

**Date:** September 27, 2021

**To:** Mark Israelson, City Manager

**From:** Lori F. Schwarz, Director of Neighborhood Services  
Shanette Eaden, Housing and Community Services Manager

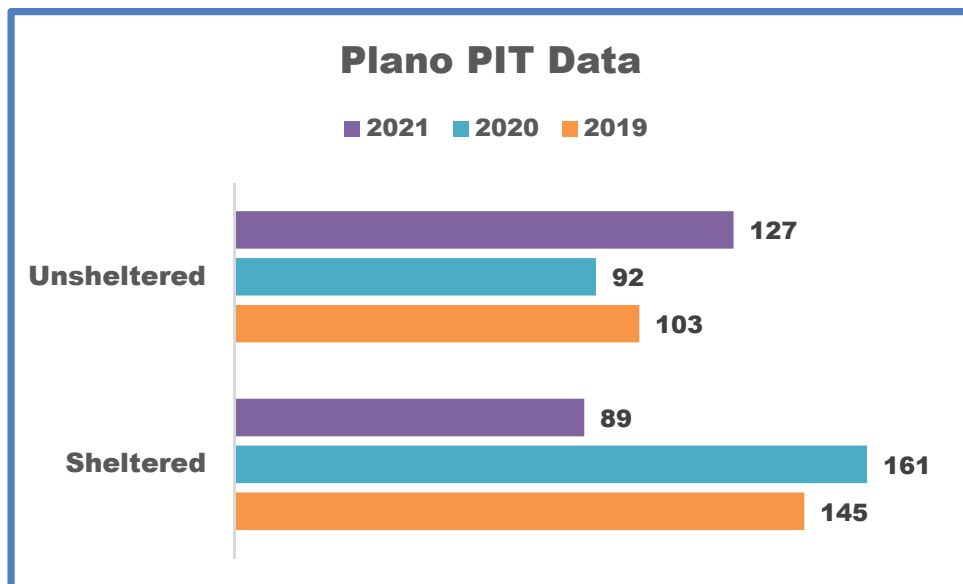
**Subject:** City of Plano Homeless Efforts

## **PURPOSE:**

This document provides an update on the state of homelessness and actions taken by City staff to address related challenges within our community. Additionally, staff seeks to receive direction on 1) strategies to educate the community on homelessness and 2) acceptable activities to explore for the expenditure of Home Investment Partnerships Investment American Recovery Plan (HOME-ARP) funds.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Annually, the City of Plano is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct an annual "Point in Time"(PIT) census as a one night, point-in-time, snap-shot into the homeless population within the city of Plano. The PIT happens at the same time period across the region. The below chart depicts PIT homeless numbers for the past three years.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and inclement weather experienced in February 2021, the 2021 PIT survey questions, and resulting data, was limited in comparison to previous years. In 2021, homeless individuals were asked their race, ethnicity, household size, and their veteran and chronic homelessness status. In years prior to COVID, homeless individuals were also asked social determinant questions, including but not limited to: their mental and physical health status, employment status, and reasons for becoming homeless.

HUD considers individuals and families sleeping in a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation (i.e. vehicles, abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) as “unsheltered” homeless. Likewise, persons living in buildings designated for temporary living arrangements (i.e. congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations) are “sheltered” homeless. In the 2020 PIT, 50% of the unsheltered population were employed. Of those employed, 9% worked full-time. Likewise, the 2019 PIT, 54% of the unsheltered population were employed, and 33% of those employed worked full-time.

Although not fully depicted in the above charts, the Plano Independent School District (PISD) served homeless students during the 2020-2021 school year. Per PISD staff, 460 students were identified as homeless during the year. Approximately 100 families were in shelters, while the vast majority stayed “doubled-up” in housing. Also, 100 students resided in hotels/motels as their permanent home.

**Pre-Pandemic Homeless Programming Overview**

The City of Plano utilizes U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), State Homeless Housing and Services Program (HHSP), and the City of Plano’s Buffington Community Services Grants (BCSG) to provide shelter to homeless and financial housing assistance to those at-risk of homelessness. Below are a list of the pre-pandemic programs that the City supports.

