

AURORA@HOME

Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026





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Executive Summary

Aurora@Home is a group of nonprofit and government leaders who work collaboratively to help address the challenges presented by housing insecurity and homelessness. As the organization grew, the need for formal structure was identified. In 2021 and 2022, decisions were made on the future structure of Aurora@Home, bylaws were developed and approved, and the strategic planning process began. This work has culminated in this document, the 2023 - 2026 Aurora@Home Strategic Plan.

In this strategic plan, recommendations are laid out in the following six categories:

Systems Mapping - to ensure access to services is streamlined and understandable

Prevention - to decrease the number of people who experience homelessness

Street Outreach - to effectively engage those in need with immediate services

Centralized Intake - to decrease the number of times people need to ask for services

Data Collection and Integrity - to ensure there is accurate data available to providers

Communications - to maintain clear and concise communication channels

The recommendations in this plan are built off of the existing infrastructure of homelessness and housing services available in Aurora. The recommendations of this plan were constructed with the Aurora Housing Strategy in mind, along with input from service providers, to ensure changes to the landscape of homelessness and housing services in Aurora proposed in this plan worked for the people on the ground. As seen in the Aurora Housing Strategy, 5% of Aurora residents are living in temporary situations - with family, friends, at motels, etc. This means that there are around 20,000 residents of Aurora that need housing and homelessness support services.

Within the 20,000 residents experiencing some form of housing instability, 612 people in Aurora are experiencing street homelessness in Aurora according to the July 2022 Point In Time Count. This is a 43% increase compared to this time last year, and underscores the impact of world events on the lives of residents. With these statistics in mind, the importance of flexibly and persistently addressing homelessness is underscored.

The recommendations in this plan seek to mitigate the time spent experiencing homelessness, to provide Aurora residents with clear paths to services, and to streamline communication between service providers. When the recommendations are fully implemented, Aurora will act as a cohesive unit addressing homelessness in a coordinated manner. These changes will ensure people experiencing homelessness know where to go, what to expect, and how to get back on their feet.

Aurora@Home thanks you for your time and consideration. Together we can support residents of Aurora to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.





Executive Summary (cont.)

Engagement and Input Process





Introduction

Aurora@Home is a group of nonprofit and government leaders who work collaboratively to help address the challenges presented by housing insecurity and homelessness. As the organization has grown, the need for clear organizational structure and direction arose. This need is being responded to by the Board of Aurora@Home by formalizing organizational bylaws, exploring options to structure the organization, and this strategic plan. The steps listed above are all done intentionally for Aurora@Home to reach populations that have historically been forgotten, expand service provision to as many people as possible, and make the process of navigating homelessness in Aurora as easy as possible. The members are voluntary and work together to accomplish common goals. Members of the group include representatives from the Colorado Division of Housing, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, county departments of health and human services, the City of Aurora, local hospitals and behavioral health centers, school districts, the Aurora Housing Authority, and numerous nonprofit organizations. A full list of members and partners in the strategic planning process are included in Appendix A. This group worked collaboratively with the City of Aurora to create the Housing Strategy which was adopted in December of 2020 to address housing needs in the community.

This comprehensive plan covers key areas of service provision in addition to strategies to increase the availability of affordable housing for the community. Included in the plan are also efforts to improve employment opportunities and revenue for people, and access to supportive services. The focus of the recommendations laid out in the plan is to both increase the availability of housing and to ensure that people receive the supportive services to maintain their housing through permanent supportive housing.

Upon completion of the Housing Strategy efforts, the members of Aurora@Home came together to work on a strategic plan for the collaborative. While these efforts were underway, the City of Aurora and partner agencies continued to respond to the immediate needs of people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness and made significant progress in creating additional opportunities for meeting the needs of the community. These efforts are updated by the City of Aurora, Community Development and can be found here. Some of these efforts include:

- Safe Outdoor Spaces (SOS) were created to provide non-congregate shelter during COVID-19
- SOS services were expanded and Pallet Shelters were added to create a safer, more dignified space for the residents.
- Food bank services in Aurora have been expanded to reach the larger community
- City Council is in the process of approving additional sheltering options
- The Aurora Flexible Housing Fund (formerly HAP) was created to provide housing stability to our most vulnerable residents.
- Housing locator software for the general public is in the process of being added to the City website.

In addition to the efforts above, the City of Aurora is providing the following services to support people experiencing homelessness:

- Four additional outreach workers have been hired
- An outreach manager position has been created
- An additional van to support outreach work has been secured



Introduction (cont.)

