



## **CITY OF BOULDER DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

### **STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: HOMELESS SERVICES & SYSTEMS ANALYSIS**

**DRAFT: 21 MARCH 2017**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In November of 2016, the City of Boulder convened a Homelessness Workgroup (Workgroup) tasked with addressing the issue of a long-term emergency sheltering and services model in Boulder, including city homelessness housing targets. The issue of emergency shelter has reached a critical point in Boulder; due to lack of clear policies on who the system is designed to serve, funding limitations, lack of a comprehensive and coordinated system of services, and that space previously offered to operate day and night overflow shelter is no longer available. The community now needs to formulate a crisis response strategy, as the emergency “overflow” night sheltering and day shelter will likely not be available after April of 2017.

While the City is faced with responding to the short-term crisis issue of emergency shelter capacity, it also viewed this as an opportunity to not just look at emergency shelter in Boulder in isolation, but rather to analyze the effectiveness of the homeless services system in the broader county-wide and regional context in order to inform strategic decisions that ensure the system serves the community efficiently and effectively, and moves people back into permanent housing solutions as quickly as possible.

## *A New Strategic Framework*

New investments alone will not be enough for Boulder to visibly reduce the number of people sleeping outdoors. Stakeholders & Workgroup members universally acknowledge that the current homeless system is confusing and inequitable. The housing and service package a client ultimately receives is largely dependent on where a person enters the system and the case manager assigned to assist. The Strategic Framework and recommendations laid out in this report provides a road map to re-orient stakeholders towards a more transparent, integrated “systems approach”. This systems approach has also been articulated in the City’s Homelessness Strategy Framework and the Boulder County Ten-Year Plan to Address Homelessness (Ten-Year Plan).

In addition to the strategic framework that will serve as a roadmap for a re-envisioned homeless assistance system in the long-term, the Workgroup has also incorporated recommendations and action steps to respond to the short-term crisis of reduced emergency shelter capacity.

The new homeless system design is guided by a shared set of underlying principles that embrace national best practice and incorporate feedback from the Workgroup and extended regional stakeholders through a community process supported by City staff and CSH between January and April 2017.

Key to this new systems approach is the creation and implementation of coordinated entry, which requires a standardized, community-wide assessment tool(s) and process and participation by all housing and emergency service providers within a community. Coordinated Entry is recognized as a best practice and is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for communities to receive federal homeless funding. Coordinated Entry will help the homeless system match clients to appropriate housing interventions, create transparency in the prioritization of resources, and establish clearer pathways and “flow” out of homelessness.

Improved data systems will also be key to Boulder’s community approach. As evidenced by the work done by CSH, data about homelessness in Boulder exists in multiple, disjointed systems with varying degrees of reliability and

usefulness. The County Department of Housing and Human Services (HHS) will soon have the capacity to open its data warehouse and case management platform to an array of service providers in both the City and Boulder County.

With this system, HHS and its constituents will be able to monitor coordinated entry performance through data dashboards. With this data, the community will be better positioned to adopt a set of success metrics around system performance, provider and program performance, and overall quality improvement.

#### *Next Steps*

Importantly, part of the Strategic Framework includes a project management tool, which provides detailed action items labeled with specific roles and responsibilities. These details are essential and will be implemented in a phased approach in collaboration with key stakeholders. This report also surfaces questions that need to be addressed and provides direction as the community approaches major decision points. The Strategic Framework identifies short-term recommendations and strategies to respond to the emergency sheltering crisis (crisis response) and names long-term goals for new housing and services needed to address homelessness. It is meant to be a "living document" that will be updated regularly as new and better data become available.

To this end, key next steps include the following:

#### *Crisis-response:*

- Prioritize the use of Emergency Shelter and temporary housing beds by offering year-round availability with services offered on site and during the day, to ensure they complement coordinated entry and system flow to rapidly place high-system utilizers in housing and reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets. This does not include the expansion of existing low-barrier shelter beds.
- Co-locate day service within an **existing space in** community, and if possible with established safety net services to ensure they complement coordinated entry and system flow to divert light touch system utilizers and keep people in (or reconnect them with) housing; this may also serve as emergency health and safety overflow shelter.

#### *System Re-design:*

- Design and implement coordinated entry starting with the VI-SPDAT suite of assessment tools; include a stakeholder process to refine assessment tool (s) for each sub-population and establish standard operating procedures
- Utilize existing HHS data warehouse and case management platform for data integration and access to housing resources
- As improved data becomes available, ensure better coordination and effective service delivery and case management through the use of better data and CQI
- Develop a plan for scaling housing interventions in alignment with established milestones and existing analysis (e.g. City homeless housing investments, Regional Affordable Housing Plan, Boulder County Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) study, workgroup data analysis – pace of placements over 3 years)
- Create a structure for county-wide system governance and monitoring with a primary decision making body; integrate with the Ten-Year Plan Board for countywide coordinated entry system.

# INTRODUCTION

**VISION STATEMENT HERE**—From City of Boulder/Workgroup

The City's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan is the primary driver for the workgroup and its associated goals; however direction was given to the Workgroup to ensure that the new Strategic Framework and crisis-response strategies support and integrate with the county-wide system as articulated in the [Ten-Year Plan](#). This report is to enhance the City's Homelessness Strategy in conjunction with and complementary to building the county-wide coordinated system. More information on the City's current homeless strategy can be found [here](#).