<b>Service Type</b>	<b>Description of Service</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>	<b>Funding Type</b>
<b>Homelessness Prevention</b>	Emergency rent and utility assistance for a maximum of three consecutive months		
		City of Plano Program administered by the Assistance Center of Collin County	CDBG (\$122,000)
<b>Rapid Rehousing</b>	Individual housing, case management, and support services for homeless, typically lasting 12-15 months to assist the person in becoming self sufficient		
		City of Plano Program administered by City House Inc.	HHSP (\$183,880)
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	Shared housing, case management, and support services for homeless typically lasting 12-24 months		
		Agape Resource and Assistance Center	CDBG (\$54,000)
		City House Inc.	BCSG (\$20,659)
		Samaritan Inn	BCSG (\$70,000)
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	Group sheltering and case management typically lasting 0-90 days		
		Texas Muslim Women’s Foundation	CDBG (42,000)
		Hope’s Door New Beginnings	BCSG (\$17,500)

## **COVID-related Programming**

In response to the effects of COVID-19 on households, the federal government provided additional funds to municipalities to assist those at-risk of homelessness, as well as those that are homeless. The City of Plano received Community Development Block Grant-Corona Virus (CDBG-CV) funds from HUD. The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) also allocated a portion of its CDBG-CV funds to the City to provide rental assistance to residents for up to six months.

Additionally, HUD revised their HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) fund regulations, which allowed communities to utilize these funds to house homeless persons affected by COVID-19. The U.S. Department of Treasury also allocated Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds to provide rent and utility assistance for up to fifteen months. Below are the additional programs created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>Service Type</b>	<b>Description of Service</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>	<b>Funding Type (Funded Amount)</b>
<b>Homelessness Prevention</b>	Mortgage and utility assistance for up to six months. Hotel/motel assistance for up to three months	City of Plano Program administered by the Assistance Center of Collin County	CDBG-CV and CDBG (\$1,405,408)
<b>Homelessness Prevention</b>	Rent and utility assistance for up to twelve months, with a possible extension of three additional months	City of Plano Emergency Rental Assistance Program administered by Catholic Charities of Dallas	TDHCA-CDBG-CV and ERAP (\$15,873,187)
<b>Tenant-based Rental Assistance</b>	Individual housing, case management, and support services for homeless and those living in hotel/motels paid by outside agencies, typically lasting 12 months to assist the person in becoming self-sufficient	City of Plano Program administered by Volunteers of America, North Texas Region	HOME (\$312,740)
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	Group sheltering using COVID-19 protocols for overnight shelter	Plano Overnight Warming Shelter (POWS)	CDBG-CV (\$102,275)
<b>Emergency Housing Voucher Case Management</b>	Case management for homeless domestic violence survivors receiving Emergency Housing Vouchers	Hope's Door New Beginnings	CDBG-CV and CDBG (\$100,000)
		Texas Muslim Women's Foundation	CDBG-CV and CDBG (\$100,000)

## Unallocated COVID-19 Program Funds

The City of Plano was allocated \$1,988,051, in HOME Investment Partnerships American Recovery Plan (HOME-ARP) funds. HUD has not issued the implementing notice for these funds. However, their preliminary spending guidelines state that funds can be utilized to assist homeless and those at-risk of homelessness in the following four activities:

1. Production or preservation of affordable housing;
2. Purchase or development of non-congregate shelter;
3. Tenant-based rental assistance; and,
4. Support services, including homeless prevention services and housing counseling

## Existing Homeless Interaction Network Structure

The City of Plano participates in an active homeless network that begins within the organization and extends to the county and regional levels. In FY 2020-21, City staff were added to the Neighborhood Services department and re-assigned within the Police Department to address rising homeless concerns.

The Neighborhood Services department added the positions of Homeless Services Coordinator and Housing and Community Services Coordinator to perform street outreach activities and assist homeless in gaining access to homeless programs administered by the City and outside organizations. The Police Department reassigned two Neighborhood Police Officers and one Sergeant to assist in addressing homeless concerns by taking a pro-active, problem-solving approach when responding to active homeless calls. The Police Department team also serves as a liaison for the Neighborhood Services department and provides enforcement for those individuals who continue to commit crimes. In addition, both departments work collaboratively to ensure the annual PIT takes place in a safe manner.