The work of the collaborative is supported by voluntary contributions from the members, with the Aurora Housing Authority acting as the central coordinator. The City of Aurora provides additional staff support. This collaborative is a continuum of partners working to achieve common goals. Aurora Housing Authority, the City of Aurora, Aurora Mental Health, and other partner organizations work together to achieve the mission and vision of Aurora@Home. In developing this strategic plan, Aurora@Home met as an organization from September of 2021 through August of 2022 to examine the landscape of housing and homelessness services available in Aurora, Colorado. This three year strategic plan includes recommendations intended to achieve positive outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, people at risk of experiencing homelessness, people fleeing domestic violence, and for people who are currently receiving housing assistance. The recommendations are grouped under 6 organizational strategies, seen below:

- Systems Mapping to increase the ability of people to quickly and effectively access services and available housing resources by ensuring that staff members at provider agencies are able to expedite referrals
- Prevention to decrease the number of people who are at risk of becoming homeless or are newly homeless
- Street Outreach will be supported to more effectively engage those in need with immediate services and housing
- Centralized Intake to decrease the number of times people need to request assistance and overall effective coordination of resources
- Data Collection and Integrity to ensure that there is accurate data to analyze outcomes, identify services gaps and ensure a positive return on investment and sustainable outcomes
- Communication between providers, people in need, and the community to understand resources and responses

The recommendations laid out in this plan also require coordination with the Aurora Housing Strategy. Through increasing coordination with the Aurora Housing Plan, Permanent Supportive Housing and affordable housing supports can be leveraged to prevent people from being evicted in the first place. This plan represents the front door for preventing homelessness and achieving housing stability in Aurora. The housing plan provides the necessary stabilization components to complement the crisis intervention and diversion efforts outlined throughout this plan.

The VISION of Aurora@Home is to provide cross-jurisdictional and organizational collaboration to support strategic coordination of culturally responsive, trauma-informed services to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time. Aurora@Home collaborates to create equitable service delivery utilizing a trauma-informed lens and by addressing historic disparities and inequities. Homelessness is a complex challenge necessitating an array of holistic, coordinated supports leading to housing stability. The strategic plan focuses on increasing the services and outreach impact offered through Aurora@Home, expanding mapping of services and collaboration with other agencies, expanding data collection, creating new systems when needed,



Introduction (cont.)

and communicating Aurora's homelessness strategy in order to provide high-quality services. This work is undertaken to achieve the Mission of the partnership of nonprofits, governmental agencies, and specifically of the City of Aurora to provide and coordinate a complete array of services and supports needed by people who have ties to Aurora.

In achieving these goals, the values of A@H collaborative provide invaluable guidance for the work. Specifically:

- Aurora@Home believes people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and will function through an equitable, collaborative, and trauma-informed lens.
- Aurora@Home prioritizes learning from those who have experienced housing insecurity/instability and value their involvement. There are no 'homeless people' but rather people who have lost their homes or are in danger of losing their homes.
- Recommendations for services and systems are based on consumer voice, data, evidence, and promising best practices.

This work is occurring as America experiences a homelessness crisis, which means many more Americans are experiencing homelessness and desperately need support to get back on their feet. [According to the July 2022 Point In Time Count](#), done by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, homelessness in Aurora has gone up 43% when compared to the January 2022 count. This increase represents 612 people experiencing homelessness, up from 427. This increase in 185 people experiencing homelessness represents a trend that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights the deep need to produce lasting changes to the landscape of housing services to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one time.

We believe that the strategies and recommendations laid out in this plan will help achieve our vision, and we thank you for your time to read our 2023 - 2026 strategic plan. As a collaborative, A@H also knows the power of working together, and invites readers to become involved with local community agencies as volunteers, donors, and interested community members to support and further these efforts.

Introduction (cont.)



MISSION: *partnering with nonprofits, governmental agencies, and the City of Aurora to provide and coordinates a complex array of services and supports.*

Vision: Providing cross-jurisdictional and organizational collaboration to support strategic coordination of culturally responsive, trauma-informed services to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and one-time.



Vision: Collaborating to create equitable service delivery utilizing a trauma-informed care lens and addressing historic disparities and inequities.

Vision: Understanding that homelessness is a complex challenge necessitating an array of holistic, coordinated supports leading to housing resolution and stability.



Values: People deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and will function through an equitable, collaborative, and trauma-informed care lens.

Values: Prioritizing learning from those who have experienced housing insecurity/instability and value their involvement.



Values: Recommendations for services and systems are based on consumer voice, data, evidence, and promising best practices.



Community Feedback and Engagement

To ensure the recommendations within this plan embody the values above, Aurora@Home held two focus groups to gain authentic community feedback on the landscape of homelessness services in Aurora. A survey was also distributed to providers to gain an understanding of their alignment with the Aurora@Home strategic plan, which received 45 responses. Their feedback informed the urgency of what recommendations are implemented first, and the feasibility of implementing cross-organizational recommendations. A complete analysis of the survey results can be found in Appendix B.

A focus group of people with lived experience of homelessness was conducted, which informed the urgency in this plan to support comprehensive awareness of resources and services through System Mapping, Prevention, and Street Outreach and this feedback was incorporated into those sections. A second focus group brought together service providers who have not been engaged in the strategic planning process to gain insight into their perspectives on service collaboration in Aurora. This input helped inform the sections on communication and the overall goals. While results from the focus groups have been shared with the strategic planning teams, to respect the anonymity of the focus group participants, the analysis of these groups will be kept confidential.

A check-in with Street Outreach Teams was conducted to ensure recommendations reflected the support needed to provide quality service to people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness. Street Outreach feedback can be found within the section of Street Outreach below along with collaborative feedback gained from the Board.

