

Allentown Homeless Commission

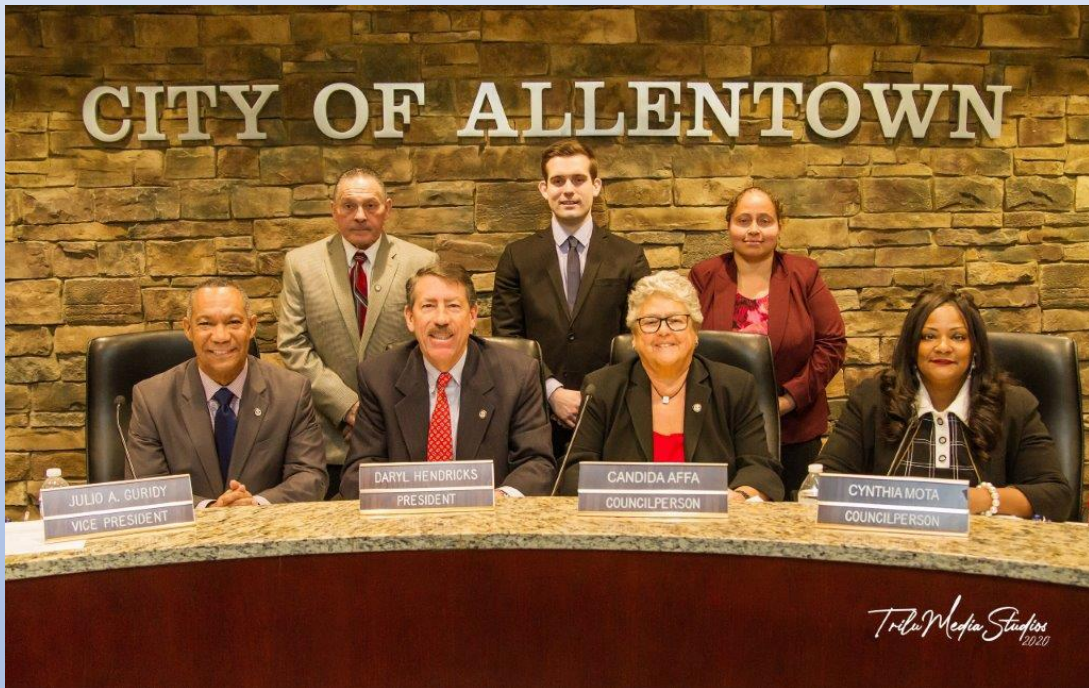
Strategic Plan Presentation

March 17, 2021

City of Allentown
Commission on Homelessness
March 2021



Allentown Homeless Commission



- Authorized by City Council Feb, 2020
- 15 Members appointed by Mayor
- Purpose
 - Advise the Mayor & City Council
 - Educate the public
 - Coordinate efforts
 - Develop Strategy to end homelessness

Allentown Homeless Commission

Thomas R. Harrington, Chair

Rev. Charlene Smalls, 2nd Vice Chair

Ellen Denizard

Anna Lightner

Hope Sabbagh

Michelle Wagner

Robert Nicolella, 1st Vice Chair

Rev. Dr. Larry D. Pickens, Secretary

Carolyn J. Hoffman

Jennifer Miklus

Benjamin T. Stephens

Community Advisory Panel

Deanne Best

Chris Cassidy

Cathy Coyne

Abigail Goldfarb

Roslyn Kuba

Allison Moretz

Santo Napoli

Jimmy Torres

City of Allentown Department Liaisons

Efrain Agosto, Fire Chief, Allentown Fire Department

CeCe Gerlach, City Council Member, Allentown City Council

Glenn Granitz, Chief of Police, Allentown Police Department

Eric Gratz, EMS Chief of Operations, City of Allentown Paramedics

Vicky Kistler, Director of Health, Allentown Bureau of Health

Heidi Westerman, Community Housing Manager, Allentown Community Housing

Leonard Lightner

Director/Deputy Mayor

Community & Economic Development

Ray O'Connell

Mayor, City of Allentown

Vision Statement



“We envision a day in which every person living in the City of Allentown has safe and affordable housing.”

