

Being the Bookends: Municipal Approaches to Addressing Homelessness

2023 APA PA Annual Conference
October 17, 2023 - 10:15am to 11:30am



Presenters:

Laura Collins, Director of Community & Economic Development - City of Bethlehem, PA

Janine Santoro, Director of Equity & Inclusion - City of Bethlehem, PA

Dr. Sherri Brokopp Binder, Executive Director - Ripple Community Inc.

Hannah Clark, AICP, Community Planning Manager - Design Hub by Michael Baker International

Today's Roadmap:

- Let's hear from you!
- Why a Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness?
- The Plan
- Site Suitability Analysis
- Lessons Learned & Next Steps
- Audience Q&A

Let's hear from you!

Go to Menti.com and enter **3235 6586** to provide
initial thoughts and feedback:



Why a Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness?

Regional Context



Regional Context

Point in Time Count

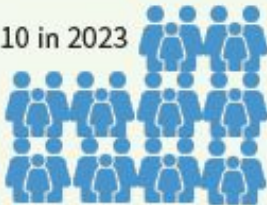
465 households made up of **686** people experiencing homelessness in 2023. This represents an overall decrease from 2022 of 15% in the number of households and 26% in number of people experiencing homelessness. However, there were noted increases in:

Chronically homeless families

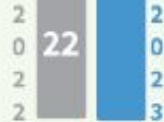
1 in 2020



10 in 2023



Individuals experiencing homelessness who are chronic substance abusers



Coordinated Entry System Registrations

Of the 33-county Eastern PA CoC, the Lehigh Valley (Northampton and Lehigh counties) made up **25% of the total CES registrations** in 2023.

1,570

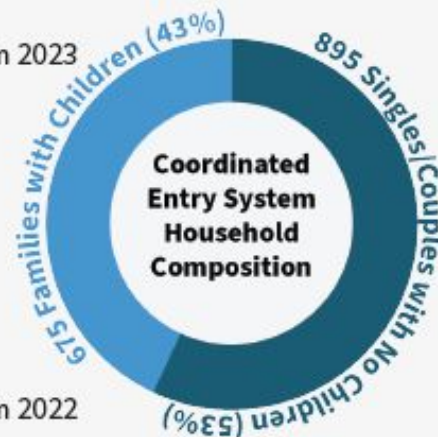
registrations in 2023



45% increase

1,086

registrations in 2022



In 2023 **ONLY 9%** (142 households) of the total enrolled in the Lehigh Valley RHAB (1570 households) exited to permanent housing.

Lived Experience Survey

In the summer of 2022, 107 individuals were interviewed at service provider sites:

- New Bethany Ministries
- Ripple Community Inc.
- Daybreak
- Free Laundry Night
(sponsored by St. Luke's Parish Nursing)
- Bethlehem Emergency
Sheltering - Weekend Lunch



This past winter,
what shelter services
did you use?

The most frequently visited
shelters were **Bethlehem
Emergency Shelter** and
Allentown Emergency Shelter

Have you ever chosen to
not stay at a shelter?

**45% of respondents have chosen
to not stay in a shelter, citing
reasons such as: Feeling unsafe,
feeling unwelcome, no option to
stay with partner/spouse/family,
no accommodation for pet(s)**

Have you ever been
turned away from a
shelter?

76% respondents **have never been turned away** when seeking shelter.

The **24%** of respondents who **have been turned away** cited reasons including: **shelter was too full, they arrived late, lack of ID, and/or a protocol violation**

The last time you were securely housed in a place you considered to be your home, why did you leave that home?

20% were **evicted** and/or **forced to leave due to crowding, condemnation, or landlord issues**

14% left due to **relationship conflict**

11% were **kicked out or ran away**

What is keeping you
from finding housing?

**42% cannot find a place they
can afford**

10% are on a waiting list

**9% have a physical disability
and can't find an accessible
apartment**

**6% lack an ID/proper
identification**

Where do you spend time during the day when the shelters are closed?

50% spend time at a **day program** like **Daybreak, Ripple Community Inc., etc.**

18% spend time **outside**

11% spend time at a **family member or friend's house**

8% spend time at **the library**

Bethlehem steps up

- The Lehigh Valley has no permanent year-round emergency shelter.
- The City of Bethlehem embarked on this study in early 2022, a year in which demand for sheltering jumped.

lehighvalleylive.com





Advertisement

News never stops. Neither do we. Support lehighvalleylive.com

Edged Out

Bethlehem needs a permanent homeless shelter. The city's studying how it could happen.

Updated: Mar. 02, 2022, 11:50 a.m. | Published: Mar. 02, 2022, 11:42 a.m.

NEW!

By [Sara K. Satullo](#) | For [lehighvalleylive.com](#)

[Bethlehem's](#) leaders agree the city needs a permanent homeless shelter. The question is where to locate it and how to make it happen.

[Bethlehem City Council](#) Tuesday night voted 6-1 to hire consultant Michael Baker International at a cost of \$84,690 to develop a strategic plan to address homelessness and study the potential for a year-round shelter. The firm will begin stakeholder outreach starting in April, said Mayor [J. William Reynolds](#).