This specific outreach was in addition to the ongoing meetings with the Board Members, planning teams, retreats with the operational leaders, and solicited input from the outreach staff members.





Strategies and Recommendations

Summary

System Mapping

- Identify resources to create a comprehensive list of housing and other available services
- Create a visual of case workers across organizations with adequate information
- Ensure there is a system in place to continually update and maintain data
- Create and fund an action plan for ensuring systems are continually kept up to date.
- Explore where consumers are most likely to experience wait times and address these service gaps.
- Expand mapping efforts to other community-based organizations in Aurora



Prevention Effort



- Create a Prevention Stakeholder Subcommittee led by the City
- Determine ROI on funds spent in COVID relief and budget for future work
- Create a Court Strategy and Coordinated effort/subcommittee
- Request that personal documents be added to existing database systems.
- Engage with others to understand and participate in regional approaches for prevention efforts
- Create a prevention education campaign for tenants and landlords
- Implement centralized case managers that refer to other organizations as needed.
- Create a landlord incentive fund to incentivize working with tenants.

Street Outreach

- Enhance the Outreach Coordination meeting led by the City
- Improve coordination between outreach and case management to reduce duplication of efforts
- Clarify referrals and increase access to referrals to expedite the chances of successful interventions
- Understand staff turnover and ways to support individual organizations with best practices
- Create a staff development program across organizations for outreach workers
- Pilot a program that allows staff from individual organizations to visit other organizations for educational purposes





Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Summary (cont.)

Centralized Intake System for Consumers



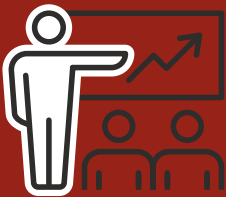
- **Work with the City of Aurora on creation of the One-Stop Shop to reduce redundancy of applications and referrals**
- **A@H will engage in ongoing regional collaborative relationships, supporting the development of innovative projects**
- **Create a Group of Centralized Intake Staff**
- **Create or utilize existing shared data system(s) for legal identification and intake**
- **Implement and Evaluate Shared Intake Staffing**
- **Replicate successful efforts and continue evaluation efforts**

Data Collection and Integrity

- Create a data committee with the City
- Create a data-driven inventory of housing available in Aurora
- Promote data sharing to understand gaps and successes
- Utilize data to better communicate challenges, opportunities, and successes



Communications



- Increase and improve internal communication for A@H members
- Increase communication with external partners to promote clear understanding and to support a collaborative effort
- Create a sense of greater shared investments responsibility for A@H
- Increase regional awareness of Aurora@Home and coordinate efforts for both internal and external communications as well as relationship building
- Create External Communication Plan and Strategy



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

System Mapping

to increase the ability of people to quickly and effectively access services and available housing resources by ensuring that staff members at provider agencies are able to expedite referrals

The referral process currently in Aurora is often difficult for consumers, providers, and funders to understand. In addition to that, referrals in Aurora are often based on personal connections and individual's knowledge of how to navigate the systems available to them. While positive outcomes are achieved by those who know what to do and who to ask, it is not the way that homelessness services should be made available. The current method of referring in Aurora is also subject to significant delays if someone changes jobs, since the informal referral system is then lost until new relationships can be built.

Because of this, there is a need for clarity on how progressive engagement occurs for consumers, how referrals are made, how waitlists are organized, and general clarity around the process of getting people the help they need. This clarity will help reduce the amount of wait time for people who are requesting services. The vision of this strategy is that Aurora@Home will act as a centralized place for service organizations to engage, streamlining the referral process, and improve needed connections between service openings and people in need. Cities, such as Houston, Texas, which have done this work have been able to [reduce the waiting time for housing by 30-50%](#). **Once systems are mapped, the key is to determine how to expedite the process and immediately access available and appropriate resources for the consumer.**

*“You can’t have a life if you don’t have housing first”
Service recipient*

Recommendations to Achieve the Strategy

Year 1

Identify resources to create a comprehensive list of housing and other available services.

- Create easy-to-use tools with flow charts/visuals to help consumers access services, and increase the number of staff employed at Aurora@Home, and/or through the Navigation Center currently under development, to meet the demand of consumers while providing high-quality referrals to other organizations.

Create a visual of case workers across organizations with adequate information to ensure referrals occur.

- The visual will include information such as title, direct contact information, names, and more as identified as important by Aurora@Home and partner organizations.
- Aurora@Home will explore the level of detail desired by partner organizations and how to maintain the system to maximize ease of use and usefulness.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

System Mapping (cont.)

Year 1 (cont.)

Ensure there is a system in place to continually update and maintain data on available resources, organizational contacts, individual points of contact, referral pathways, etc.

- Determine if existing platforms are options or if a new platform needs to be built.
- Explore United Us, Aunt Bertha, HMIS, etc.
- Explore resources needed to create a new platform.
- Look to resources like the Homeless Resource Guide as a starting point.
Streamline communication between organizations by deliberately choosing the best system for Aurora's needs.

Year 2

Create and fund an action plan for ensuring systems are continually kept up to date.