Outside of the PIT, city staff from the departments of Environmental Health and Sustainability, Fire, Libraries, Neighborhood Services, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Safety Communications meet monthly to address department-specific homeless issues, as well as coordinate strategies that address cross-departmental concerns. Quarterly, executive team members from these departments, as well as the Communications and Community Outreach department, City Attorney and City Manager offices meet to discuss the implementation of the city's overall homeless strategy. Moreover, City staff have an active presence within the county and regional levels when addressing homelessness.

The Neighborhood Services and Police departments attend monthly Collin County Homeless Coalition (CCHC) meetings. The CCHC membership includes nonprofit and faith-based organizations, along with homeless advocates and city staff who focus on solving homelessness within Collin County. Neighborhood Services staff work collaboratively with CCHC leadership to provide program information and advice on countywide homeless issues.

Regionally, Neighborhood Services staff are also active participants in the Dallas Continuum of Care, a collaborative group of nonprofits organizations focused on addressing homelessness on a regional level through the use of HUD Continuum of Care and State Emergency Solutions Grant funding. Neighborhood Services staff work with the lead agency, Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, to ensure the needs of homeless residents in Plano and the Collin County are considered when making regional decisions.

## How The City Assists Those Experiencing Homelessness

The first approach to addressing homelessness is prevention. As shown in previous tables, the City's Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) provides financial housing assistance to residents by paying housing and utility costs necessary to keep people in their existing home. City staff measure the effectiveness of the program by surveying program participants at the 90- day and 12-month periods after

receiving assistance. In FY 2019-2020, 80% of program participants were surveyed. The results of the survey as are follows:

1. 100% remained housed for 90 days after receiving assistance, and
2. 90% of those surveyed continued to remain stably housed 12-months after receiving assistance.

For those unable to prevent their homelessness, Neighborhood Services staff work to connect them with social services. Services range from access to housing through a City or regional program, to providing food and hygiene kits that include a homeless resource guide. Although COVID limited access to hospitals, city staff will assist homeless individuals admitted to the hospital, when contacted by the facility staff.

Outside of responding to calls for services, Neighborhood Services staff have dedicated street outreach three times a week and one Saturday each month to interact with and help homeless residents. Additionally, staff spend Wednesday afternoons at Harrington Library to assist residents that are homeless, or at-risk of homelessness, that are library patrons. At times, services needed by homeless residents are not located in Collin County. In such situations, City staff contact an agency within Dallas-Fort Worth area that can assist the homeless individuals(s) and provide a DART pass to travel there.

On average, Neighborhood Services staff have from 40 to 60 homeless encounters per month. All homeless encounters are entered into the regional Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) under the City's Street Outreach Program. This serves as a unified database that can be searched by all regional partners when assisting homeless persons.

Entry into HMIS does not equate to a homeless resident giving permission to be placed on the region's Housing Priority List (HPL); however, it is the first step to assisting a homeless resident with obtaining housing. Many HMIS participating agencies that provide housing obtain their participants from the regional HPL. City staff work with homeless residents to gain their trust and, subsequently, their permission to be entered into the HPL.

Occasionally, homeless residents are concerned about the possibility of having to move from Plano to a different city to obtain housing, if selected from the HPL. In these instances, city staff work with nonprofit partners to obtain temporary housing in Plano, while waiting for assistance through the City's Tenant-based Rental Assistance (TBRA) or Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs. Both City programs experience delays in housing homeless residents due to the lack of affordable rental units within the city.

The City of Plano and the City of McKinney have the only RRH programs for the general homeless population in Collin County and both programs are for residents living within their respective cities. Currently, the City's RRH has a waitlist and the City's TBRA program is for homeless people that can document that they have been affected by COVID. For those that cannot prove they have been affected by COVID, the RRH is only local program that can provide them with a rental unit in their name.

Moreover, Collin County does not have an emergency shelter for the general homeless population. The city of Plano serves as home to the only emergency homeless shelters in Collin County, which are for youth (City House Inc.), and survivors of domestic violence (Hope's Door New Beginnings and Texas Muslim Women's Foundation). This lack of low-barrier housing for the general homeless population adds to the visibility of single homeless men and women on the streets. Additionally, homeless families that have not experienced domestic violence, do not have an emergency shelter in Collin County.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

Staff is requesting direction on 1) a community-wide homeless education strategy and 2) preference of options listed below to further explore for the use of HOME-ARP funds.