Lack of Affordable Housing



- One in four renters in U.S. spend more than half their income on housing
- 36 affordable rental units for every 100 very low-income households
- Most new construction is for higher-income families

Homelessness in America



“Stable housing is the foundation upon which people build their lives.”

USICH, 2015

Homelessness in America



Homelessness in America



46% of people living in shelters are intact families.

19% are fleeing domestic violence.

Shinn, M., 2020

Homelessness in America



Homelessness impacts our children socially, emotionally and academically.

USICH, 2015

Homelessness in America



Children in a shelter for 90 days are 40% more likely to enter the child welfare system.

Every child in foster care costs \$25,000 - \$37,000 per year.

ACYF, 2012

Homelessness in America



Homelessness impacts our emergency rooms, detox centers and jails, costing \$30,000/year per person.

USICH, 2015

Homelessness in America



**40% of homeless youth
identify as LGBTQ+**

ACYF, 2012

Homelessness in America



50% of homeless adults do not suffer from a mental illness or disability.

1 out of every 14 Americans experience homelessness sometime in their lives.

Link, et.al, 1994

“It hasn’t always been this way . . .”



**Homeless began to increase in
1970’s due to:**

- Lack of affordable housing
- Increase in foreclosures
- Closing of State psychiatric hospitals

USICH, 2015

What our future can be . . .

Built for Zero Initiative

- 80 Cities in US have committed to reducing homelessness to functional zero.

What our future can be . . .

Built for Zero Initiative

- 80 Cities in US have committed to reducing homelessness to functional zero.
- Can Allentown make this commitment?

Homelessness in Allentown

Allentown Homeless Population - 2019



**1,426 people in Allentown
experienced homelessness in
2019**

**63% of all homeless in Lehigh
Valley live in Allentown**

*Eastern Continuum Coordinated Entry – Jan. 1, 2019 – Sept. 30, 2019

Homelessness in Allentown - 2020



527 New Requests for Help

305 – Literally Homeless

195 – Families with Children

99 – Domestic Violence

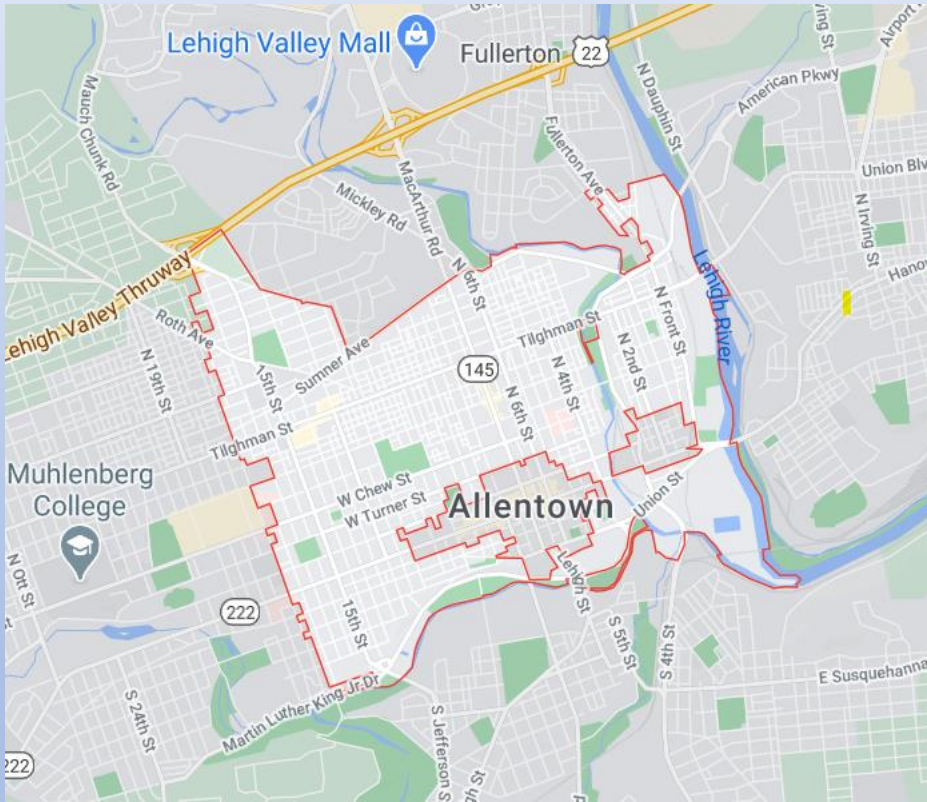
Eastern PA Coordinated Entry System, 2020

