income families are defined as (1) having an income that does not exceed the Federal poverty level or (2) 30 percent of Area Median Income. For additional information, see 24 CFR Parts 5, 943, and 982 in Section 238 of the 2014 Appropriations Act, which amends section 3 of the 1937 Act (42 U.S.C. 1437a)

[11] BBC Research & Consulting. 2013. Housing Market Study: Salt Lake City Corporation. Denver, CO.

[12] Urban Institute. 2015. The Housing Affordability Gap for Extremely Low-Income Renters in 2013. Washington, D.C.

[13] Housing First applies to both short- (i.e. Rapid Re-housing) and long-term (i.e. Permanent Supportive Housing) solutions, and it seeks to provide permanent, affordable housing as a first step that is followed by supportive services and community-based supports. It is considered an evidence-based practice by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. 2015. Housing First. USICH Solutions Database; available at http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/housing_first.

[14] Permanent Supportive Housing is considered an evidence-based practice and typically incorporates one or more related evidence-based practices in supportive services, such as Motivational Interviewing, Assertive Community Treatment, Illness Management and Recovery, etc. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. 2015. Rapid Re-Housing. USICH Solutions Database; available at http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/ permanent_supportive_housing.

[15] A significant number of studies and evaluations of supportive housing practices can be found online through the Corporation for Supportive Housing's website: http://www.csh.org/?custom-search-my-term=&post_type[]=resources&x=42&y=12&category[]=research-and-evaluation&s=CustomSearch&order=DESC

[16] United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. 2015. Rapid Re-Housing. USICH Solutions Database; available at http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/rapid_re_housing.

[17] Robert P. Butters, Sarver, C. M., Prince, K. C., and Worwood, E. B. 2014. Evaluation of the Chronic Homeless Services and Housing (CHSH) Project. Utah Criminal Justice Center, College of Social Work, University of Utah.

[18] See Abt Associates 12-14: for an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of centralized versus decentralization structures in the following areas: (1) intake for Rapid Re-housing; (2) housing barrier assessments; (3) financial assistance for re-housing; (4) housing locator/landlord recruitment; (5) stabilization supports for tenants and landlords; and (6) data management and evaluation.

[19] National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2011. One Way In: The Advantages of Introducing System-Wide Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families. Washington, D.C.

[20] Culhane, Dennis P., Metraux, Stephen and Byrne, Thomas. 2011. A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: a paradigm shift? Housing Policy Debate, 21: 2, 295 — 315

[21] Friedman, D. H., J. Raymond, et al. 2007. Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Housing Stability: A Comparative Analysis. In: Understanding Boston (series). Boston, The Boston Foundation; The Center for Social Policy, McCormack Graduate School at University of Massachusetts Boston.

[22] Culhane, Dennis P., Metraux, Stephen and Byrne, Thomas. 2011. A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: a paradigm shift? Housing Policy Debate, 21: 2, 295 — 315

[23] HUD Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing (RHRP) Notice, March 19, 2009.

[24] Abt Associates, Inc., Wherley, M., Albanese, T., Spellman, B. Holt, E., and Culhane, D. 2009. Rapid Re-Housing: Creating Programs that Work. Prepared for The National Alliance to End Homelessness. Washington, D.C.: 4

[25] House Bill 295, Providing Affordable Housing, became law in 1996.

[26] Wood, James. 2003. Affordable Housing in Utah Cities: New Construction, Building Fees, and Zoning. David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah.

[27] Some assessments or intake processes are composed of a simplified set of questions that address barriers to housing (see in particular intake assessments used by Alameda County, California). There are several validated tools that can be used to assess vulnerability; as assessments vary in length, those that are more in-depth can be perceived as higher in value the longer one remains in shelter. Currently, the VI-SP-DAT (Vulnerability Index & Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) is being examined as a potential means for assisting with the coordination of services in Salt Lake County. Depending on the assessment tool, there are a range of methods for validating their use in terms of individuals and families recidivating back into homeless situations. VI-SPDAT, for example, has resources that describe how its assessment tool has evolved in response to multi-site evaluations.

[28] "Salt Lake Area Homeless Resource List," Salt Lake County 2-1-1. Available at http://www.uw.org/211/resources/resources-by-need/oct-2015/salt-lake-area-homeless-resource-list-2015-en.pdf

[29] "Salt Lake Area Homeless Resource List," Salt Lake County 2-1-1. Available at http://www.uw.org/211/resources/resources-by-need/oct-2015/salt-lake-area-homeless-resource-list-2015-en.pdf

[30] Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake (HACSL). 2015. Annual PHA Plan and 2015-2020 5 Year PHA Plan. UT. Available at http://www.hacsl.org/about/annual-plan-for-fiscal-year-2011-2012

[31] Salt Lake City Housing Authority. 2015. Annual Plan. Available at http://www.haslcutah.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=50

[32] Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake (HACSL). 2014. Annual Report. Available at http://www.hacsl.org/about/annual-report