

June 25, 2018

Ms. Amy Munro
City of Aurora
Redevelopment Coordinator
Neighborhood Redevelopment Division
51 E. Galena Blvd
Aurora, IL 60505

Dear Amy,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input into the City's ESG plan.

I draw from my experience with homelessness in Aurora: I started volunteering at Hesed House in 1991. I started working here in 1999. I became Executive Director in 2004.

In particular, I wanted to offer my perspective on which of the eligible areas the city should prioritize.

The two highest areas of need are:

- 1) **Emergency Shelter** – Aurora is at the breaking point with homeless shelter capacity. The primary shelter at Hesed House is substantially overcapacity. We are creating a new family shelter on September 1. We expect it to be overcapacity on Day 1.
- 2) **Rapid Rehousing** – Rapid rehousing is a far more efficient use of resources than homeless prevention. At first it seems to make more sense to help a family or individual before they become homeless rather than waiting until they actually become homeless, but that forgets one important fact: the vast majority of people on the verge of homelessness will find a way to stay housed.

The result is that homeless prevention dollars often go to individuals who would have found a way to stay housed without assistance.

With rapid re-housing, you wait until an individual has become homeless and then you get them out into housing very quickly. None of the money is "wasted" on individuals who wouldn't become homeless (because these individuals are already homeless).

Rapid rehousing is particularly important for families, especially in light of the transitional housing program at Hased House closing and being replaced by a family shelter (that will be over capacity).

The next most important area would be:

- 1) **Homeless Prevention** – Homeless prevention isn't a bad use of funds. It is just far less efficient than rapid rehousing (see my explanation of rapid rehousing)

The lowest area of need would be:

- 1) **Street Outreach** – There are very few people in Aurora who sleep on the streets. For example, in a HUD mandated street count a few years ago, East St. Louis had 285 individuals on the street; Bloomington had 216; Rockford had 52; Batavia had 7. On the exact same night, Aurora had 1. The low number of individuals living on the streets of Aurora is a result of the PADS shelter at Hased House being "low threshold" for entry. This is simply not a need.

If it were up to me, I would put 100% of the non-admin dollars into emergency shelter and rapid rehousing.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further if you all have any questions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ryan J. Dowd, Attorney-at-Law
Executive Director