

City of Richmond



March 27, 2024

Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors
P.O. Box 40
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832

Chesterfield County Administration
9901 Lori Road
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832

Dear Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors and Dr. Casey:

As you know, since the inception of the Richmond Task Force on Homelessness, homeless services have been coordinated regionally. This coordinated approach led to the formation of both Homeward and the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care, and today it continues to allow us to, as a region, work collaboratively to address one of our country's most complex challenges.

The number of unsheltered residents in our region is growing, and according to Homeward's most recent Point-In-Time count, there are now 681 people in the region experiencing homelessness. Of the 681 individuals counted, 206 are considered truly unsheltered with 475 living in some form of shelter to include emergency shelter. In 2023, there were 690 individuals counted, 188 truly unsheltered and 502 people living in some form of shelter. The increase we see from 2023 to 2024 is nuanced but what we know is that our residents across the region are in need.

Our commitment to ending homelessness has been steadfast, and in 2020, we finalized our Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. The plan was developed by the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, in partnership with the city's Department of Social Services. Additionally, we established a Homeless Advisory Council to lend additional recommendations around strategies to combat homelessness, specifically in the City of Richmond.

Given that most of the region's shelters are located within the city, we oftentimes see an overrepresentation of unsheltered individuals seeking refuge within the city. This is why over the past year-and-a-half we have worked towards three expressed goals to better support both the city and the region's unsheltered residents. Those goals include:

- Expanding year-round emergency shelter capacity;
- Identifying a permanent inclement weather shelter location and experienced non-profit provider/operator; and

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- Establishing a community resource and training center to support the region's unsheltered residents.

In August 2023, conversations with two non-profit providers, The Salvation Army and Home Again, galvanized into full partnerships. In September 2023, our Chief Administrative Officer, Lincoln Saunders, presented a proposal to the Richmond City Council and in the fall that proposal was fully adopted.

Inclement Weather Shelter (Single Adult Men and Women) and Year-Round Shelter (Single Adult Men)

The first component of this proposal was to establish a permanent 150-bed inclement weather shelter (IWS) for single adult men and women at 1900 Chamberlayne Avenue under the operation of The Salvation Army. This shelter is operating during the inclement weather season (November 15 – April 15), with the shelter opening for additional days between April 16-November 15 as dictated by the weather (92 degrees and above, 40 degrees or below, at least one inch of precipitation within a 24-hour period, heavy wind, or tornadoes.). An additional contract was recently adopted by the Richmond City Council—allowing the City of Richmond to convert 50 of the current 150 inclement weather shelter beds to year-round beds for single adult men beginning May 1, 2024. These beds will be part of the region's coordinated entry system which is prioritized by Homeward. It retains 100 of the current 150 beds as IWS beds for single men and women during the inclement weather season (November 16 – April 15). These beds are walk-up, first-come first-served. Additionally, these 100 IWS beds for single men and women will still be activated during severe weather events.

Year-Round Shelter (Families)

Additionally, in the fall of 2023, the Richmond City Council adopted our proposal allowing us to open a 50-bed year-round family shelter at 7. North 2nd Street under the operation of Home Again. These beds are also a part of the region's coordinated entry system and have been serving families from across the region since December 1, 2023. Home Again has seen an increase in families in need coming from the counties and we continue to support all families, regardless of their last identified residence.

Collectively, these shelters represent a significant increase in both year-round and inclement weather shelter capacity for the region. These efforts, while critical and necessary to support our region's unsheltered residents, come at a cost. The total cost of the contracts and city-provided security services is over \$3.7 million. Our teams have met on several occasions over the past year as the city developed its plan to meet the needs of the growing unsheltered population in our region.

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Additionally, our regional administrators have discussed that once we had agreements in place the city would welcome, and request, regional support so that these shelters can be regional resources. Homelessness and housing insecurity knows no boundaries. The City of Richmond has declared a Housing Crisis, but we know that your locality is also experiencing the same challenges we are, with rising rents and significant pressure on our available housing stock. We are all working to prevent families from experiencing homelessness – but we know that for the foreseeable future, unsheltered families and individuals will require our collective support to get on a path to stability.

This is why we write to formally request that you consider our request to join Henrico County in contributing 25 percent towards the cost of these critical resources for our most vulnerable population.

We look forward to hearing from you soon on this critical matter.

In Service,

Levar M. Stoney
Mayor

Kristen M. Nye
City Council President
Councilmember – 4th Voter District

CC: The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – City Council Vice President and 3rd Voter District Councilmember
J.E. Lincoln Saunders – Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Richmond
Maggie Anderson – Chief of Staff to Mayor Levar M. Stoney
The Honorable Tyrone E. Nelson – Chairman for Henrico County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Dan J. Schmitt – Vice Chairman for Henrico County Board of Supervisors
John Vithoulkas – County Manager for Henrico County