In addition to the two plans noted above, several other local plans and reports were included as part of the analysis and recommendations for crisis response and Strategic Framework in Boulder to ensure alignment with regional efforts. Each of these reports included alignment with the Strategic Framework outlined here, including:

Report:	Alignment with Strategic Framework:
Boulder County Regional Affordable Housing Plan (Draft) <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal to increase the number of new permanently affordable housing units including those available to extremely low-income households</li></ul>
Boulder County Permanent Supportive Housing Study <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identified need in the region to provide Permanent Supportive Housing for <i>at least</i> 225 households</li><li>• Recommends the use of a coordinated entry system in order to achieve PSH placements</li></ul>
IBM Smarter Cities Challenge Report <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommends the use of an integrated data platform using the framework developed by Boulder County HHS</li><li>• Recommends expanding coordinated assessment and establishing coordinated data entry</li></ul>
Longmont Homeless Services Assessment <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommends the use of a coordinated entry system and a shared database across all agencies</li></ul>

This work has been guided by a shared set of guiding principles established by the workgroup to provide the overarching vision for the approach to the crisis response new strategic framework. These Workgroup guiding principles include:

- **ACCESS:** *The homelessness assistance system is open & inclusive, transparent, consistent, and easy-to use; includes solutions from the perspective of those with lived experiences of homelessness*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/hhs/draft-plan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/cs/boco\\_housingstudy2016.pdf](http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/cs/boco_housingstudy2016.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://mdhi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SCC-Denver-Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> A copy of the Longmont assessment can be requested here: **XX**

- **PERMANENT HOUSING:** *The homelessness assistance system is a strength-based approach with a Housing First approach emphasized; the system is able to meet diverse housing needs and provide efficient delivery across providers*
- **DATA-DRIVEN:** *The system is sized appropriately to take into account need and prioritize investment; policy and service decisions are evidence-based and data-informed and oriented toward results*
- **REGIONAL:** *Local implementation of emergency services is integrated into the countywide and regional system and consistent with the City of Boulder's long-term affordable housing goals*
- **SUSTAINABLE:** *The over-arching goal of the homeless services system is to connect those entering with stable housing; the system is scalable and able to leverage state and national resources; the system aligns with community needs and values*
- **SYSTEMS-CHANGE:** *The system will be re-envisioned to be bolder, looking beyond agencies and programs, and using new ideas and best practices openly*

## Methodology

The City of Boulder (City) contracted with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) to conduct analysis to support the development of the Strategic Framework and action plan. CSH's process had four key components:

### 1. Mapping of the Existing and Proposed Homeless System

Reviewing and analyzing data from homeless service providers and community partners, CSH designed a map of the existing homeless response system for a range of interventions including emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing for the overall Strategic Framework. The system map illustrates how individuals and families currently enter the homeless response system and where there may be gaps and bottlenecks in the system. In order to improve client flow from homelessness into permanent housing, CSH developed several design scenarios for proposed re-envisioned system— illustrating key opportunities for improving throughput in the system for a range of homeless subpopulations. A complete list of services providers that were contacted and a summary of the data included for the system map can be found in the Appendix.

### 2. Workgroup facilitation

CSH facilitated and shared its analysis and system maps of the existing and proposed systems with the City and Workgroup members during regular meetings held two times per month, including representation from homeless and formerly homeless individuals. Additionally, CSH engaged Workgroup members outside of meetings to help with local data analysis and elicit feedback. CSH's Workgroup facilitation also included one full-day work session to focus on Coordinated Entry design. These Workgroup meetings served as an opportunity to vet early concepts of the Strategic Framework and establish common understanding about the guiding principles and goals for the City. Based on feedback from City staff and Workgroup members, CSH refined its analysis on shelter and day services demand and design scenarios. A complete list of workgroup meetings and members can be found in the Appendix.

### 3. Calculating Annualized Need

To determine the annual demand for homeless housing and services in Boulder, CSH first used the 2015 Boulder Point-In-Time Count (PIT) to compare the numbers of sheltered single adults to the total number of sheltered households (both single adults and families in Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing). This comparison produced a multiplier that could then be applied to the sheltered single adult PIT count to calculate an annualized sheltered homeless count for single adults. This same comparison was applied to

unsheltered single adults, sheltered families and unsheltered families from the PIT count to find multipliers for each subpopulation, which were used to calculate the annualized homeless count for each. A base multiplier from HUD was used to annualize the chronically homeless numbers from the PIT. Adding the subpopulations together, the total annualized sheltered number, annualized unsheltered number, and annualized chronically homeless number, calculated using the PIT, were then used as the annual demand for homeless services in Boulder. This report recognizes that the PIT is not without limitations--inherently PIT undercounts the homeless population as it is unable to measure the “hidden” homeless population and relies on volunteers to find those experiencing homelessness on a given night in January. However, the PIT was used here as a starting place to estimate demand because it was the data source available as a proxy for those experiencing homelessness across populations including: single adults, chronically homeless, and families (including chronically homeless families).

Because of the PIT limitations and the fact that the Workgroup was primarily focused on the emergency shelter demand and utilization, CSH also used a data analysis between the emergency shelter providers and Boulder County Housing and Human Services (HHS) that was completed prior to the establishment of the Workgroup. This analysis, which mapped shelter utilization, intake, and demographic data across providers, was critical in determining initial projections regarding emergency shelter capacity and housing targets.

#### 4. **Unit Projections**

Using the information in the System Map and CSH’s Projection Tool, CSH created a projection for “right-sizing” the City of Boulder system with a balance of interventions (diversion, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and temporary places to stay) that addresses the needs of households experiencing homelessness in the county. The projections will show the current system mix as it relates to a new, more strategic system mix. To address the crisis response strategy, CSH also completed an analysis on shelter demand and capacity in conjunction with system re-design recommendations.

The final version of the Strategic Framework offers short-term (crisis response) and long-term goals and benchmarks to guide the City’s activities to reduce homelessness which balances long-term housing goals with the appropriate emergency response level needed. Most importantly, the final version of the Strategic Framework reinforces Boulder’s priorities to transform the City’s homeless response system by adopting a greater focus on permanent housing outcomes; building on the culture of client-centered services within the City’s system of care; continuing to move toward a fully coordinated countywide system with greater equity and transparency; and ending homelessness for the most vulnerable.

