



CITY OF DANBURY

155 DEER HILL AVENUE
DANBURY, CONNECTICUT 06810

DANBURY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

(203) 797-4625

March 25, 2009

The Honorable Mark D. Boughton, Mayor
Honorable Members of the Common Council
155 Deer Hill Avenue
Danbury, CT 06810

RE: Proposed Revisions To Danbury's Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness

Dear Mayor Boughton and Council Members:

Respectfully submitted for your review and approval are the attached recommendations of the Danbury Housing Partnership for revisions to the Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness adopted by the Common Council in March of 2006. This request is submitted pursuant to Section 10-76 (5) of the Code of Ordinances that directs the Partnership to propose to the Mayor and the Common Council for review and approval any revisions to the Ten-Year Plan determined to be necessary to effectively meet the endorsed aim of eliminating chronic and long-term homelessness.

The proposed recommendations reflect the experience and judgment gained by the Housing Partnership during the two years of its efforts to oversee implementation of the Ten-Year Plan. The proposals fall into two main categories: the first being additions to the Plan reflecting new strategies, initiatives and best practice models that were developed after adoption of the original document by the Council in 2006. These additions will allow the Partnership to expand its efforts to address homelessness by incorporating new ideas and strategies that were not yet in existence when the original Mayor's Taskforce developed Danbury's plan.

The second category of proposals involves revisions to specific recommendations in the original plan or to the timetable for their implementation. The need for these revisions arose either from changes in best practice models, changes in recommended strategies, difficulties in implementing recommendations as proposed or the discovery of alternative ideas for accomplishing the intent of the original recommendation. Sadly, while the Partnership continues to aggressively implement the Ten-Year Plan we must also recognize that the severe economic recession we are experiencing has made it difficult to complete some of the recommended tasks according to the timetables set forth in the original Ten-Year Plan. The intent of these revisions is to ensure that Danbury's Ten-Year Plan remains a living document incorporating the latest information and best practices available to meet our goal of ending homelessness in our community.

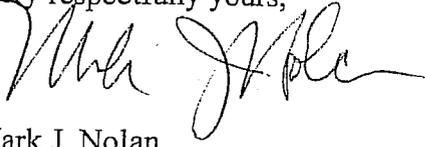
Mark D. Boughton, Mayor

(2)

March 25, 2009

We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to continuing to work with you to end homelessness in our community and create affordable housing opportunities for our residents.

Very respectfully yours,



Mark J. Nolan
Chair

Cc: M. Carolyn Sistrunk, Vice-Chair
Susan Zaborowski, Secretary
Hon. Jean Natale, City Clerk

**Danbury Housing Partnership
155 Deer Hill Avenue
Danbury, Connecticut 06810**

Recommended Revisions To Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness

The Danbury Housing Partnership is charged under Section 10-76 of the Danbury Code of Ordinances to take measures necessary to implement the Plan To End Homelessness in Ten Years as adopted by the Common Council of the City of Danbury in March of 2006, as the same may be amended from time to time, subject to the availability of resources in any given budget year. As part of its responsibility to oversee implementation of the Ten-Year Plan, the Partnership is also charged under Section 10-76(5) to propose to the Mayor and the Common Council for review and approval any revisions to the plan determined to be necessary to effectively meet the endorsed aim of eliminating chronic and long term homelessness.

The Partnership commenced its oversight responsibilities in April, 2007 and has worked since then in concert with our community partners to implement the recommendations in the plan. As part of its charge, the Partnership reviewed the recommended tasks in Danbury's Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness as adopted by the Danbury Common Council in 2006 and considered recommended additions to the plan as well as revisions to existing tasks. These recommendations were arrived at after careful consideration and were based on the Partnership's two years of experience in implementing the plan and researching current best practices and strategies for addressing homelessness.

The recommendations are divided into two main categories. The first category includes proposed additions to the plan primarily reflecting new strategies and concepts that were developed during the period since the original plan was developed by the Mayor's Taskforce and adopted by the Common Council. The second category includes revisions to specific recommendations in the plan based on the Partnership's experience in attempting to implement the recommendations. The Partnership also notes that although we have been fortunate to make great progress to date, we must recognize that the economic downturn has impacted the ability of the Partnership and its community partners to meet the timetables in the original plan as envisioned by the original Taskforce.