Explore and understand where consumers are most likely to experience wait times and work to address these service gaps.

Year 3

Expand mapping efforts to other community-based organizations beyond those active with A@H.

Measurements and Deliverables

- The map of existing services will be completed by June 30, 2023.
- The map of desired services and other organizations to partner with will be completed by September 31, 2023 for implementation by December 31, 2023.
- Maintenance of systems and data integrity will be maintained continuously with evaluation of waiting times for services.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Prevention Effort

to decrease the number of people who are at risk of becoming homeless or are newly homeless

The best way to address homelessness is to prevent people from experiencing it in the first place; however, prevention efforts often go unreported and unappreciated. By definition, prevention and diversion of people from homelessness are meant to reduce the number of people entering homelessness. The State of Colorado Division of Housing reported a number of causes for homelessness including lack of affordable housing, health challenges, and systemic inequities in their [September 2021 Report Homelessness in Colorado](#).

Throughout the pandemic, the Denver Metro area identified an increase of 10% in families needing shelter and 27% for individuals; with a doubling of people experiencing homelessness for the first time. Through landlord and tenant education and outreach campaigns, currently underway through the City of Aurora, stronger support systems will be maintained, decreasing the number of people who enter the eviction court system. Preventing people from facing eviction also saves the city money. In 2021, a total of \$13,152,097 was spent on eviction prevention, which provided support to 1,736 households. This service is extremely helpful to residents in Aurora; however, helping people not enter the eviction process at all will support positive outcomes for residents and reduce the cost burden of paying out support dollars.

It is important to note that a significant number of people experiencing homelessness are in their situation due to fleeing domestic violence. While the primary focus of this set of recommendations is to support people at risk of experiencing homelessness due to monetary reasons, the need to prevent people leaving domestic violence situations from experiencing homelessness is also essential to providing quality services.

Finally, people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness often don't think about the jurisdictional borders that exist around them. Maintaining a homelessness services workforce that knows about the landscape of homelessness in Colorado will allow Aurora@Home to plug into a greater regional effort to prevent homelessness. This can only come through intentional, regular investment in the people on the ground, and their importance cannot be underlined enough.

“I found support through Aurora@Home, and was finally able to start rebuilding my life.”
Service recipient



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Prevention Effort (cont.)

Recommendations to Achieve the Strategy

Year 1

Create a Prevention Stakeholder Subcommittee led by the City.

- Involve all organizations providing eviction assistance.
- Involve and coordinate with the courts.
- Involve Adams and Arapahoe County Human Services Child Support Services for coordination regarding eviction actions and to help educate the community regarding child support payment options.
- Provide ongoing education for personnel on eviction assistance.
- Explore how the City can help people fleeing domestic violence from experiencing homelessness.

Determine ROI on funds spent in COVID relief and budget for future work.

- Seek funding to continue the services activated by COVID-prevention funding.
- Re-evaluate funding streams affected by COVID.
- Understand lessons learned for developing future strategies and funding requests.

Create a Court Strategy and Coordinated effort/subcommittee to undertake work with support from City staff.

- Involve the courts, and legal experts who represent consumers in court, in stakeholder efforts (such as Colorado Poverty Law Project, Colorado Legal Services, Colorado COVID-19 Eviction Defense Project).
- Work towards a plan for waiving court fees or having a fund for payment of court fees.
- Provide eviction assistance for people who are going to court.
- Provide mediation prior to court with tenant, landlord, and caseworker.
- Hold mandatory/incentivised trainings for DEI and cultural competency to support sensitivity towards tenants and understanding of issues affecting them.

Request that social security cards, ID's, birth certificates, etc be added to the HS Connects, MyColorado app/ HMIS systems.

- At every opportunity with consumers start creating centralized documents
- **Year 1:** Conduct outreach to MyColorado, and other relevant databases/providers, that integration of their data into the homelessness service ecosystem is a goal of Aurora@Home.
- This will be an ongoing process that is anticipated to take more than one year to complete.
- Upkeep of the system to ensure new additions are being made will be required long-term.
- Explore integration with domestic violence systems, such as CAFE. Over 50% of people experiencing homelessness experience domestic violence, and communicating with those systems is essential to quality service delivery.

There are confidentiality issues with integrating CAFE into HMIS that need to be understood.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Prevention Effort (cont.)

Year 2

Engage with others, such as MDHI, to understand and participate in regional approaches for prevention efforts and all areas through regional coordination and understanding of existing regional efforts.

- Region is defined as the metro counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties.

Create a prevention education campaign for tenants and landlords.

- Work with the communications team to design and implement this campaign.
- Build on the Systems Mapping recommendations to ensure the referral process is easy and understandable to navigate.

Request that social security cards, ID's, birth certificates, etc be added to the HS Connects, MyColorado app/ HMIS systems.

- Year 2: Explore integrating vaccine records, ID's, and other relevant data from MyColorado and similar sources into the database.

Year 3

Implement centralized case managers that refer to other organizations as needed.