The Lehigh Valley's existing housing shortage and the

Advertisement

The Challenge

- With growing housing insecurity, homeless service providers need more stability and support.
- The future of Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering's current location was uncertain.
- Is a privately-operated, year-round permanent homeless shelter feasible?

Major Considerations

- Must be a multi-site, regional approach
- Must strengthen existing services
- Affordable housing helps both prevent homelessness and transition individuals out of it.

The Plan

What we did:

- In 2022, the City initiated the Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness.
- We wanted to know if a built solution was feasible.
- 21 internal and external partners were interviewed to understand existing services.
- 107 individuals experiencing homelessness shared their lived experiences.
- Our regional roundtable on homelessness drew 18 municipalities, service providers, institutions and elected officials.
- We studied the Lehigh Valley's homelessness services pipeline to identify the best role for the City.

Interviews with Internal and External Stakeholders

- Consultant team interviewed 6 City Departments (internal stakeholders) and 15 service providers (external stakeholders).
- Interview Questions included:
 - Current and historical perspective on homelessness in Bethlehem and the larger Lehigh Valley region.
 - Key issues facing those currently experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability.
 - The support services, types of spaces, and amenities needed by those currently experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability.
 - Key factors to consider when evaluating where to build and operate a year-round emergency shelter.
 - Key external and regional partners who should be involved in this effort.

Regional Roundtable on Homelessness

Focus:

- Current context of homelessness in the Lehigh Valley.
- How participants are engaging with and supporting those experiencing homelessness in their communities and the larger region.
- Identifying common touch points and areas for collaboration.
- Chart a collaborative path forward that leverages regional partnerships.

Participants:

Municipal Partners:

- City of Bethlehem
- City of Allentown
- City of Easton

County Partners:

- Northampton County
- Lehigh County

Bethlehem Area School District

Service Providers:

- New Bethany Ministries
- Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering
- Lehigh Valley Regional Homeless Advisory Board (LV RHAB)

Institutions:

- Lehigh University
- Moravian University
- St. Luke's University Health Network
- Lehigh Valley Health Network

Elected Officials:

- Pa. Rep. Steve Samuelson
- Pa. Senator Lisa Boscola
- Pa. Rep. Jeanne McNeill
- Congresswoman Susan Wild

Historic Bethlehem

Lehigh Valley's Homeless Services Pipeline

Pathways to obtain shelter once someone is experiencing homelessness

A. Homelessness Prevention

- Rental Assistance
- Tenants' Rights
- Legal Aid
- Utility Assistance

B. Emergency Sheltering

- Facility intended to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations
- Best Practices include: Low-barrier and immediately available to anyone experiencing homelessness; Intake process should not be a part of this step

C. Intake Centers/ Services

- Register for Coordinated Entry into Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Or connect directly to other support services (Note – Not everyone makes it into the Coordinated Entry System)

D. Self-Directed Return to Housing

- Many people who become temporarily homeless do not need outside assistance to return to housing

E. Rapid Rehousing

- Housing identification (available units/ willing landlords)
- Flexible financial assistance
- Case management and services

F. Transitional Housing

- Some households may move through this intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing
- Service intensive
- 'Longer' stays (can range from 3 months to 3 years)

Long-term housing options fall along a spectrum of support and permanence

G. Permanent Supportive Housing

- Combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use

H. Affordable Housing Strategies

- Ultimately, most housing services are intended to return households to permanent affordable housing in the community

Homelessness Services Estimated Level of Need in the Lehigh Valley (2022)

A. Homelessness Prevention

- Need: 1,032 Households, an increase of 38% from 2022
- 2021 eviction rates (PA Housing Alliance): 5.6% in Northampton County and 9.5% in Lehigh County, significant increases since 2016 – 1.4% and 1.93% respectively

B. Emergency Sheltering

- Current inventory: 354 units with 41% of the units (144) only offered seasonally (i.e. winter months).
- BES served 241 un-duplicated guests in the 2022-23 season. They averaged 62 guests/night. They reported 9,355 bed nights, a 24% increase from the '21-22 season.

C. Intake Centers/ Services

- Need: 1570 households enrolled in CES/BNL (45% increase from 2022 - 1086 households)
- 69% of households (1086) enrolled via 211; 31% enrolled via access site (484)
- Identified Gap: Need for more walk-in intake centers/options

D. Self-Directed Return to Housing

E. Rapid Rehousing

- Current inventory: 92 units
- Need: 985 households
- Lehigh Valley RHAB's Rapid Rehousing capacity meets 9% of the total existing need

F. Transitional Housing

- Current inventory: 113 units
- The Lehigh Valley RHAB has the longest average length of stay on the By Name List (BNL) at 161 days. The LVRHAB also has the longest length of time on the BNL for a permanent housing exist (90 days).

Long-term housing options fall along a spectrum of support and permanence

G. Permanent Supportive Housing

- Current inventory: 244 units
- Need: 497 households, a 68% increase from 2022.