The Danbury Housing Partnership respectfully requests that the Common Council approve the following additions and revisions to Danbury's Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness. We believe that these changes will help ensure that Danbury's plan remains a working document incorporating the latest ideas and strategies available to address the issue of homelessness in our community.

PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE TEN-YEAR PLAN:

- Fund and support Project Homeless Connect as a proven strategy to (1) directly address the needs of people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and (2) to create community awareness of the issues involved with homelessness. Timetable: On-going, Years 3-10.

Rationale: Project Homeless Connect became a nation-wide initiative to provide services and create awareness of the issue of homelessness following the creation of Danbury's plan. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted and promoted the Project Homeless Connect model as an excellent next step for Ten-Year Plan communities to kick-start implementation of their plans and to bring people directly into contact with needed services and housing assistance. Danbury's Continuum of Care took the lead in partnership with the Danbury Housing Partnership to organize and conduct Danbury's First Annual Project Homeless Connect in December, 2007. The growth in financial and community support for the second event this past December demonstrates that Project Homeless Connect has firmly established itself as an effective mechanism for connecting people with services and creating support for efforts to end homelessness.

- Establish the Partnership Celebration Breakfast as an annual event to galvanize community support for efforts to address homelessness and create affordable housing. Timetable: On-going, Years 3-10.

Rationale: The Danbury Housing Partnership conducted its first Celebration Breakfast in October, 2008. Almost three hundred guests attended, providing an excellent opportunity for the Partnership to publicize the efforts of the Partnership and our many community partners to address homelessness and create affordable housing. The event featured presentations on Danbury's Housing For Heroes initiative and the unveiling of a new video on Danbury's Project Homeless Connect. The event was highlighted by the presentation of the first annual Danbury Housing Partnership awards recognizing individuals and agencies in the community for their efforts to address homelessness and provide affordable housing opportunities. The event also raised funds for the new Danbury Housing Partnership Fund which was used this year to support Project Homeless Connect.

- Support the Danbury Housing Partnership Awards in order to recognize and encourage efforts to address homelessness and create affordable housing. Timetable: On-going, Years 3-10.

Rationale: The Danbury Housing Partnership Awards were established to recognize extraordinary efforts on the part of individuals, businesses and agencies

to further the aims of the Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness; to create affordable housing or to provide services needed in the community. The goal of the awards is to encourage further efforts through the public recognition of good works and to expand public awareness of the need to address homelessness, produce affordable housing and foster sound community development.

- Create affordable housing opportunities for seniors to address and prevent homelessness among seniors and free up larger “empty nester” homes as potential housing for families.
Timetable: Years 3-5.

Rationale: The addition of this recommendation will ensure that the need to provide affordable housing for seniors is made an integral part of the Ten-Year Plan and help integrate the Partnership’s efforts to address both homelessness and the identified need for affordable housing opportunities for seniors. The need for affordable housing for seniors should be part of a comprehensive effort to address homelessness and create affordable housing in the community.

- Create a comprehensive campaign to re-message homelessness and communicate the need for work force housing and senior housing in the region. Take the campaign throughout the region to create awareness of the need for affordable housing and raise funds in support of efforts to end homelessness and create affordable housing.
Timetable: Year 3.

Rationale: The proposed addition will allow the Partnership to develop and implement a comprehensive campaign to “re-message homelessness” based on the model developed by the U.S. Interagency Council On Homelessness subsequent to the adoption of the Danbury’s Ten-Year Plan. The initiative will enable the chair to be pro-active in increase awareness of the efforts to address homelessness, of the need to create affordable housing on a regional basis and to raise funds in support of our efforts.

- Investigate the suitability and potential of the State’s Housing Incentive Option legislation as a strategy to create affordable housing in Danbury and as an opportunity to work cooperatively with our HVCEO neighbors on addressing affordable housing regionally.
Timetable: Year 3.