## **System Design Principles**

The new homeless system design is guided by a set of underlying principles that embrace national best practice and incorporate feedback received from Workgroup members. Together, these designs present a cohesive vision and strategy across the entire system that values transparency, equity, and a client-centered approach. The system design principles are as follows:

- Aims to create “throughput” or system “flow” to reduce the length of time that people experience homelessness and to maximize permanent housing placements
- Establishes clear goals based on data analysis

- Identifies gaps within the system and projects housing interventions needed to bring resources to scale to meet the goals
- Assumes that the system will operate on a single data system to maximize coordination and positive outcomes
- Embraces Coordinated Entry as a key service for better alignment of resources and improvement of client experience

### *1. Role of Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing*

The Strategic Framework anticipates that the role of emergency shelter and transitional housing will shift to support coordinated entry. The Workgroup's shelter utilization data analysis pointed to the primary challenge of how the current system is functioning in that only about 20% of the emergency shelter population is using over 80% of the capacity and resources. The completed local data mapping efforts confirmed that about 80% of individuals utilizing emergency shelter were averaging 8 nights per year or less in shelter, while about 20% of individuals accounted for the heaviest shelter utilization, with the highest users averaging more than 190 nights in shelter per year. Using this local shelter utilization data CSH completed further analysis (detailed below) to demonstrate that by shifting temporary housing options (emergency shelter and transitional housing) to target those individuals with the highest levels of utilization that are not able to resolve their homelessness and exit the system without significant support, Boulder can create an intentional path out of homelessness for individuals.

Specifically, emergency shelter and transitional housing will need to shift to a model where:

- The beds/capacity are prioritized for high-utilizers.
- The services offered within emergency shelter are geared toward connection to permanent housing in the shortest amount of time possible, this includes navigation to a supportive housing unit or connection to income/supports to allow for self-resolution.
  - For example, eligibility criteria for emergency shelter will consider assessment factors that indicate an individual is likely to be a high utilizer/high need and a reservation system is developed to transition those waiting for placement or taking longer to self-resolve in a transitional housing bed.
- This is a departure from the current model where emergency shelter services is offered daily to individuals on a first come first serve basis. To accommodate this model, the coordinated entry system is critical; including an assessment method for identifying high need/high utilizer individuals and matching them to either shelter or emergency beds.

The Workgroup also aims to develop a crisis-response strategy that will:

- Account for the closure of the emergency overflow shelter and the time it takes to maximize current emergency shelter capacity and add new permanent housing placements into the system.
- Anticipate the use of existing space and safety net services and that the role of day services will shift to support coordinated entry and diversion services.
  - Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/closing-the-front-door>



- Leverage existing space and safety net service to allow for more investment in permanent housing resources, therefore CSH is not recommending the investment of capital funds in purchasing or re-purposing an existing facility for additional temporary/emergency shelter solutions.

## ***2. Coordinated Entry as a Key Strategy***

Coordinated entry systems are designed to create a more seamless way for people experiencing a housing crisis to access appropriate housing and services. Coordinated entry is a system, both procedural and technological, whereby clients access housing resources through the same process regardless of entry point. Individuals and families are assessed by their level of risk and or need, using a common assessment tool, and based on their scoring access the same pool of shared housing resources across the community.

Similar to other communities without fully implemented coordinated entry, CSH's analysis showed that within Boulder's current system, a household's ultimate permanent housing placement is largely dependent on where a client enters the system. There is extremely limited housing stock, as well as multiple gatekeepers for interim and permanent housing placements, each with different priorities. In order to access permanent housing a client must access multiple waitlists. These waitlists and the current approach are largely "program-driven" rather than "system-driven;" this approach ultimately creates bottlenecks, reduces collective impact, and wastes human resources.

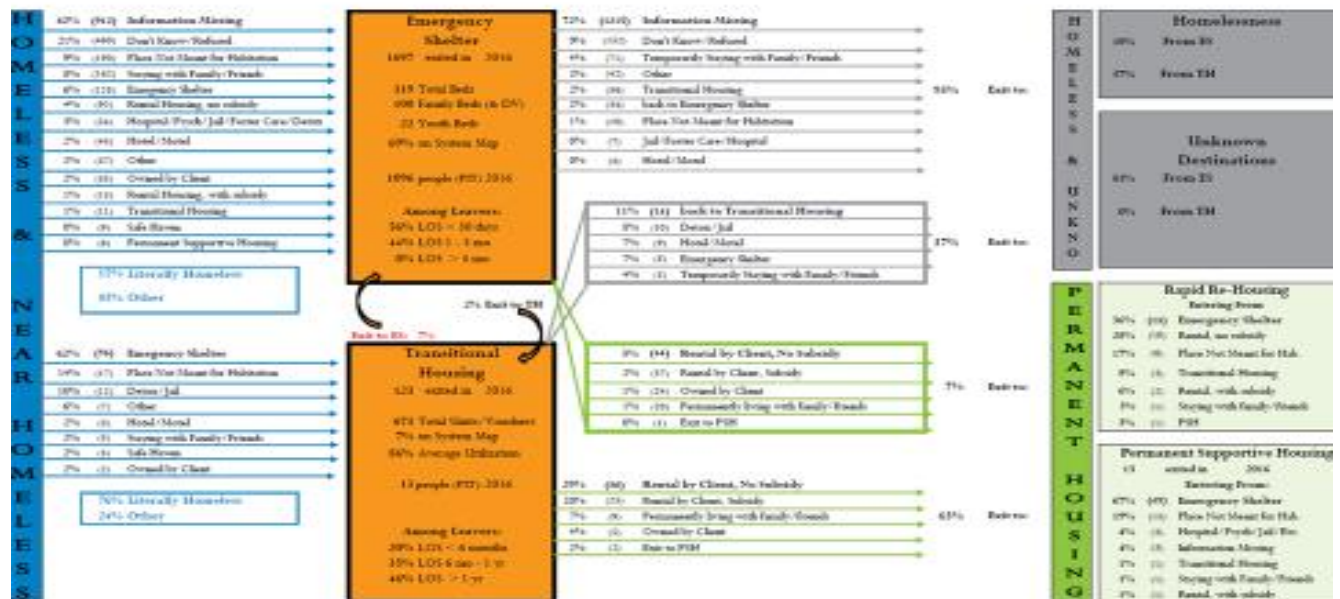
Once implemented, coordinated entry will create defined pathways. Coordinated entry should be able to move clients between programs if a particular housing placement is not successful. A single system waitlist will match resources based on community-adopted tools and a decision-making matrix to maximize positive exits out of homelessness. Additionally, outreach and other front door workers will be reconfigured to support the new design and complement the overall coordinated entry operation. Key next steps for implementing coordinated entry include establishing a coordinated entry workgroup to implement shared outcomes, begin piloting with a shared assessment tool across providers, and a set of standard program models, and business rules.