Allentown School District



- **1,095 children experienced homelessness in 2020**
- **4th largest number in PA**
- **Includes families that are doubled up**

Homelessness in Allentown - 2020



70% were from 18102 zip code

#1 – Insufficient Income

#2 – Evicted or Kicked Out

#3 – Mental Health (9%)

#4 – Domestic Violence (8%)

#5 – Substance Abuse (4%)

*Lehigh County CYF 2020

Often Uncounted – Homeless Youth



1 in 30 adolescents (ages 13-17) experience homelessness.*

Allentown – 292 youth will experience homelessness this year**

*Voices of Youth Count, University of Chicago

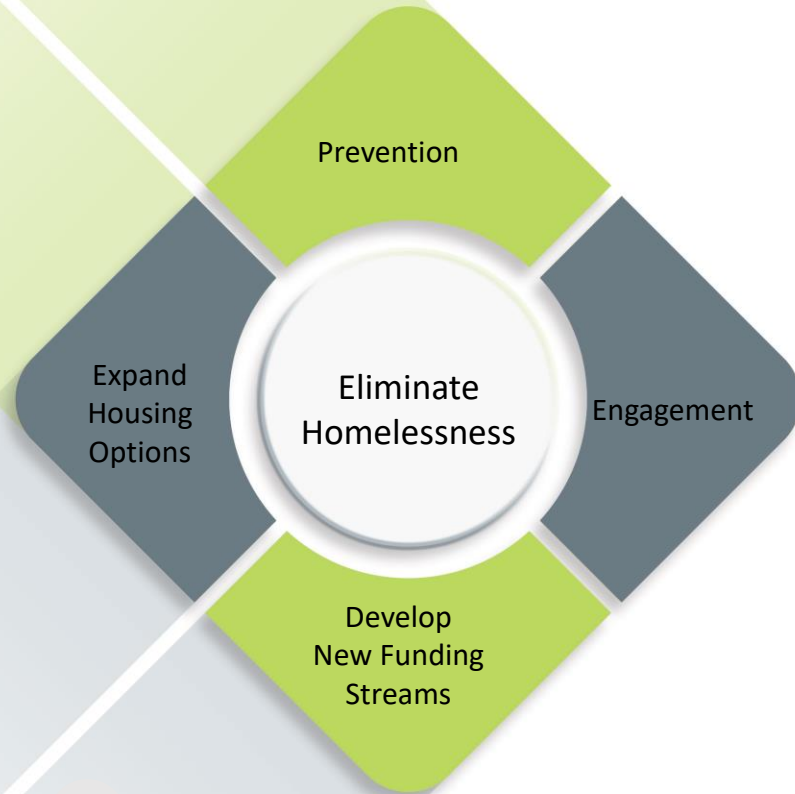
** Valley Youth House, 2020

Our Shelters are Full



- CACLV's 6th Street Shelter
Wait List of 3-4 months
- No immediate shelter beds for families or single women.
- No housing for parents with intellectual disabilities with young children.

Five Key Strategies



- Prevention
- Property Owner Engagement
- Expand Housing Options
- New Funding Sources
- Community-wide Coordination

1st Strategy – Prevention/Rental Assistance



- Keeping people in their homes has best outcomes
- \$20M in new Federal funding to Lehigh County
- Provide flexible assistance funds
 - ASD's Rooster Relief Fund

2nd Strategy – Property Owner Engagement Initiative



- Hire Housing Navigators
- Property Owner Incentives
- Risk Mitigation Funds
- Property Owner-Tenant Mediation

3rd Strategy – Expand Housing Options



Option #1 - Rapid Rehousing



- **People & families literally homeless**
- **Low-Barrier of Entry**
- **Less expensive**
- **HUD Best Practice**