- Create a working group to design efforts, including resources required, to implement next steps.
Strategies may include:
 - Create a centralized intake assessment.
 - Work with HMIS to ensure that there is a centralized data collection system.
 - Establish case manager teams so when one person leaves the clients still have a network to reachout to.
 - Centralized referrals.
 - Determine who would lead and hire these staff members.
 - Identify funding sources.
 - Create data systems which are also easily accessible for multiple providers.

Create a landlord incentive fund to incentivize working with tenants.

- Help landlords to provide ample tenant notice of eviction.
- Help landlords understand and encourage use of prevention funding to avoid evictions.

Request that social security cards, ID's, birth certificates, etc be added to HS Connects, MyColorado app, and HMIS.

- Begin integrating federal systems to automatically have information such as Social Security Numbers.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Prevention Effort (cont.)

Measurements and Deliverables

- Annual Tracking:
 - Evictions
 - Foreclosures
 - Court hearings for eviction cases
- Family stability for those who receive services will be tracked over time.
 - 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year increments will be tracked.
- Changes to service availability and use before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic.





Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Street Outreach

to more effectively engage those in need with immediate services and housing.

Street outreach is essential to providing comprehensive, supportive services to people experiencing homelessness. The US Interagency Council on Homeless has found that street outreach is most effective with experienced and well trained staff who are able to be coordinated. In addition, street outreach is most effective when utilizing a person-centered approach, and when information and data entry processes are coordinated. Staff who receive regular training are also more likely to be effective. It is a highly skilled role that requires continuing and conscious investment in the workforce to ensure positive outcomes. Workers are often required to understand how to navigate highly complex public and private systems while building relationships with people who are experiencing a high level of trauma and may have a history of physical and/or mental/behavioral illnesses. Unfortunately, high staff turnover has been reported as a consistent concern across Aurora. It is believed that the high turnover is due to noncompetitive salaries, stress induced burnout, and promotion opportunities from outside organizations. In addition to this, street outreach workers have reported that a lack of ongoing training and internal career development opportunities lead to a perception that their skills and contributions are not valued.

A challenge historically has been getting caseworker and referral staff the necessary background knowledge to understand the full suite of potential supports available to people at risk of experiencing homelessness, which underscores the importance of implementing the Systems Mapping strategy. In addition to that, career development and growth opportunities for case managers, proper and regular training, professional development opportunities, and an outlined path for increasing pay will improve both the longevity of case managers and their ability to navigate the array of services available in Aurora.

With the human capital of supported, valued case workers in place, a plan can be developed to better anticipate and facilitate moving people into all forms of housing. Valued staff and organizations with historical knowledge will also allow caseworkers to emotionally support people in times of transition, as people on the cusp of experiencing homelessness often have to leave things behind or lose cherished memories in the process of relocating. That level of emotional trauma directly leads to burnout and turnover of case workers, which points to the need for supportive services to be implemented and made available to all staff in the sector.

These issues result in a lack of street outreach staff that are adequately trained and experienced being able to make impactful referrals. In the interest of supporting people experiencing homelessness, and supporting our workforce, the following recommendations are put forward. Implementation of these recommendations are anticipated to improve the daily quality of work of street outreach workers, which will directly impact the quality of services provided to people experiencing homelessness.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Street Outreach (cont.)

ACTION STEPS

Year 1

Enhance the Outreach Coordination meeting led by the City.

- Further engage with all outreach workers to help design systems that work for them.
- Further define outreach efforts and the overall approach to street outreach in Aurora.
- Increase the number and quality of street outreach with people experiencing homelessness.
- Establish and strengthen connections between organizations to increase collaboration.
- Increase engagement with centralized intake services to streamline referrals.

Improve coordination between outreach and case management to reduce duplication of efforts.

- Create a consistent definition of services provided by case managers and outreach workers in order to expand staff development and overall coordination.
 - Define street outreach, community outreach, outreach to organizations, outreach and education for City and County Staff, and other types of outreach.
 - Develop protocol on how to request support from one another and develop a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities for the coordination of the team of workers from diverse organizations.

Year 2

Clarify referrals and increase access to referrals for consumers who are working with outreach staff members to expedite the chances of successful interventions.

Understand staff turnover and ways to support individual organizations with best practices.

- Evaluate retention to better understand successful strategies within organizations such as compensation, staff development, and career pathways.
- Provide staff support including debriefs from interventions including bereavement support when clients are deceased.

Create a staff development program across organizations for outreach workers.

- Maintain a collaborative spirit as new partners are onboarded.
- Improve communication between partners and awareness of services offered by other organizations.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Street Outreach (cont.)

Year 3

Pilot a program that allows staff from individual organizations to visit other organizations for educational purposes.

- This sharing of practices and information will comprehensively increase the understanding of what homelessness services are available in Aurora, create connections and pathways that can help expedite getting people the help they need, and provide continued learning/professional development opportunities for staff.