### **Community-wide Education Strategy**

Currently, staff is working to create an internal Homeless Dashboard that informs collaborating departments of homeless statistics monthly. This data will help departments make data-driven decisions as it relates to actions that may affect homeless people and/or areas where the data shows additional resources need to be assigned. Staff is requesting feedback regarding the options below to educate the community on the issue of homelessness and what they can do to best help.

#### **Action 1: Outward Facing Homeless Dashboard**

This tool is similar to the internal dashboard that staff is developing. It would provide monthly interactive data on Plano's homeless population.

#### **Action 2: Community-wide Homeless Education Campaign**

City staff including Neighborhood Services, Fire, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Safety Communications and Communications and Community Outreach departments would collaborate to establish a frame work for a community public education campaign on homelessness. The campaign would focus on informing the public of the following:

- a) The City's role in addressing homelessness;
- b) Who to call if a non-emergency homeless concern arises;
- c) When law enforcement actions can be taken; and,
- d) What to do and/or what not to do when if you encounter a homeless individual.

Under the guidance and direction of the Communications and Community Outreach Department, the education campaign would be introduced to both residents and business owners.

#### **Action 3: Homeless Reporting Application**

Sometimes 9-1-1 calls are made when a homeless individual is seen, although there is not a danger being posed to one's life, health, or safety. Moreover, there may be instances where the individual witnessing the concern may not have time to stop and call a non-emergency line or know the correct telephone number to call. This application seeks to solve the "where or who to call" question. Similar to "Fix-It Plano," the location and homeless concern would be submitted for the appropriate staff to address. Concerns can be submitted anonymously or with a request for an update.

### **Options for the use of HOME-ARP funds**

As stated above, the City of Plano has \$1,988,051 in unallocated HOME-ARP funds. These funds must be used to provide affordable housing to homeless persons, including but not limited to non-congregate sheltering and tenant-based rental assistance.

#### **Action 1 - Hotel conversion to affordable housing units for homeless**

City staff will explore existing hotels/motels suitable for conversion of two separate sites for homeless housing using grant funds; one for general population and one for families. Each building would have a small place for "triage" of those coming directly off the street, but unable to move into a newly created housing unit. Using a RFP process, staff would seek a developer to assist with the conversion. A separate RFP would solicit a nonprofit organization to operate, manage, and provide case management services in the newly created housing. Staff would also explore a financing partnership with the Plano Housing Authority to assist with the conversion financing.

Action 2 – Tenant Based Rental Assistance

Using the City's existing TBRA program as a framework, city staff would use an RFP process to select an additional nonprofit organization to administer the program for homeless. May be used in conjunction with other action solutions or a stand-alone option.

Action 3 – Hotel conversion to non-congregate emergency shelter

As an alternate to Action 1, City staff will look into conversion to an emergency shelter only.

Action 4 - Individualized "Community Circle" Approach without the use of HOME-ARP funding

If the City chooses not to utilize HOME-ARP funds, this option is an incremental approach to addressing the immediate needs of homeless residents. Other federal monies for housing would be an option, if available. However, creation of housing units would be a more proactive approach.

Using the list of homeless persons entered into City's Street Outreach Program in HMIS, city staff would create a "Community Circle" made up of Plano nonprofit and faith-based organizations that offer specific services that meet the needs of the individual. The Community Circle would meet weekly to assist the individual, one person at a time. This results oriented group will assist the homeless person until they are stably housed.

xc:            Jack Carr, Deputy City Manager  
                  Greg Rushin, Deputy City Manager  
                  Ed Drain, Police Chief  
                  Charles Heasley, Police Sergeant