## ***3. Continuous Quality Improvement and Data Refinement***

Within HHS's single data system for coordinated entry, the City will be able to monitor system performance through data dashboards consistent with countywide performance measurement. With this data, the community will be better positioned to adopt a set of success metrics around system performance, provider and program performance, client outcomes, overall quality improvement and test assumptions. For example, the workgroup has been led through analysis of how to prioritize emergency shelter and transitional housing capacity based on demand assumptions from system utilization data. With reliable, consistent exit data from across the service system and use of a common tool to assess need, the stakeholder will be able to continually test and refine demand assumptions to ensure the right amount of resources are available and distributed within the system.

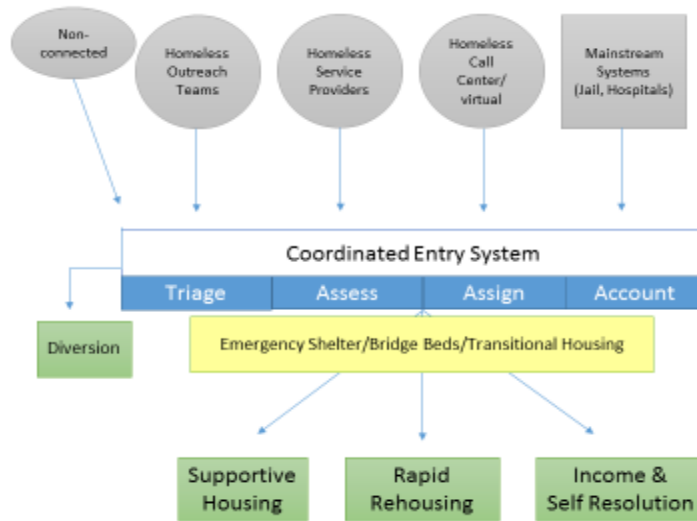
## **System Analysis & Conclusions**

To both formulate a crisis-response and create a new Strategic Framework, CSH led the City and the Workgroup through a review and analysis of the current system by creating a system map from community partners and service providers which illustrated how people are entering and exiting the homeless system.



A detailed version of the system map can be found in the Appendix. From the systems map, the Workgroup was able to see there was not coordinated flow in or out of the system for households experiencing homelessness. In particular, providers are largely not currently collecting entry and exit data, so it is difficult to know if households are exiting the system into stable housing, or maybe could have been diverted from the system to begin with. Data from the systems map also suggested that individuals were not able to move on to more permanent situations; for example many exits from temporary/transitional housing were into another temporary or transitional housing placement.

After reviewing the systems map, CSH led the Workgroup through an exercise asking members to re-envision the system from what it was currently to how it would look if it was functioning in the most effective way possible for those experiencing homelessness. The Workgroup reached a consensus on the system illustrated below:



The workgroup also noted important components of the re-envisioned system, including:

- System entry-points can be physical sites in the community, or virtual- for example, workgroup members envisioned the system to have the ability to complete assessments using a common database and/or a call center such as 211.
- Outcome evaluation; for housing placement and navigation within the system so that these outcomes can inform how well the system is functioning and when changes need to be made.
- A common data platform and outcome measures across the system; which will help to guide decisions, recommendations, and policies for the City and countywide system going forward.

The next steps in the analysis included projections presented to the workgroup for “right-sizing” the system within Boulder County with a balance of interventions (diversion, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and temporary places to stay) that addresses the needs of households experiencing homelessness in the county. The right-sizing projections based on the demand analysis outlined in the methodology section of this Framework and include individuals, and families, and chronically homeless, showed the most needed interventions in the systems to be as follows:

**FINAL REPORT WILL INCLUDE CITY SHARE OF COUNTYWIDE NUMBERS BELOW AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION. WILL ALSO INCLUDE LANGUAGE ABOUT WHY RRH AND PSH FOR FAMILIES NOT INCLUDED IN NUMBERS BELOW.**

Housing Intervention	Annualized Demand
PSH- Individuals	(180)
Rapid Re-housing- Individuals	(158)
Diversion –Individuals	(673)
Diversion - Families	(282)

*\*While more detailed analysis of the Workgroup focused primarily on homeless single adults using the emergency shelter system, the initial right-sizing projections included single individuals, families, & youth.*

The framework and methodology for the right-sizing analysis and unit projections is a tool to set the **direction** of the system in terms of where additional investment is needed. Also, it provides the framework for the CQI process going forward; as providers link to the HHS case management and data platform and test assessment tools, this will enable the ability to test and adjust these demand assumptions.