Option #2 - Renovate Vacant Homes



- **2,100 Vacant single-family homes***
- **Redevelopment Authority has taken 50+ properties**
- **We support CED's idea of a Land Bank**
- **Designate funding to rehab for homeless families**

*Census Bureau - 2019

Option #3 - Permanent Supportive Housing



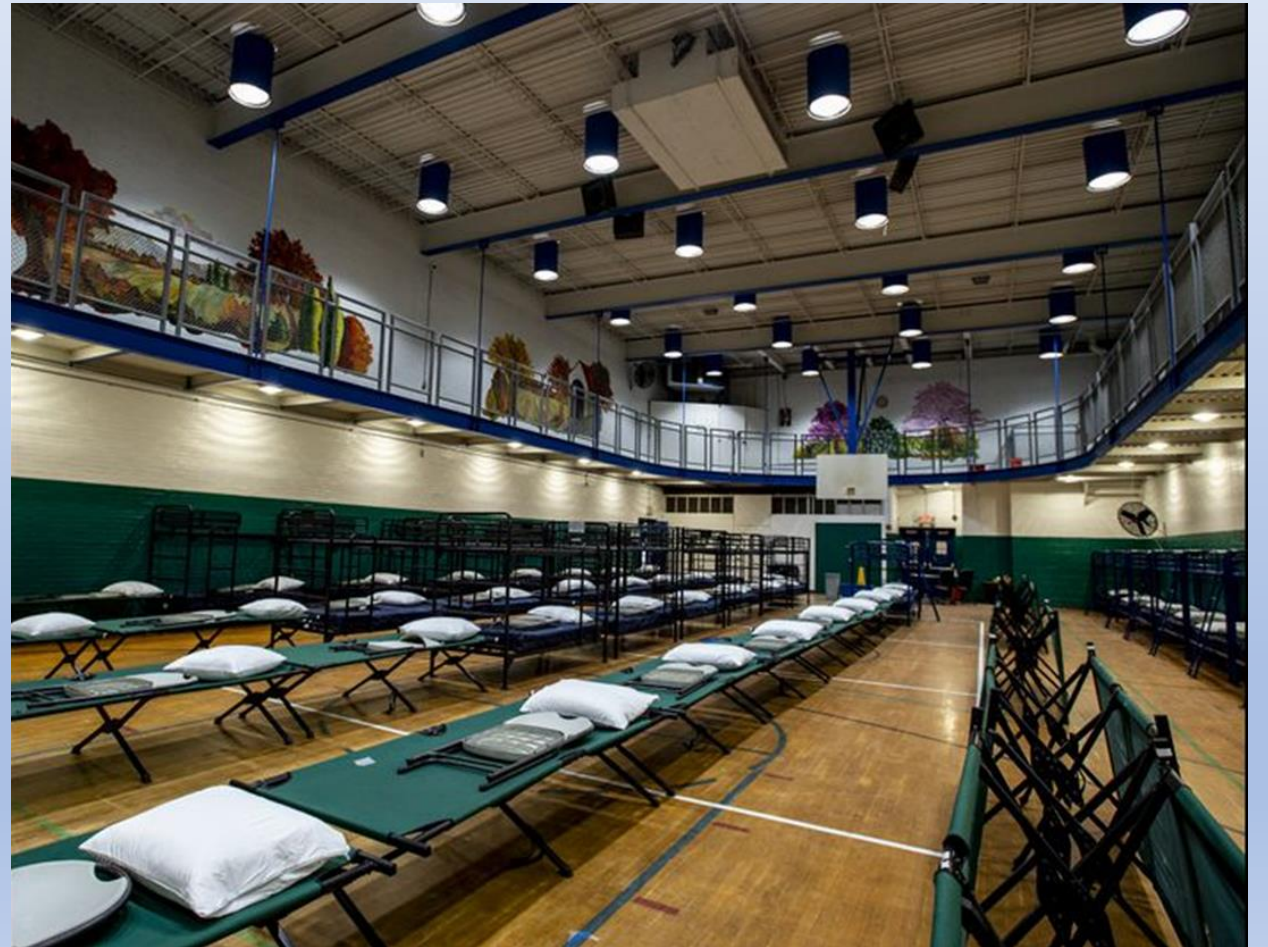
Project HOME - Philadelphia

- **Long-term housing for the chronically homeless**
- **Connect to community services**
- **Improves health outcomes and lowers public costs**