Measurements and Deliverables

- Number of contacts made
- Types of contacts made
- Referrals made
- Consistency of data entry into HMIS/CAFE
- Length of time street outreach workers stay in their role
- Presentations and training provided





Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Centralized Intake System for Consumers

to decrease the number of times people need to request assistance and overall effective coordination of resources

Communities ranging from [Charleston, SC](#) to [San Francisco, CA](#) to [Englewood, CO](#) have employed centralized intake or navigation centers as a way to improve access and the timeliness of services, track service recipients, and provide ongoing support to help people stabilize in housing. Both consumer and staff members report that there are currently barriers to accessing services in Aurora. These can come in many forms, including needing multiple referrals to end up on multiple waitlists, confusion about which services are being offered, difficulty accessing a service appropriate to the consumer's needs, and needing to physically travel to multiple locations to check up on waitlists. People with lived experience of homelessness likened accessing services to a full-time job due to these issues, further complicating holding a job to achieve self-sufficiency and stability.

Concurrently with the publishing of this plan, the City of Aurora is supporting the development of the Ridgeview Campus Redesign, which is converting an available space into a shelter with a 250 bed capacity. An additional 10 - 15 families will be able to stay at the Healthcare Montview Emergency Family Center during cold weather months when the facility is completed and operational. This project has the potential to scale, and adds further emergency relief to those in need. Finally, Aurora Mental Health is developing a Mental Health Safety Net Campus, in collaboration with STRIDE Community Health Center and the Aurora Housing Authority to support people grappling with substance use disorder and detoxification. This pilot also is being conducted with the potential for scaling in mind. These resources will be monitored for success and plugged into the centralized intake system as it is rolled out. Connecting people in need to these services underscores the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of resources available in Aurora.

The goal of this strategy is to address these barriers to services discussed above. Through establishing a centralized intake model, many of these barriers will be resolved. Through supporting an "all doors lead to services" approach, the time it takes to navigate the system, get people sorted into appropriate services, and physical travel time can be reduced and/or eliminated. This can be achieved through a conscious alignment of assessment and intake methodologies across agencies, and is essential to achieving positive outcomes for consumers. While the recommendations in this plan will not, and are not intended to, result in a single stream that all people must go through to receive services, it does seek to streamline the available paths to services with the goal of reducing wait times and matching the best service to the needs of the individual.

ACTION STEPS

Year 1

Work with the City of Aurora on creation of the One-Stop Shop (Navigation Center) to reduce redundancy of applications and referrals.

- Evaluate efforts for innovations, budgeting, planning, and service needs.
- Work with A@H to increase services for people utilizing the center.
- Upon proven success for single individuals, expand the work to meet the needs of other populations such as families.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Centralized Intake System for Consumers (cont.)

Year 1 (cont.)

A@H will engage in an ongoing regional collaborative relationships, supporting the development of the following projects:

- Ridgeview
- Montview
- Aurora Mental Health
- Navigation Center

Create a Group of Centralized Intake Staff, leveraging the Prevention Stakeholder Subcommittee from the Prevention recommendations.

- Create a centralized intake form that refers to all available services and aligns with regional intake processes through MDHI.
This form will be shared with all homelessness service providers in Aurora, and supplemental training materials will be provided to ensure comprehensive understanding and adoption of the form.
Available options will be explored to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Determine a hiring entity for centralized intake.
- Determine shared data systems for usage and obtain buy-in from partner agencies.
- Create a budget for centralized intake.
- Secure funding.

Create or utilize existing shared data system(s) for legal identification and intake.

- Expand the usage of the Homeless Management Information System with the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative and further encourage participation in this existing system.
- Work with Arapahoe Human Services to expand the use of HS Connects with partner agencies to access legal identification.
- Work with consumers to use One Colorado for their legal identification.

Year 2

Implement and Evaluate Shared Intake Staffing.

- Evaluate the rate at which warm handoffs are occurring, and develop training materials to support the warm handoff model of case management/outreach work.

Year 3

Replicate successful efforts and continue evaluation efforts.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Centralized Intake System for Consumers (cont.)

Measurements and Deliverables

- Implementation of Centralized Intake
- Document storage and sharing
- Shortened referral times
- Shortened waiting lists

*“We appreciate all the assistance we’ve received thus far. We’re working towards becoming stable.”
Service recipient who is now housed*





Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Data Collection and Integrity

to ensure that there is accurate data to analyze outcomes, identify services gaps and ensure a positive return on investment and sustainable outcomes

The ability to collect and share high-quality data across systems is needed both for real time service delivery and for evaluating the effectiveness of investments. Metrics, such as housing inventory, demographics of people experiencing homelessness, employment status, and more are collected and evaluated by individual providers. This information is essential for each provider but fails to provide an overall understanding of the effectiveness of the combined efforts in Aurora. Individual entities collect extensive data that they need to perform their jobs rather than collaborating on a large-scale data collection effort to create a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of homelessness in Aurora. Through reviewing and expanding data sharing agreements between service providers, school districts, and the City, the quality and quantity of data will be increased and the ability to understand service gaps and effectiveness of interventions will be improved.