H. Affordable Housing Strategies

- LVPC estimates there is a deficit of 14,480 housing units for households with incomes under \$25K
- 3 out of every 10 households in the Lehigh Valley are considered cost-burdened, meaning they spend more 30% of their income on housing costs

What we learned:

- What the ideal Bethlehem shelter would look like.
- The capital and operating costs of different built solutions.
- The best locations based on service mapping.
- Potential funding sources and project phasing.

National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Best Practices for a Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter

THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Align shelter eligibility criteria, policies, and practices with a Housing First approach so that anyone experiencing homelessness can access shelter without prerequisites, make services voluntary, and assist people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

Provide diversion services to find safe and appropriate housing alternatives to entering shelter through problem-solving conversations, identifying community supports, and offering lighter touch solutions.



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS

Ensure immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7. Eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities.



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Focus services in shelter on assisting people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Measure data on percentage of exits to housing, average length of stay in shelter, and returns to homelessness to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve outcomes.

Based on best practices and level of need, the vision for the City of Bethlehem's permanent, year-round emergency shelter includes:

- **At least 50 non-congregant rooms**
- **Ten (10) family-sized units**
- **25 congregant emergency beds**
- **Single-stall showers**
- **Laundry facilities**
- **Commercial Kitchen**
- **Full-sized Lockers**
- **Day-time drop-in center**
- **Office space for Service Providers and Coordinated Entry System intake**

Costs by Structural Type for a 24/7 Year-Round Emergency Shelter

	New Construction	Rehab Shell	Rehab Existing Community Building	Rehab Hotel/Motel (i.e., structure with existing infrastructure)
Demolition	N/A	\$10/sq. ft.	\$5/sq. ft.	\$2/sq. ft.
Acquisition & Capital Construction	\$322/sq. ft.	\$292/sq. ft.	\$401/sq. ft.	\$256/sq. ft.
Operations & Maintenance	\$10k/bed/year	\$10k/bed/year	\$10k/bed/year	\$10k/bed/year

Cost Estimates for Operations & Maintenance

Expense Description	Cost Estimate Range (\$/Year)
Staffing (Salaries; benefits; training; taxes)	\$305,500 to \$427,700
Administrative Costs	\$106,700 to \$149,380
Utilities	\$41,700 to \$58,380
Maintenance	\$46,200 to \$64,680
Total	\$500,100 to \$700,140

Available Shelter Funding

- \$2 million allocated in City Budget
- \$1.4 million approved by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from HOME-ARP
- Additional funding will need to be raised from these potential sources:
 - CDBG
 - Continuum of Care
 - Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program
 - PHARE
 - Home4Good
 - Private, institutional, and philanthropic
 - Operator contributions to capital and operations

Potential Project Phasing

		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
PHASE DESCRIPTION		Acquisition	Bids for Design, Engineering, Construction & Formalize Operator Agreement	Rehabilitation & Construction	Operator Ramp Up	Launch All Operations
FUNDING SOURCES	ARPA Funds (2023 Budget)	●				
	HOME-ARP Funds (2023 Budget)	●	●	●		
	CDBG (inclusive of future CDBG, HOME allocations)		●	●		●
	Section 108 Loan (HUD)	●	●	●		
	Continuum of Care Funds				●	●
	PHARE				●	●
	Home4Good				●	●
	Private Funding (inclusive of health networks, institutions, local philanthropy)				●	●
	Operator Funding				●	●

Strategic Plan StoryMap & Site Suitability Analysis

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8d6a7372d9874ca1bd4561d7bdba9f18>

Where we are now:

- Ongoing collaboration with Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering and other service providers.
- Evaluating potential sites for a permanent, year-round emergency shelter.
- Working with an architect on a site feasibility analysis and cost estimating.
- Staying creative to meet congregate, non-congregate and family sheltering needs.

Lessons Learned

- Addressing homelessness requires looking at the **local and regional systems** that are **contributing to housing instability and homelessness**. Homelessness **does not respect municipal boundaries**, though it is **possible to effectively address homelessness at the municipal level**.
- **Homelessness is a social problem**, but it's **also a human one**. Appropriate responses must begin with a **deep understanding of the complex causes of homelessness and the lived experiences of our unsheltered neighbors**.
- A **key component of addressing homelessness is preventing housing instability** that can lead to loss of housing. Understanding **local market dynamics and housing affordability trends and supply** is a **huge part of preventing and mitigating homelessness and housing instability**.
- These efforts **required bold, sustained leadership and investment**. Building **municipal and regional champions is key**. Identifying and accessing **phased funding sources is key**. Facilitating a **dynamic process that can quickly respond to new opportunities and challenges is key**.
- **Opposition** to creating and sustaining permanent sheltering options **can and often will derail these efforts along the way**. **Overcoming** that opposition **requires resilience, constant coalition building where possible, and discretion**.

Q&A

Thank you!

Laura Collins, lcollins@bethlehem-pa.gov

Janine Santoro, jsantoro@bethlehem-pa.gov

Dr. Sherri Brokopp-Binder,
sbinder@ripplecommunityinc.org

Hannah Clark, hannah.clark@mbakerintl.com