Option #4 - Tiny Home Village



Year-Round Emergency Shelter



4th Strategy – Develop New Funding Streams



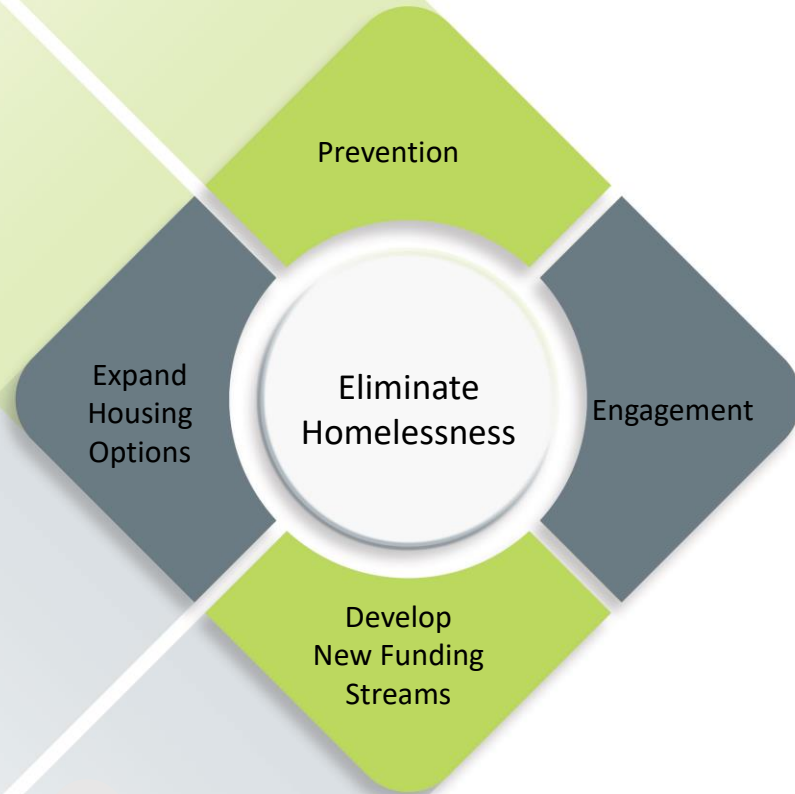
- Public Funding Options
 - Designate new tax revenue for affordable housing
 - Bond issue for capital expenses
- Private/Public Funding
 - Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)*

*LIHTC allocates tax credits to the states that developers use to raise capital for the construction of affordable rental housing. In exchange for receiving the tax credits, developers agree to keep rents affordable for a number of years in the apartments that are built.