The CQI process is critical for Boulder to continue to update and refine these housing targets as well as the need for temporary housing capacity. To implement the Strategic Framework, it is recommended that assessment data informing risk/need level of those touching the Boulder homelessness system be evaluated as well as the housing inventory available at least every six-months. Implementing the CQI process in this way will help the community understand how assumptions about shelter capacity may change based on the capacity to add more PSH over time, or if level of utilization aligns with level of need, and whether those assumptions are proving to be valid.

### Shelter Demand Scenarios

One of the primary aims of the Workgroup is to develop a crisis-response strategy for the emergency sheltering system. As such, the priority population of focus for the more detailed analysis outlined below is single adults that have had interaction with the City's emergency shelter system. An analysis completed by the workgroup of 2015 data included approximately 2,400 de-duplicated individuals had touched the overnight emergency shelter system with varying levels of utilization. The data available is largely based on utilization, which means that assumptions based on this analysis will not capture those extremely vulnerable individuals that are not accessing the shelter system frequently or at all. Conversely, there may be some individuals with lower level of needs/vulnerability that are not currently able to navigate the system effectively and are falling into the high-utilizer category. The analysis below outlines scenarios based on the assumption that high-utilizers of shelter resources also have a high level of need and cannot resolve their homelessness without navigation to permanent housing options. As the Strategic Framework is implemented, specifically coordinated entry and a CQI framework, the City will be able to test these assumptions to determine whether they hold true and adjust projections accordingly.

This shelter utilization data confirmed what emergency shelter providers had been reporting in their experience; approximately 80% of individuals touching the shelter system annually fell into the light-user category, with an average of 8 nights in shelter per year. Those falling into the heavy/moderate utilization categories made up approximately 20% of the total annual shelter population but were averaging high numbers of nights per year in the system (in other words, only 20% of the shelter population was using over 80% of the resources). This analysis suggests two things: 1). that individuals not able to easily self-resolve their homeless situation are getting stuck inside the shelter system and not always being navigated effectively to housing placements, and 2). that effectively targeting these heavy/moderate users of the system with housing and navigation services, Boulder can work to get them out of the system as soon as possible, shift to support coordinated entry, and use its shelter capacity more effectively.

## 2015 FY Night Shelter Data Trends

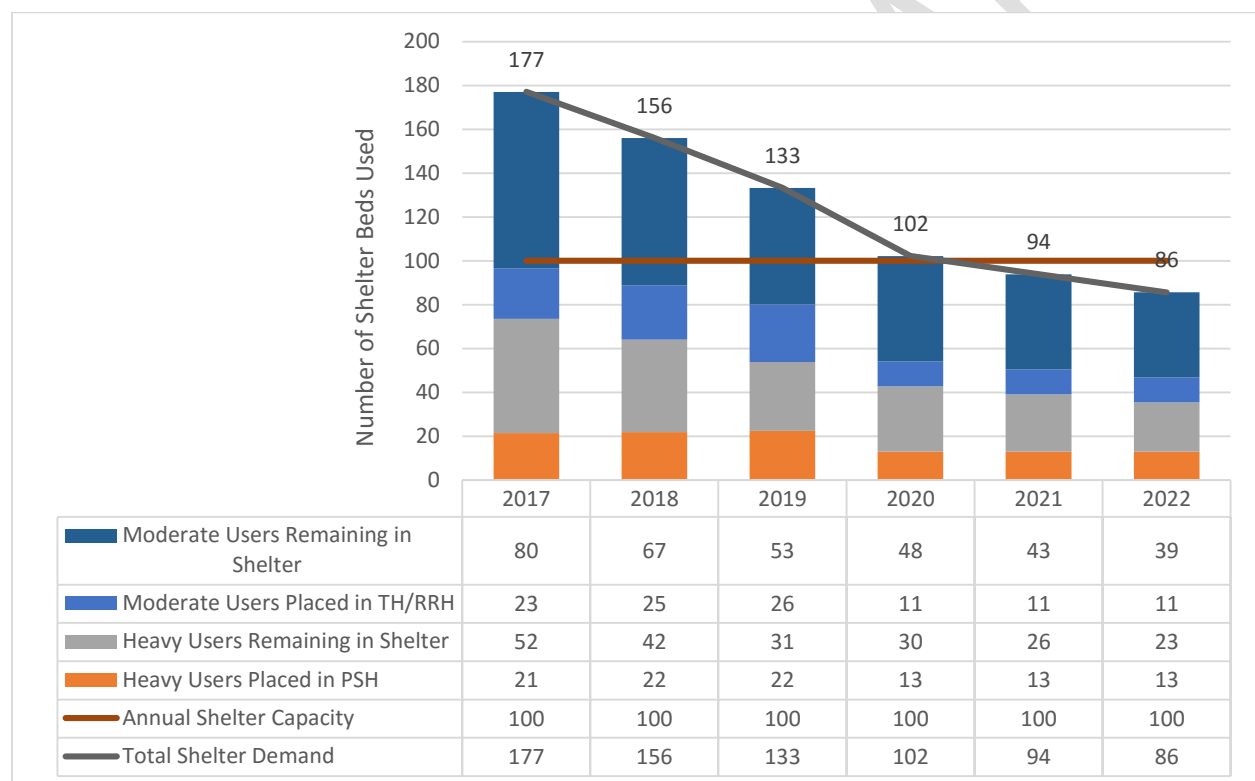
CSH completed an analysis to examine existing emergency shelter and transitional housing (TH) capacity and put forth a set of scenarios to the workgroup to illustrate how these interventions can be used in a different way to more effectively connect high system utilizers with permanent housing solutions. This goes back to the re-envisioned system established by the Workgroup and the core tenant of this system which is to shift to use coordinated entry and shelter/TH as strategic placements to navigate individuals out of the system and into permanent housing.