Rationale: The proposed addition addresses the State’s Housing Incentive Option legislation based on the HOMEConnecticut initiative which was not adopted until after the creation of Danbury’s Ten-Year Plan. The legislation provides for financial incentives to municipalities that create zones with increased densities for Incentive Housing Developments providing for a designated

percentage of affordable housing units. The HVCEO Greater Danbury Housing Market Assessment included a description of the program and recommended that HVCEO members consider participation.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE TEN-YEAR PLAN:

- **General: Revise, re-organize and integrate the multiple recommendations in the original plan dealing with transitional housing. Address the issue of transitional housing creation in a comprehensive but concise manner and establish realistic timetable for implementation of remaining goals in years 3-10.**
- Year 1, Pg. 11. “Establish a relationship between the local chamber of commerce and the continuum of care.” **CHANGE TO:**

“Establish a relationship between the local chamber of commerce and the Danbury Housing Partnership.”

The change is requested since it is the Danbury Housing Partnership (rather than the Continuum of Care) that is charged with implementing the Ten-Year Plan and addressing affordable housing needs. The Continuum of Care is represented on the Partnership by Co-Chair Milena Sangut and works collaboratively with the Partnership.

- Year 1, Pg 8: “Consider requiring the setting aside of a portion of housing units in a development for long-term retention as affordable housing through deed restrictions or, in lieu thereof, making of payments into a municipal housing trust fund to be used for constructing, rehabilitating or repairing housing affordable to persons and families of low and moderate income”

Proposed for postponement until later in the Ten-Year Plan period due to current economic conditions and to allow consideration of the State’s Incentive Housing Option legislation as an alternative or complementary means of achieving the creation of affordable housing. Consideration will also be given to applying for a Technical Assistance grant from DECD to assist in creation of an appropriate incentive zone should the City decide to pursue this program depending on the availability of funding being available in the State budget. HVCEO’s Greater Danbury Housing Market Assessment recommends that all HVCEO communities pursue the Housing Incentive Option, creating an opportunity to jointly address affordable housing on a regional basis. Propose for re-consideration in year 4.

- Year 1, Pg 8: “Engage philanthropy, governmental (state and local) and other funding sources to craft a flexible grant program tied to the development of permanent supportive housing units.

www.danburyhousingpartnership.org

Proposed for postponement until years 5 – 10 in the period covered by the Ten-Year Plan due to the current economic downturn. The State has suspended funding projects under its Next Steps Supportive Housing Program and the creation of such a program is beyond local capabilities at this time. The Partnership will continue efforts to persuade the State to fund the development of permanent supportive housing units as well as to make the Next Steps Program more flexible and user-friendly. Currently the Next Steps Program has requirements that make it difficult to utilize, particularly for organizations looking to do their first development. The Partnership advocates that the program should provide grants in addition to loans, that the requirement to use the Low Income Tax Credit Program as part of the development be eliminated and that the program provide assistance and funding to assist organizations develop proposals and plans. The City will continue to consider financial support for supportive housing projects through its CDBG program. The Partnership will also continue to develop partnerships on the local level to encourage the development of supportive housing.

- Year 2, Pg 9: “Develop loan program for small multi-family properties to upgrade and refurbish.”

Proposed for postponement until later in the ten-year period covered by the plan: years 5 – 10. It is unlikely that an ongoing rehabilitation program can be sustained at this time due to the lack of a sufficient local funding source. The City’s current CDBG allocation from HUD is not sufficient to support a housing rehabilitation program and would require a significant increase in beyond what is currently proposed under the Federal stimulus plan and Federal budget. In the interim, the community should continue efforts to take advantage of existing State-funded programs such as LAMPP lead abatement funding, energy conservation funds, CHIF funds and other available sources.

- Year 1, Pg 11 & Year 2, Pg 12: “Establish emergency shelter housing beds for intact families.” **CHANGE TO:**

“Develop and implement a comprehensive homeless prevention and rapid re-housing plan to address the housing needs of intact families in a holistic manner. This will include a system or facility to provide for the emergency housing needs of intact families along with supportive services and re-housing assistance.”

