



Veterans Support Council, Inc.

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We need to take the next step in solving Indy's Homeless problem.

Public-private partnerships are the only answer to Homelessness.

First of all, let me state that I do not believe we will ever get 100% of our homeless population off the streets because of those addicted to drugs and alcohol. Abused persons, persons with mental illness, and those hiding from the law are also going to be hard to house because they don't trust the system or the law, **but that doesn't mean we should stop trying.**

That being said, in my opinion, the only way society will ever be able to significantly reduce Veteran homelessness, or any homeless problem for that matter, is to get the private sector involved in this problem. The city can not be everything to everybody. The private sector must step up, and we know they will only get involved when it's to their financial advantage or benefit.

After working with our Homeless, ExOffenders, and Veterans for over 20 years, I'm convinced this problem will only be solved when we collectively develop a series of public-private partnerships to solve this problem.

As a community, **we must find ways to develop additional housing** for our homeless population. Remember, our homeless population is made up of our brothers, sisters, moms, dads, aunts, uncles, etc., who have fallen on hard times for one reason or another. They are our family members who need our help. Indianapolis is fortunate enough to have a great group of organizations that have been working on this problem for years. CHIP, HIP, Horizon House, Wheeler Mission, HVAF, and VOA have all made great strides in helping to solve this problem in the last few years, but it's still not enough.

The local businesses and corporations that have invested heavily in our beautiful downtown area just want the homeless problem to go away. We all do, but we must start working together to solve this problem. Most businesses will say, "We pay our taxes and that the city should handle the homeless problem." Obviously, our taxes are not enough to solve the homeless problem alone. Money from the private sector is the answer; we must collectively figure out ways to pull it together for our family members on the streets and our community.

Public-private partnerships are the answer – The Rubin Engagement Center is an excellent example of a public-private partnership. Several of us (homeless outreach groups and city council members led by Leroy Robinson) worked on the Rubin Engagement Center a few years ago. Still, it only served a small segment of our chronic homeless problem. Without the (private) donation from the Rubin family, the Rubin Engagement Center would never have happened. Once funded, the city's Sheriff's Department (public) stepped in with the help of Eskenazi Hospital, and a private-public partnership was born to make the Engagement Center a reality.

What We Still Need To Do:

We need to build a secular community Emergency Shelter (managed by city & professional & faith-based volunteers) that caters to not only our general homeless population but to our homeless population with mental health, drug, and alcohol issues.

The city of Indianapolis has relied upon and depended on organizations like Wheeler Mission and the Salvation Army for over 125 years. Even though they have done a great job, they have not had the resources to solve the problem alone. It's time the city stepped up and took the next step in creating its own emergency shelter. Politically, I know this would not be possible without the help of the private sector. Still, it's time for the city to take responsibility for its less fortunate citizens.

- **We need more Transitional Housing units**, which will enable us to move people from our already overcrowded Emergency Shelters into a Transitional Housing environment, thus getting more people off the streets. The sooner we get people from our shelters into Transitional Housing, the sooner we can get them the multi-level help/services they need. Shelters are only meant to be temporary stays for a limited time.
- **We need more Rapid Rehousing units**, which will enable us to move more people from a Transitional Housing environment to their own homes.
- **We need more Permanent Supportive Housing units**, which will enable us to move people into their own permanent homes.
- We need to be able to help people obtain and maintain their own homes.

- I would like to see our community build two or three authorized "Tent Cities" for the homeless living on our streets where the city could provide information on Homelessness, security, restrooms, and trash pick-up, thus allowing some of the homeless to set up tents in a safe and secure environment instead of some of the unsafe, unhealthy environments they are currently living in. Plus, they would be a much safer place for our Street Ministries to set up food lines and our Professional Outreach Teams when they visit the homeless. ***I get shot down whenever I bring this up with City Council Members.***

We Need to Get a Combination of These Groups Involved:

Veterans Service Providers | Housing Service Providers | Private Housing for Veterans | Public Housing for Veterans | Public-Private Housing for Veterans | Local Corporate Sponsors | City & State Officials | City & State Legislators

In Conclusion:

It's time we, as a community, come together and take the next step in solving our homeless problem by getting the public, private, and corporate sectors together with our existing homeless service providers that have been working on this problem for years. We must also bring in our City Officials and State Legislators to further develop ways (grants, tax incentives, etc.) for the private sector to benefit from helping Indy solve this problem. ***Public-private partnerships are the only way to solve our homelessness problem, as it has been for many other projects here in Indy.***

If you have any suggestions or additional input on accomplishing our goals, please get in touch with me at (317) 632-0500 or via email at Hawkins@Veterans.ooo. You can also check out our housing webpage at www.Veterans.ooo/housing.

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