Market Segments (% of total population)	Unique Persons (2,337 total)	Cumulative Nights at Boulder Shelter + BOHO	Definitions: (# of nights)	Average # of Shelter Nights	Assumptions Used for Analysis
Heavy (3%)	71	18,360 (26%)	193 to 348 per person	261 night average	All these individuals will need PSH and will remain in shelter until they get it
Moderate (20 %)	454	37,839 (53%)	35 to 192 per person	80 night average; If you house the longest stayers in TH, average drops to 70 nights	The longest stayers will get TH and the others will continue to reside at the shelter at average of 70 days and then self-resolve
Light Users (77%)	1,811	14,878 (21%)	1 to 34 per person	8 night average	These individuals can be diverted and/or will find other options if shelter is not available

The significant challenge for the workgroup was: how does aligning adult shelter and TH with the re-envisioned system impact shelter demand in the short and long term? CSH's analysis looked at existing shelter capacity, which currently is approximately 100 seasonal beds – not taking into account the emergency overflow beds that will no longer be available after April, 2017. Also taken into account was TH capacity within the system for single

individuals, which is approximately 190 beds. (TH # WILL BE ADJUSTED DOWNWARD TO LIMIT TO ESTIMATED BEDS SERVING ADULTS. PROBABLY CLOSER TO 150.) This analysis was able to illustrate that by re-purposing shelter & TH to prioritize heavy/moderate users supported by coordinated entry, and shifting to a year-round shelter model to allow individuals able to self-resolve to do so, the high-utilizer demand for shelter will decrease steadily over time. However, without adding more permanent housing solutions into the system, high-utilizer demand for emergency shelter will still exceed capacity.

The scenario below outlines a number of assumptions, including the addition of 60 permanent housing solutions per year countywide and illustrates that shifting to this re-designed system and adding new (PSH and RRH) the emergency shelter capacity will be adequate to meet high-utilizer demand within a three-year time frame. (The complete analysis of emergency shelter scenarios can be found in the Appendix).



#### Assumptions:

- 100 year round program-based shelter beds and all placements target longest stayers
- Uses existing PSH and TH annual vacancies + **10 new PSH units and 50 new RRH slots each year for three years** to produce placements.
- All 190 TH beds for singles are used to support long-term placements and only produce a 5% rate of return to homelessness (big shift in operations)
- Inflow of 20 individuals per year (rough estimate) become part of the 20% who can't self-resolve
- Formal diversion program implemented or self-resolvers will self-divert when no shelter is available

Based on this Strategic Framework, the recommendations are as follows:

1. Using a common assessment tool to target heavy/moderate utilizers for emergency shelter beds and TH
2. Shift to a year-round sheltering model where individuals are allowed to stay at the shelter in order to be navigated as quickly as possible to housing, or to self-resolution
3. Co-locate targeted day services at the shelter to support navigation to housing or self-resolution (e.g. income and employment); services provided by existing shelter provider or by a consolidation of the three major shelter providers in Boulder (Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Bridge House, and BOHO)
4. Locate skilled assessors at this location to determine whether individuals entering here need to be brought into the shelter or directed toward diversion interventions
5. Using the Strategic Framework outlined above to continually test assumptions through CQI process, such as:
  - Assessment tool: is the tool an accurate indicator of high level of need so the system can target shelter beds and housing interventions appropriately? How does the system build a better assessment tool?
  - Sizing interventions: is the assumption that high/moderate utilizers account for approximately 20% of the single adult homeless population correct? Does this account for inflow? How does the system adjust with better data and size interventions accordingly?
  - Data collection: are current data inputs the right indicators to know if the system is working? Can they help to identify gaps or areas for improvement?

## Day Services

The Workgroup's analysis of the day shelter utilization is consistent with the night shelter in that approximately 20% of the population falls into the high-utilizer category. A detailed summary of day shelter/service utilization is included in the Appendix. To test this assumption further, the Workgroup can examine the types and frequencies of day services by night shelter users. To orient toward the new Strategic Framework, day services can shift to further support coordinated entry by assessing individuals and for those falling into the high utilization/high need category, directing them to the Emergency Shelter where day services are co-located and specifically toward housing solutions navigation.

For those assessed and falling into the light user category, day services will look distinctly different than those offered at the emergency shelter; day services for light users will be oriented toward diversion and re-connecting individuals with housing as quickly as possible without bringing them into the system.

Based on this Strategic Framework, the recommendations are as follows:

1. Using a common assessment tool, including a diversion assessment tool (in which skilled assessors can determine whether an individual or family is appropriate for a diversion-based intervention), direct those heavy/moderate utilizers to emergency shelter and target light users to day services
2. Invest in permanent solutions consistent with the new Strategic Framework rather than purchasing/creating a new space for light-user day services; explore opportunities to **co-locate** day services within existing safety net services/space (e.g. facilities where people are screened for public benefit eligibility/acquisition)
3. Activate day services as a diversion center with services targeted toward prevention/stabilization to divert, assess, and stabilize people as soon as possible; services provide by current day services provider or consolidated shelter provider network
4. Locate skilled intake assessors at this location to determine whether individuals entering here need to be directed to the shelter or toward diversion interventions
5. Test assumptions regarding assessment tools and sizing interventions through the CQI process



## Crisis Response

While the City and the Workgroup implement the re-envisioned system and Strategic Framework, there is still the immediate challenge of the emergency overflow shelter closure and that demand for emergency shelter may exceed bed capacity for potentially a period of up to three years (this may be shorter or longer depending on adjustments to demand assumptions via the CQI process and the pace at which permanent housing is added into the system). In this transition period, the City may need to activate an emergency crisis response strategy during cold-weather nights and to address general health and safety needs for those light users that may be touching the homeless system briefly but are not going to remain in Boulder.

