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Brockton to unveil 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness

James Harrington's 10-year plan, to be unveiled Wednesday, involves replacing shelters with new housing.

By Elaine Allegrini, ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

BROCKTON — In two years, homelessness has dropped 21 percent, according to Mayor James E. Harrington, who on Wednesday will announce a 10-year plan to abolish chronic homelessness.

Based on a national model, Housing First, the city is in partnership with state, federal and private nonprofit agencies in a program designed to bypass shelters and provide direct housing with supportive services for the chronically homeless.

"Eventually, under this plan, the shelters go away," Harrington said.

Father Bills & MainSpring, the area agency that offers shelters for the homeless in Brockton and Quincy, will build 32 housing units for the homeless on Spring Street, next to the MainSpring shelter, according to Harrington.

The program got a jumpstart last year with a \$668,000 grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. That money funded several existing programs for the homeless and allowed for leasing 15 area apartments, 10 in Brockton and five in Plymouth.

This year, the local award reached a record high of \$675,000.

Providing a homeless person with a small, single-occupancy apartment and support services gives them a better chance of getting a stable job and permanent housing, according to Tom Washington of Father Bills & MainSpring.

The concept is working across the country, said Philip Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in Washington D.C.

In adopting the 10-year plan to abolish chronic homelessness, Mangano said, Brockton joins 327 cities in 49 states. Fourteen plans are moving forward in Massachusetts, including in Quincy, which has already had a positive effect on Brockton, he said.

Mangano will join Harrington and others in Brockton for Wednesday's announcement.

"We need to be partnered locally because, ultimately, while it's a national problem, it yields to local solutions," Mangano said.

The chronically homeless are the most vulnerable, disabled, visible and expensive, according to Mangano.

"The cost of doing nothing for them is very expensive," he said.

Without appropriate intervention, the chronically homeless population taxes primary health, behavioral health, law enforcement, court and incarceration services, Mangano said.

The plan, he said, puts the city in a better position to receive federal funding, which next year is projected to be \$5 billion nationally, he added.

“There’s a tremendous need for long-term supportive housing,” said Capt. Leo M. Lloyd Jr., administrator of the Salvation Army’s Adult Rehabilitation Center on North Main Street, another agency looking to work with the city to increase housing opportunities for the homeless.

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