

REACHING HOME: Missoula's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Dear fellow Missoulians:

Missoulians do a lot for people who are homeless, or who lack secure housing. These efforts, while dogged and sincere, are not enough. The evidence is that hundreds of people in our city are without housing on any given night. We need to do more.

Toward that end, Missoula – like hundreds of other communities nationwide, and in response to a Congressional mandate to do so – is crafting a comprehensive plan to prevent homelessness and re-house people whose homelessness we cannot prevent. The first draft of that plan – “Reaching Home: Missoula’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness” – accompanies this letter. It is the product of more than a year of work by a dedicated group of business and community volunteers, and based on local and national research and information from diverse stakeholders, including homeless and formerly homeless people.

The plan is both a call to action and a strategy for change. As a call to action, the plan marshals national best practices and original local research to make the case that focusing on prevention and rapid re-housing is both moral and cost-efficient. As a strategy for change, the plan examines existing services offered to identify gaps, needs for growth, and opportunities for coordination and consolidation. The plan is not exhaustive, both because over the next 10 years we will need to adjust it and because securing housing for everyone possible will require sustained effort from many hands.

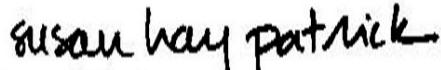
The draft of “Reaching Home” is available on the City of Missoula website at www.ci.missoula.mt.us under Mayor’s Initiatives. As you read it, please carefully review what the plan proposes and what it asks for our community to do next. We want and need your feedback; please focus it on the strategies we have outlined for preventing and reversing homelessness: Are there strategies we missed? Are there strategies we included that need to be revised? Please also scrutinize the resources and partners we have identified for implementing the strategies outlined: Do you have information or expertise we can use to identify resources or refine the estimates of how much money and resources are needed? Are there partners we have not identified who should be included? Are you affiliated with a group identified as a partner, but for which you think the particular strategy is not a good fit?

Finally, please think about how you personally and professionally will help end homelessness in Missoula – and please let us know.

Where do we go from here? We will accept comments by email to 10yearplan@missoulaunitedway.org through November 14, 2012, when we will cap off outreach on the draft plan with an open house public meeting at the Holiday Inn Downtown, 200 South Pattee Street, from 6 to 9 p.m. With the feedback gathered on the draft, the working group will revise the plan, and then ask the Board of County Commissioners and City Council to adopt the plan and begin implementation, a process most likely to culminate in January 2013.

Thank you for your interest in Reaching Home, your willingness to provide constructive feedback on this draft, and for your commitment to being part of a community solution to this pressing community problem.

Regards,



Alderman Jason Wiener, Reaching Home Co-Chair

Susan Hay Patrick, CEO, United Way of
Missoula County, Reaching Home Co-Chair