 Binghamton launches new strategy for

Binghamton launches new strategy for homelessness homelessness

Jillian McCarthy
Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin |
USA TODAY NETWORK

The City of Binghamton is beginning a yearlong street outreach strategy to house unhoused Binghamton residents and permanently close encampments.

Binghamton Mayor Jared Kraham announced on Nov. 2 the new strategy, "Open Doors, Safe Spaces," will use direct street outreach teams who will go to street encampments and provide access to housing and support services.

The city will contract with Catholic Charities of Broome County to fund housing subsidies for encampment residents. Once these residents are housed, assigned caseworkers will provide "intensive stabilization support, including facilitating treatment for mental health, substance use and healthcare resources," according to Kraham.

"We will be using proven strategies that have worked in cities larger and small all across the region, all across the nation, and we will be working with a tried and true community non-proIt in Catholic Charities of Broome County that has been in this space for many decades," he said.

Binghamton City Council member Rebecca Rathmell joined Kraham in announcing the strategy, an approach that she said has been "six months in the making." On any given night in Binghamton, Rathmell said about 75 residents sleep on the city’s streets, in encampments, under bridges and overpasses, on the riverbank and in a dozen other locations "not at all meant for human habitation."

"While I can tell you that that represents a 400% increase in street homelessness within the city post COVID, you don’t need to know those numbers to look around and see how pervasive street homelessness has become," she said.

Rathmell said the initiative has two measurable goals — housing 100 people who have been sleeping on the street, and activating early interventions in local shelters to shiW the "current waiting room culture" by housing an additional 180 sheltered residents over that same one-year period of time.

Tonya Brown, executive director of Catholic Charities of Broome County, said she is proud to partner with the city to connect unhoused residents with housing and further support in order to build a "more stable future."

"Everyone deserves a safe place to call home and the opportunity to move forward with dignity," she said.

Once residents are housed and connected to services, the Binghamton Department of Public Works will work to clear encampments that can be found on city riverfronts and public property. The Binghamton Police Department will enforce the permanent closure.

The new initiative was created with support from Community Solutions, a nonprolt organization that aims to help municipalities help their unhoused populations. Clutch Consulting, a Community Solutions partner, designed Binghamton's "Direct to Housing model," the lrst of its kind to be deployed in New York, according to Kraham.

Rathmell said the initiative began with the city's pause on encampment sweeps in May and continued in July with a two-day training in Binghamton for various state agencies, healthcare, local social service agencies and municipal sta] to analyze Broome County's homelessness response and develop a plan of action in response.

Kraham said the training identiled a total lnancial investment of $3 million to achieve the city's initiative goals within one year.



People from the Hawley Street Encampment and Citizen Action of NY attended the July 16 Broome People from the Hawley Street Encampment and Citizen Action of NY attended the July 16 Broome County Legislative meeting to demand action to County Legislative meeting to demand action to the ongoing housing crisis. Several demonstrators the ongoing housing crisis. Several demonstrators were removed and arrested for disruption. were removed and arrested for disruption. Kalyn Grant/Press & Sun Bulletin Kalyn Grant/Press & Sun Bulletin

© 2016 www.democratandchronicle.com. All rights reserved. Powered by TECNAVIA