Based on the need for a crisis-response strategy, the recommendations are as follows:

1. Co-locate emergency overflow temporary shelter beds with the location identified for day services to continue to leverage existing space and prioritize new investment into permanent solutions; co-location also enables the leveraging of assessment and diversion services
2. Determine the annual target number of emergency overflow/temporary shelter beds based on the shelter demand scenarios, the seasonal impact, and the rate at which permanent housing solutions are added into the system
3. Services provided by current overflow services provider or consolidate provider network, to be phased out over a transition period where emergency shelter capacity and day services are better positioned to respond to demand **FINAL REPORT WILL INCLUDE RANGE OF OVERFLOW BEDS NEEDED, YEARLY TARGETS IF THERE IS A "STEP DOWN" AND WHERE/WHO PROVIDES.**
4. Connect the crisis response strategy to the CQI process to better forecast how long the transition/crisis-response plan needs to be in place, and the number of beds needed during this transition period

## Data Framework

The methodology used to assess demand and estimate the size and type of interventions needed in Boulder provide a framework for testing and adjusting the assumptions made as part of this initial workgroup analysis. This will be particularly important to support coordinated entry, assess the effectiveness of current assessment tools, and refine housing targets and projections as the systems knows more about the level of need in relation to utilization. For example, if providers begin to see that individuals with high system utilization are not being effectively targeted toward housing placement, this data will inform the process and trigger the question of whether the assessment tool needs to be changed to better account for this. In order for this CQI process to be activated and effective for the system, next steps for the City and stakeholders will include:

- Continued efforts toward data integration, and
- The use of a shared data platform across providers

The shared database and case management platform can also be leveraged for implementing system-wide coordinated assessment. With HHS as the lead, the Workgroup will need to identify a timeline by which all providers will have access to the data warehouse and case management platform to track outcomes, make and receive referrals, and access housing placement inventory. The integrated case management platform can support provider referrals for specific services in the very near-term and additional capabilities including assessment tool, program enrollment, and housing placement referrals are expected to be completed by June of 2017. Currently, a phased addition of providers into the integrated case management platform is planned with specific providers slated to begin in June – additional



providers and prioritization for access will be informed based on the recommendations and the conclusions of the Workgroup.

This data warehouse and case management platform will also be a critical tool in tracking outcomes to inform whether the Strategic Framework is working and what parts of the system need to be adjusted and when.

Recommendations for outcomes tracking and initial creation for a system dashboard include:

1. The number of permanent housing placements relative to housing targets
2. Returns to homelessness
3. The number of days from referral to housing

The data integration and CQI process is critical for Boulder to move toward its re-envisioned system and to fully implement coordinated entry; the next steps in the process will be finalized and overseen by a data-integration sub-group made up of some key Workgroup members.

### Coordinated Entry

As part of the Workgroup leadership and facilitation, CSH along with the City hosted an all-day Coordinated Entry System (CES) re-design lab which focused on what the key action items will be to fully implement the CES in Boulder across providers and connect CES to broader regional systems. These action steps are outlined in the Project Management Workbook but the design lab was a helpful tool in reaching consensus on several key points including:

1. **Assessment tool:** The Workgroup decided to use the **VI-SPDAT tool for individuals, families, and youth** for the CES to begin with and the CQI framework to refine
2. **System Entry Points:** The Workgroup decided on the following system entry points:
  - Day Shelter
  - Night Shelter
  - Court
  - EFAA
  - Our Center (located outside of the City of Boulder, in Longmont)
  - Sister Carmen (located outside of the City of Boulder, in Lafayette)

These entry points may be expanded or consolidated based on volume and need, again through the CQI process, re-evaluated every six months for consolidation opportunities.

3. **Data Platform:** There was consensus among Workgroup members at the CES design lab to utilize HHS's data warehouse and case management platform across providers for coordinated entry (including tracking inventory & matching) and to connect this data platform to existing regional CES systems, such as HMIS or ONEHOME.

### Questions & Issues

#### *Diversion*

This initial Workgroup analysis assumes that a high percentage (approximately 80%) of individuals touching the homeless system in Boulder will not actually need to enter into the system but can be diverted from the system. This assumption is predicated on knowing more about two key issues:

- Using the CES process and common assessment tool, the City and the Workgroup will learn more about this 80% portion of homeless individuals and whether or not current assumptions hold true or need to be adjusted up or down in terms of the % of single individuals needing to be navigated to housing vs. diversion
- What does Diversion entail, and how is this portion of the homeless population described further to better target with the right intervention

In terms of the second issue, there are several recommendations that will enable the City and the Workgroup to implement a formal diversion program, including:

1. Implement diversion screening tool as part of the common assessment
2. Train and locate skilled intake assessors at system entry points, including day services, shelter, and a diversion center
3. Diversion strategies may also include homeless prevention and emergency rental assistance resources
4. Allocate a portion of funding earmarked for diversion services from a flexible pool in order to provide emergency assistance to keep people housed or quickly reconnect them with stable housing

#### *Diversion Plan*

The high percentage of light-touch users in the homelessness system leads to the assumption that some of these individuals and families do not need to enter the system in order to be connected to housing. By implementing a Diversion strategy, shelters, outreach, and system entry point locations interfacing with people experiencing homelessness will be trained to use a diversion assessment tool, designed with input from persons with lived experience, community partners and examples from other communities. An example of a diversion assessment tool can be found in the appendix.