Strategy #5 – Community-wide Coordination

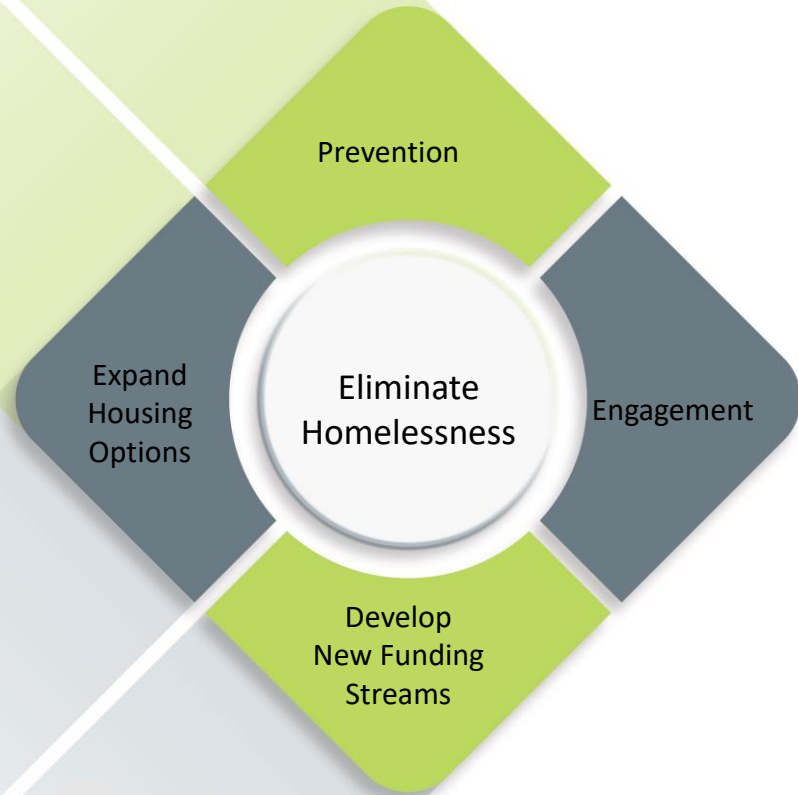
**Built for Zero
Initiative**

Five Key Strategies



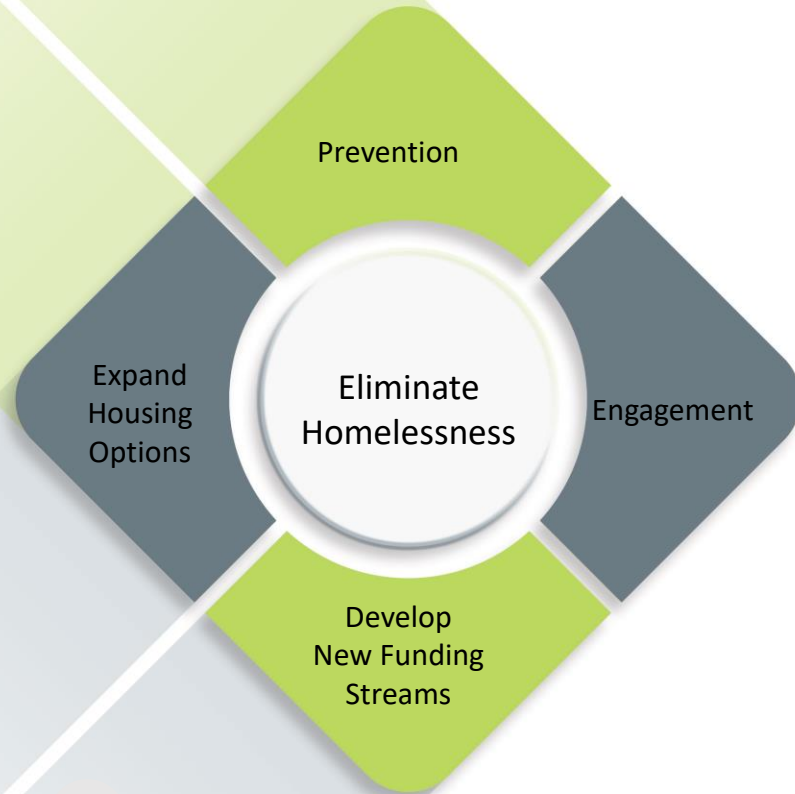
- Prevention
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- Expand Housing Options
- New Funding Sources
- Community-wide Coordination

Short-Term Actions



- Rental Assistance Funds
- Property Owner Engagement
- Renovate Blighted Properties
- Homeless Coordinator for City
- Built for Zero Initiative

Long-Term Actions



- Explore Tiny Homes
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- New Shelter Beds families & adults with disabilities

Closing Thoughts . . .



***1,400 Homeless
is heart-breaking . . .
But it's not impossible to solve.***

***Need to address those who are
homeless tonight . . .***

***And take steps to prevent
homelessness in future.***

Allentown Homeless Commission - 2021



***We have to act quickly . . .
but also ensure we use data to do
the right thing.***

***Need to turn down the
temperature . . .
And realize we all want the same
thing.***



Allentown's Future Housing for the Homeless



Allentown's Future Housing for the Homeless



Allentown's Future Housing for the Homeless



Allentown Homeless Commission - 2021



“Homelessness is a choice – not the choice by people living on the streets, but a choice by the rest of us to look the other way.”

Marybeth Shinn

Allentown Homeless Commission

Questions/Comments



Allentown Homeless Commission

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