Addressing the emergency housing needs of intact families through the creation of shelter beds is no longer recognized as an acceptable practice. The proposed revision will allow the Partnership to continue its research into best practice

models for addressing the emergency housing needs of families and develop a comprehensive plan based on these models. The Social and Supportive Services Committee has designated addressing this issue as a major priority for action. The revision also allows for incorporation by the Partnership of "rapid re-housing" strategies that have come into prominence as recognized and effective best practice models since the adoption of Danbury's Ten-Year Plan. A comprehensive approach to this issue will include a range of homeless prevention, supportive services and re-housing assistance that will be suited to meet the emergency housing needs of families.

- Year 2, Pg. 10: "Establish Temporary Monthly Rental Subsidies Fund with funds garnered in year one and fund 20 individuals in and 10 families in permanent housing in years 2-5."

Proposed for postponement until later in the Ten-Year Plan period due to current economic conditions: years 5 -10. It should also be recognized that it may be beyond the financial and administrative capability of a locality to develop such a program locally without significant State and Federal investment such as in the Section 8 program.

- Year 2, Pg 8: "Explore and encourage expansion of existing partnerships between non-profit agencies and private developers through workshops to increase awareness of financial incentives and funding availability for permanent housing." **CHANGE TO:**

"Encourage and facilitate partnerships between non-profits, government and private developers to pursue affordable housing funding and create transitional, supportive and permanent affordable housing."

While workshops, such as that put on by the Housing Development Fund during year one, have been conducted and are useful, there are many different ways to encourage partnerships that the Partnership should and has pursued. The proposed revisions seeks to expand this recommendation by allowing the Partnership to work to encourage partnerships through a variety of means: including meetings, personal contacts, workshops, focus groups and the establishment of workgroups like the Veterans Housing Workgroup that brought together both non-profit and for-profit developers to create transitional and permanent housing for veterans. The Housing Partnership will work to encourage partnerships to produce affordable and supportive housing through the efforts of its chairs, of the Housing and Community Development Committee and the work of its support staff.

- Year 2, Pg 9: "Create educational programs for land use officials regarding the removal of barriers to affordable housing." **CHANGE TO:**

“Create awareness of the need for, and benefits of, affordable housing through the chair’s outreach initiative, consideration of the State’s Housing Incentive Option legislation and implementation of HUD’s Model Barriers Review Process.”

The Public Relations, Marketing and Education Committee reviewed this recommendation and concluded that it was more applicable to surrounding communities that provide more limited land use options for development of multi-family and affordable housing than does Danbury. The committee’s proposed revision is intended to expand the target audience beyond just land use officials and to allow for alternative methods of creating awareness of the need for affordable housing and the important links between housing, jobs and community development. The committee will also review HUD’s national models for evaluating whether barriers to affordable housing exist and determine which, if any, apply to Danbury. Timetable: Year 3 and on-going.

- Year 2, Pg 8: “Explore partnerships with educational institutions to offer classes on services and management of supportive housing.” **CHANGE TO:**

“Build capacity of area agencies to effectively manage supportive housing and provide required supportive services in a residential setting through participation in training and educational programs.”

Chairman Mark Nolan has initiated a partnership with Western Connecticut State University to collaborate on efforts to address homelessness and educate the community about homelessness. The first public event arising from this partnership will be Westconn’s Annual Beatrice K. Nemzer Social Work Symposium on April 15, 2009 which will be devoted to the issue of homelessness and will include presentations on successful strategies to develop and manage supportive housing. Further efforts at collaboration are being explored by Chairman Nolan in cooperation with Westconn. While the original recommendation in the Ten-Year Plan is being successfully implemented, the proposed revision is intended to expand the original language to allow for on-going training and education outside of a classroom setting to include workshops, workgroups, internships or other collaborative efforts providing the opportunity for real-world training and capacity building regarding supportive services and supportive housing. Timetable: Year 3 and on-going.