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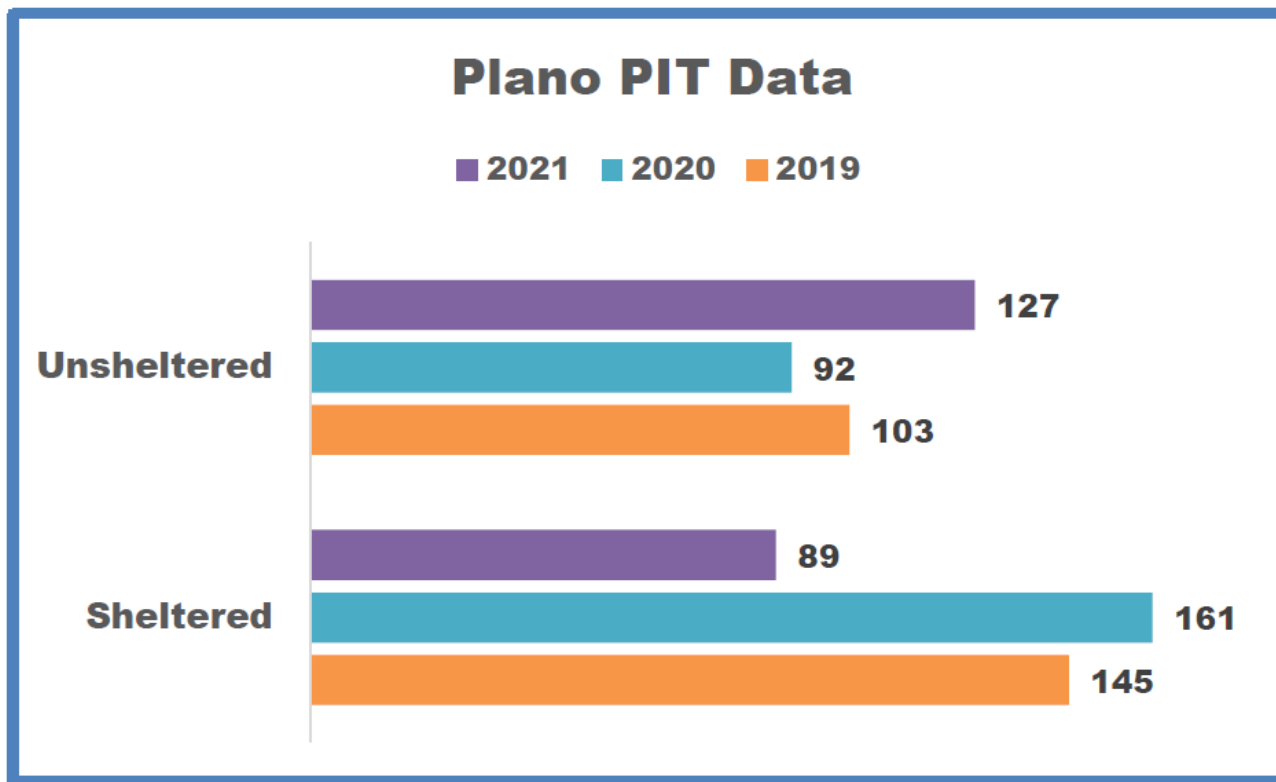
## **City of Plano Homeless Actions**

Shanette Eaden, Housing and Community Services Manager

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# State of Homeless in Plano



# Outward Facing Homeless Dashboard

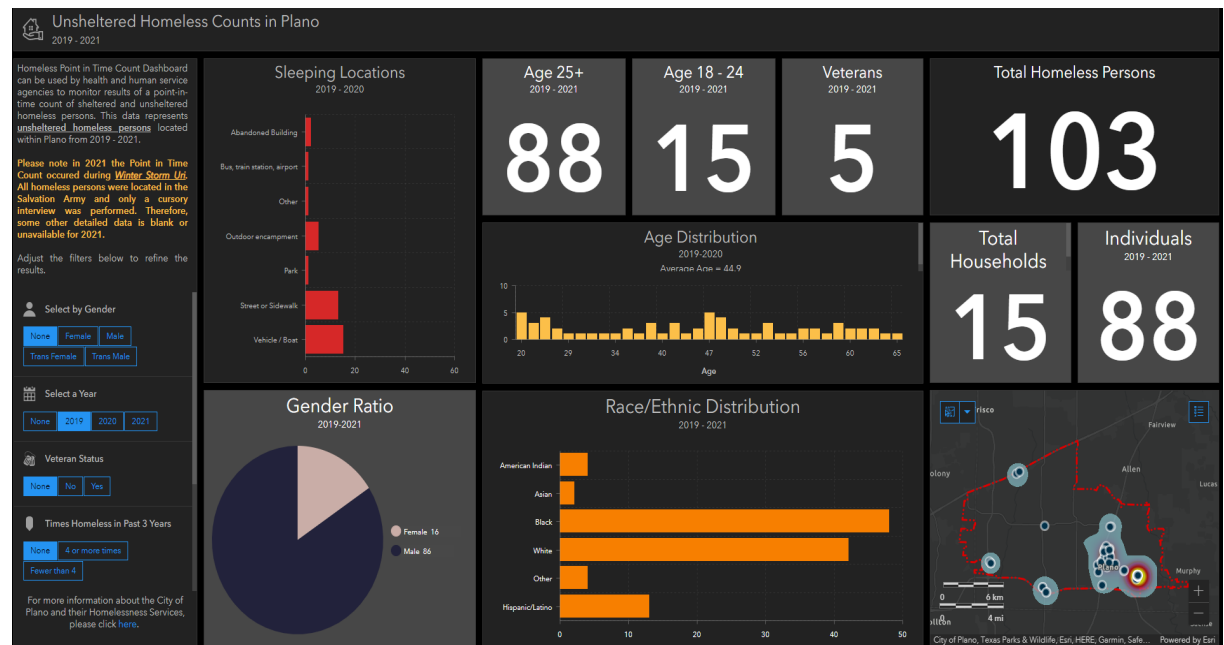
## Community-wide Education Strategy – Action 1