When high-quality data is being collected, real-time data sharing on housing and employment statistics will be available to all service providers in Aurora, which will improve outcomes for people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. This will, in turn, increase investment in homelessness services due to an increase in credibility and accountability. Further, creating a shared repository for I.D.s, birth certificates, Social Security Numbers, etc. will improve case worker's ability to support people experiencing homelessness to get back on their feet, as losing documents needed to gain employment and housing are common issues experienced by people living on the streets. Finally, increasing the quality and availability of data will ensure that reporting out on services provided is grounded in data, which will allow for more vibrant and impactful annual reports to be generated.

ACTION STEPS

Year 1

Create a data committee with the City.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora, the Aurora Housing Authority, and all organizations required to report to the City due to funding streams.
- Review data collection for relevancy, shared definitions, opportunities to eliminate duplication, and alignment between agencies.
- Evaluate Key indicators and utilize information for planning throughout Aurora@Home with sensitivity to not ask service providers to collect data in another format.

Create a data-driven inventory of housing available in Aurora.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Data Collection and Integrity (cont.)

Year 2

Promote data sharing to understand gaps and successes.

- Address issues of confidentiality and consumer releases to expedite data sharing.
- Determine most effective systems and encourage consistent use across all providers.
- Explore how domestic violence databases can be integrated without compromising confidentiality.
- Explore integrating other systems, such as school districts, into the database to expand available data.

Utilize data to better communicate challenges, opportunities and successes of the work.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora and the Aurora Housing Authority.

Measurements and Deliverables

- Creation of an annual data report
- Creation of a data dashboard with monthly updates for the public





Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Communications

between providers, people in need, and the community to understand resources and responses

Communicating the landscape of homelessness, and what the City is doing to support people experiencing homelessness, is a challenge for every community. It is also essential to ensure that everyone understands the importance of supporting people experiencing homelessness, and what is being done to support those people. While service providers have a deeper understanding of the roles and services available, this information is often lost between providers and the public. The goal of this strategy is to clearly state who Aurora@Home is, what it is doing, and where homelessness in Aurora is anticipated to go in the next five years.

This will be achieved through clearly communicating the streamlining of services that will occur through implementation of the rest of the plan, providing consistent, accurate, and aligned information and language around homelessness in Aurora, and through celebrating the efficiencies and successes of services offered. Through plainly broadcasting eligibility requirements, destigmatizing accessing services, and increasing awareness of services available, there will be an increase in awareness of homelessness and services provided to people experiencing homelessness in Aurora.

Further, communication between service providers has historically been more informal, leading to a who-you-know method of cross-referral. This slows the rate at which people experiencing homelessness receive services that match their needs, and creates confusion amongst service providers and the public alike. Through careful alignment of communication channels, a more formal system can be established to support quick and effective service delivery.

“Collaboration must remain at the forefront regardless of the direction A@H takes. Collaboration is what will help us all improve the lives of those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness”
Service provider



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Communications (cont.)

ACTION STEPS

Year 1

Increase and improve internal communication for A@H members in order to improve effectiveness.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora, the Aurora Housing Authority, and others.
- Ensure current communication systems are maintained including website, meeting notices, strategic plans and implementation work.
- Clearly define the mission, goals, and shared messaging strategies internally for Aurora@Home.
- Clearly define roles of Aurora@Home, and highlight where partnerships are needed.
- Maintain an active website for community and internal communications.
- The Operations Committee will meet monthly with a hybrid in person/virtual model to communicate efforts, collectively strategize, communicate successes, etc. to ensure shared understanding of the current landscape of Aurora@Home.

Increase communication with external partners to promote clear understanding and exchange of information to support a collaborative effort.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora, the Aurora Housing Authority, and others.
- Annually update community partners and partner organizations of progress made. Include relevant partners such as City governing boards, Aurora City Council, Adams County Board of Commissioners, Arapahoe County Board of Commissioners, Douglas County Board of Commissioners, etc.
- Regularly report on outcomes to external partners including an Annual Report.
- Ensure that the website is regularly updated.

Create a sense of greater shared investments responsibility for A@H.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora, the Aurora Housing Authority, and others.
- Implement the Aurora@Home Bylaws and Governing Board values.
- Update and streamline the member agreements (MOUs) and ensure invoicing and payment for partner contributions occurs in a timely manner.
- Explore automatic renewal as an option to streamline contracts with partner organizations when contracts remain unchanged.
- Continue monthly meetings of the Operations committee with additional members hosting, planning the agendas and preparation including site visits as a priority for the members when meeting in person.



Strategies and Recommendations (cont.)

Communications (cont.)

Year 2

Increase regional awareness of Aurora@Home and coordinate efforts for both internal and external communications as well as relationship building.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora, the Aurora Housing Authority, and others.
- Understand roles and responsibilities of members.
 - Be able to define when and how members are representing A@H to support coordination of efforts.
- Continue coordination with key stakeholders such as the Division of Housing, Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, and City groups.
- Coordinate with other metro groups, counties, and state stakeholders as appropriate.
- Engage with elected officials.
- Share strategic plan efforts and ongoing work.

Create External Communication Plan and Strategy.

