

TO: MEMBERS OF THE FORT MONMOUTH ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION PLANNING AUTHORITY

FROM: ROSE ESTEPHAN, SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RE: SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE HOMELESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

SSAC Report on Homeless Situation in Monmouth County:

The homeless situation in Monmouth County is in a critical state even though the “official” statistics supplied by the Point in Time (PIT) Survey shows less than critical numbers. However, in evaluating these statistics with the information from the Monmouth County Consolidated Plan (MCCP), Monmouth County Continuum of Care (MCCC), information provided by various homeless providers and homeless advocacy groups, the indications are that not only is there a need in the county but specifically in the towns in which Fort Monmouth presently exists, Eatontown, Oceanport and Tinton Falls. The SSAC recognizes that this region can not meet all of the County’s homeless needs however; we can make a significant difference by meeting the homeless needs in these three communities.

The SSAC Report on the Homeless Situation in Monmouth County is not just an evaluation of statistics from the MCCP and MCCC but from homeless providers and various advocacy groups that deal day to day and in real numbers with not just the need of the homeless but the need for self-help housing. It is not possible to use the PIT Survey independently because they are numbers that objectify a need that happens at a particular point in time and is subject to variables such as weather and time of year. Many believe there is an unintentional undercounting of numbers. The homeless just don’t show up to be counted. An example would be veterans groups that see a significantly higher number of veterans coming to them for assistance but do not participate in the PIT survey.

There are three types of specific homeless needs that the SSAC proposes for inclusion into the FINAL Reuse Plan:

The first and second areas of greatest need are PERMANENT and PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING. We propose accommodations be made for single adults, seniors, those with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, veterans and families. Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Families appears to be the area of greatest need within Monmouth County. The SSAC proposes that 100 units to meet this need.

The third is in EMERGENCY SERVICES. This need is indicated in the County evaluations and even more urgently in the information gathered through the submission of the Notices of Interest (NOI) and statistics from the homeless advocates. The most critical areas of need are shelters for: single adults, domestic violence victims and especially families. Various providers indicate an alarming number of homeless from these groups are turned away everyday. The SSAC proposes a minimum of fifty (50) dwelling units or approximately 130 individuals to meet this need. All other subpopulations can be accommodated in this number.

At the current time Homeless NOI evaluations are being conducted in parallel with the financial feasibility analysis.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the county, Lynn Miller, Virginia Edwards and their staffs, for the manner in which they conduct the PIT Survey. Everyone that came to participate was treated with the utmost care, courtesy and respect. Also, I would like to acknowledge and commend the members of the Social Services Advisory Committee for their efforts and time to this committee and to the public members and advocacy teams in providing their valued insight, in providing supporting data, and their time.

SSAC Report for Self-Help Housing:

The charge of the SSAC was to investigate, evaluate and address the need of the homeless as it related to Fort Monmouth and specifically the towns of Eatontown, Oceanport and Tinton Falls. The SSAC became the venue for extensive discussions concerning self-help/affordable housing. To paraphrase a homeless and self-help/affordable housing provider; 'If there was more affordable housing the homeless would be less of an issue in our communities'. It is an equal critical concern to that of the homeless.

The SSAC suggests that in order to address the self-help housing issue and increase the number of homes that would be affordable in cost to low income families, the towns of Eatontown, Oceanport and Tinton Falls consider increasing the number of self-help housing put forth by the Habitat for Humanity Public Benefit Conveyance (PBC) that are included in the fair market value housing purposed by EDAW in the plan for Fort Monmouth.

The SSAC proposes that the consideration be made toward moderate density housing which would fit with the plan put forth by EDAW rather than or in addition to single family homes being constructed. This would not impact the three towns negatively in terms of costs, no increase in taxes, no impact on schools, etc. It would simply subtract from the fair market housing number and in turn add that number to the number of self-help housing number for low income families. As an example, if the fair market value number is 100 take 25 and add it to homes that would be affordable in cost to the public. In that case, the plan would have 75 fair market value and 25 homes that are affordable in cost but are not considered COAH "affordable" housing. Habitat for Humanity would build the homes and hold the mortgages. The owners would pay fair market value taxes. SSAC suggests and encourages the towns to increase this type of self-housing housing that is affordable in costs to those in need to a minimum of 25 per town.

It should be the right of every person to be able to live with a decent roof over their head. The SSAC has heard countless accounts of individuals and families that are not able to live in a decent home or are turned away from emergency shelters due to lack of space. These accounts have also been recorded at the public FMERPA meetings. This not due to lack of work ethic or not being employed, it is due to a series of circumstances that cause them to deplete their savings, they temporarily lose their jobs or need a safe place to live with their children. The economic factors that currently exist in our country and specifically in our area certainly lend themselves to an environment that makes matters worse for those in need. We are in a position with the unfortunate closing of Fort Monmouth to truly make a difference in countless lives. We can and should try to make an impact on the woeful situation that exists in our area to alleviate the tremendous need for emergency, permanent / permanent supportive, and self-help housing - housing that is affordable in cost, but that is not considered as COAH defined "affordable" housing. It is the Social Services Advisory Committee desire to make that difference. It is a one time opportunity to make the closure of Fort Monmouth a renaissance rather than a finale.

There is much to be considered before a final plan can be realized in terms of the homeless and affordable housing. The SSAC hopes to continue working to meet the intended goals and objectives of the SSAC in a compassionate and equitable manner to reach a realistic outcome.