The addition of skilled assessors (either existing day services staff or re-purposed case management staff) specifically focused on Diversion will enable implementation as Diversion has a slightly different framework than traditional case management. Examples of Diversion staff methodology include<sup>6</sup>:

- Listen to the story
- Affirm, reflect, de-escalate, and pay attention to housing strengths, resources, resilience and needs (not services) expressed. Do not leap to solutions before hearing their need
- Move from crisis to brainstorming solutions, empowerment
- Prioritize immediate plan, (where to be tonight) with attention to safety. Engage their resources
- Initiate plan (30-60 day max) with minimal assistance (mediation, housing search, temporary financial assistance)

Common Diversion solutions include:

- Re-establish rental housing with minimal one-time temporary financial assistance with a cap
- Mediate with family/friends to stay short or long-term, possible flex temporary financial assistance
- Mediation with landlord/property

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/closing-the-front-door-creating-a-successful-diversion-program-for-homeless>

- Shared housing
- Housing search
- Connection to mainstream services (outside of homeless services, such as human services)
- Relocation to out-of-area support system

Once assessed, individuals and families typically meet with a case manager to start housing stabilization planning immediately after being assessed and deemed appropriate for diversion. Housing planning involves both finding immediate housing and planning for longer term housing stability. If an immediate alternate housing arrangement cannot be made, a shelter stay is likely the most appropriate option.

A Diversion workgroup (as part of implementation) will inform the design, participate in service delivery, and report outcomes, which will be critical to inform and refine assumptions regarding the demand for Diversion services. Temporary financial assistance (amount to be determined) will be established for targeted assistance to connect or re-connect families and individuals to stable housing.

There is a growing evidence base that Diversion is an effective intervention for re-connecting individuals and families with stable housing including successful pilot projects in Tacoma, WA, Chicago, IL and Columbus, OH. Details on the pilot projects and outcomes can be found in the Appendix.

#### *Governance Structure*

In order for the City and stakeholders to implement the Strategic Framework, there needs to be a governance structure in place that outlines the process for decision making, since that is not clearly defined.

The City should consider aligning governance of the coordinated entry system with the countywide system. The oversight of system performance can be monitored and reported on through this mechanism. An ongoing city specific review and oversight group could be considered for city specific policy-related issues in conjunction with the implementation of coordinated entry and the Homelessness Strategy. The most efficient structure deliberately engages decision makers and stakeholders in specific ways to support the creation of and implementation of policy as well as balanced accountability. Such a structure supports:

- Action-oriented facilitation that will drive forward-progression and decisiveness in policy creation, and
- Phased implementation that will equip stakeholders to make a series of incremental changes over a short period of time while contributing to the collective goal and being accountable for implementation and progress

Technical expertise is most often needed in the design and transition from the current governance model to this new structure of combined governance and implementation. Most often this is achieved through the following support activities:

- Small and large stakeholder conversations
- Creation and presentation of a proposed structure and transition plan
- Community conversation to finalize design and initiate transition
- Creation and presentation of proposed structure and operating agreements

- Assignment and training of project managers; creation of the implementation leadership team

## FURTHER GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE DISCUSSION IN WG

### Policy Considerations

The recommendations contained within the report speak to the aim of the Workgroup to develop a crisis response strategy as well as to shift to a new Strategic Framework and will mostly involve operational shifts within the system versus large-scale policy changes. The recommendation to move to a year-round shelter model where residents are permitted to stay during the day and offered specific targeted services may entail a change to the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless' (Shelter) current policies and management plan as well as additional neighborhood and community engagement regarding the proposed changes and how they relate to the larger systems vision within the City and Boulder County. Considerations for this process and timeline will need to be incorporated into next steps for implementation. The recommendations would also entail changes to how Bridge House currently provides services. Changes to policies, services and operations need to be identified.

Lastly, these recommendations may impact how the City and its partners make decisions regarding investment and funding in terms of re-directing the funding of the overflow programs into permanent housing interventions or CES activities.

### Key Next Steps & Timeline

*A provider sub-group is to be convened with City & County leadership, re: detailing service provision for crisis- response strategy & Strategic Framework. This includes next steps regarding which providers will provide services and where (The shelter, day-services, and emergency / overflow health & safety beds)*

*Place holder- this section will be filled in with high-level details and action steps from the Project Management workbook that will be populated with the Workgroup through a facilitate meeting on April 5th*

## CONCLUSION

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Boulder is well positioned to not only respond to the emergency sheltering crisis, but more importantly drive toward a new Strategic Framework for which there is an established shared vision across community partners. By focusing on leveraging coordinated entry and the existing data platform, the Workgroup set the foundation for increased coordination and measurable decreases in homelessness. The community is solidly moving in the direction of implementing coordinated entry, and committed to using data to provide a more transparent and equitable process for resolving a person's housing crisis. These are significant milestones.

To ensure that Boulder can tackle the issue of homelessness, it will be essential that resources needed to fund the system as proposed by evaluated with funding partners and that resources are aligned with the Strategic Framework. Moreover, the City, stakeholders and funding partners will need to revisit the Strategic Framework as data quality improves and the environment shifts. The projections herein are initial calculations that will benefit from further refinement as data systems improve. Continuous quality improvement will be essential if Boulder is to meet its goals.

This Strategic Framework represents one step in the path towards ending homelessness in Boulder. CSH thanks many stakeholders who contributed to the process. These include but are not limited to:

## Appendix

**Exhibit A:** *System map & list of providers contacted*

**Exhibit B:** *Emergency Shelter Demand Scenarios*

**Exhibit C:** *Workgroup analysis – Emergency shelter (night & day) utilization*

**Exhibit D:** *Example- Diversion assessment/screening tool*

**Exhibit E:** *Diversion pilot projects & outcome detail*

WORKING DRAFT