### Pros:

- Provides data to the public
- Explains Plano's homeless
- Assists in guiding external and internal decision making
- Software is in place

### Cons:

- Data updated annually at this time
- Inconsistent demographic data



# Community-wide Homeless Education Campaign

## Community-wide Education Strategy – Action 2

### Pros:

- Answers resident questions (i.e. “What should I do when I see a homeless person”)
- Increases public awareness of the City’s Role in Homelessness
- Frames the dialogue

### Cons:

- Time sensitive
- Increased staff time



# Homeless Reporting Application

## Community-wide Education Strategy – Action 3

### Pros:

- Non-emergency reporting
- Ease of reporting
- Geographic location

### Cons:

- Staff weekend availability
- Limited services

#### Homeless Activity Reporters

##### Activity Observed\*

The type of homeless activity observed

Individual

Camp Site

Bus Stop

Other

##### Details

##### Observed On\*

##### Observed On\*

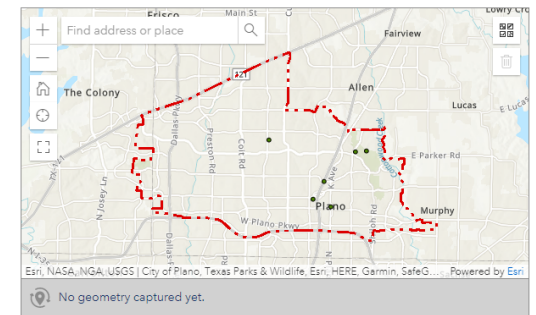
##### Would you like to be contacted for more information?\*

Yes

No

##### Observed At\*

Identify the location where you observed homeless activity



Submit



# HOME-ARP Funds

## Allowable Activities:

- Production or preservation of affordable housing;
- Purchase or development of non-congregate shelter;
- Tenant-based rental assistance; and
- Support services, including homelessness prevention services and housing counseling



# Hotel Conversion to Affordable Housing Units

Use of HOME-ARP Funds – Action 1

## **Pros:**

- Creates housing for homeless individuals and families
- Allows for the creation of rental history
- Provides a long-term solution for homeless residents to become self-sufficient
- Operated by a non-profit agency
- Onsite services
- Provides a triage for those in need of emergency housing

## **Cons:**

- State approval required
- On-going operational costs



# Tenant Based Rental Assistance

Use of HOME-ARP Funds – Action 2

## Pros:

- Provides financial housing support for homeless individuals and families
- Operated by a non-profit agency
- Provides location choice

## Cons:

- Availability of affordable units for rent
- Off-site support services
- More intensive administration due to scattered locations



# Hotel Conversion to Non-congregate Emergency Shelter

## Use of HOME-ARP Funds – Action 3

### **Pros:**

- Provides emergency shelter homeless individuals and families
- Operated by a non-profit agency
- On-site services
- Provides location choice

### **Cons:**

- Temporary housing solution
- State approval required
- On-going operational costs





# Individualized “Community Circle”

Does not require the use of HOME-ARP Funds – Action 4

## **Pros:**

- Focuses on one homeless individual or family at a time
- Utilizes nonprofit and/or faith-based service providers
- Creates a sense of community support for homeless persons

## **Cons:**

- Relies on other housing programs to obtain housing
- No dedicated case manager
- Incremental approach





# Plano

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## Questions and Discussion