- These efforts are shared by the City of Aurora and the Aurora Housing Authority.
- Work with Aurora@Home to meet communication needs.
 - Establish a task force on communication if needed.
- Create a prevention education campaign for tenants and landlords.
- Work with City staff members to fully understand external communication audiences and develop appropriate materials.
- Increase awareness of Aurora@Home in the general public.

Measurements and Deliverables

- Website visits and average length of time on the website
- Number of presentations given to community organizations
- Funding and resources available
- Number of participating organizations in A@H
- Annual communications report produced

“We’re excited about this new direction A@H is taking to improve collaboration.”

Service provider



Conclusion

Through the strategic planning process, members of Aurora@Home have been engaged to achieve the most meaningful strategies and recommendations possible. One of the values of Aurora@Home is that we believe that people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and will function through an equitable, collaborative, and trauma-informed lens. This belief has permeated the strategic planning process, and framed all recommendations made within this document. This same approach is applied when working with each other, respecting people's time, their areas of expertise, and making decisions as a collaborative body.

Aurora@home leadership, including City of Aurora representation, met with the consulting firm [Strategy With Rox](#) in September of 2021 to determine a process for the strategic planning project. As meeting cadence, input groups, and means of learning from those with lived experience of homelessness were determined, the project was officially launched. Regular meetings with the Board of Aurora@Home were conducted throughout the process to provide input on the future structure of Aurora@Home, the strategies that must be explored to strengthen Aurora@Home service provision, and the recommendations needed to achieve those strategies.

As the Board meetings were occurring, concurrent meetings with the Aurora@Home Operations team were held. These meetings provided front-line staff, and people associated with Aurora@Home who work for other homelessness service organizations, to ground the strategies and recommendations put forward by the Board in the daily reality of service provision and the experiences of those in need of services. The Operations team also provided input on how to implement the strategic plan and the action steps which were needed at the direct client level.

Through this project, Aurora@Home was able to live into another one of our values, that recommendations for services and systems are based on consumer voice, data, evidence, and promising best practices. During the strategic planning process, two focus groups were held. One focus group was with people with lived experience of homelessness, which allowed Aurora@Home to learn about the paths taken by actual people navigating the array of homelessness services available in Aurora. The second focus group brought together service providers in Aurora who were not engaged in Aurora@Homes strategic planning process, allowing a broader understanding of needs in Aurora.

The strategic plan was written in Summer of 2022, with approval and rollout of the plan occurring in late Summer/early Fall 2022. The plan establishes action steps for Aurora@Home to implement through the years 2023 - 2026. We strongly believe that these recommendations will greatly improve the material conditions of people experiencing homelessness in Aurora, Colorado, and hope you join us in supporting the hard work that needs to be done to support all residents of our great city.



Appendix

A. Acknowledgements

List of individuals involved in Strategic Planning Process

Board Members

Cheryl Ternes - Arapahoe County Department of Human Services
Bob Prevost - Arapahoe County Department of Human Services
Kathy Smith - Arapahoe County Community Resources
Jessica Prosser - City of Aurora
Alicia Montoya - City of Aurora
Craig Maraschky - Aurora Housing Authority
Steve Blackstock - Aurora Housing Authority
Kelly Phillips Henry - Aurora Mental Health Center
Amy Beruan - Aurora Public Schools
Melissa Green - Bridge House and Ready to Work
Marlo Alston - Bridge House and Ready to Work
Leslie Navarro-Walker - Cherry Creek Schools
Megan Cook - Children's Hospital Colorado
Kristin Toombs - Colorado Division of Housing
Signy Mikita - Community Housing Partners
Karmen Carter - Gateway Domestic Violence Services
Scott Shields - Family Tree and GOALS
Jamie Rife - Metro Denver Homeless Initiative
Bob Dorshimer - Mile High Behavioral Health Center
Rochelle Nadeau - Comitis, ADRC, CCN
Kristen Baluyot - Salvation Army
Kathy Mulloy - Salvation Army
Susan Todd - STRIDE Community Health Center

Contributing Members

Emma King - City of Aurora
Laura Getz - Aurora Housing Authority



Appendix (cont.)

A. Acknowledgements (cont.)

Partner Organizations



Aurora Mental Health Center
Live Life to the Fullest



Children's Hospital Colorado



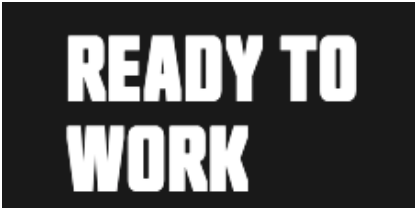
COMMUNITY
HOUSING
PARTNERS



FamilyTree



Mile High
Behavioral
Healthcare



STRIDE
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER



Partner School Districts



Aurora Public Schools
Every student shapes a successful future.



Dedicated to Excellence
Cherry Creek Schools



Appendix (cont.)

A. Acknowledgements (cont.)

Organizations Involved in the Strategic Plan Process

- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- Colorado Safe Parking Initiative (Aurora) & Just Living Recovery (Lakewood)
- Gateway Domestic Violence Shelter
- Local Affairs Division of Housing
- STRIDE mobile medical services
- UCHealth Housing Transitions Team



COLORADO
Department of Local Affairs





Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data

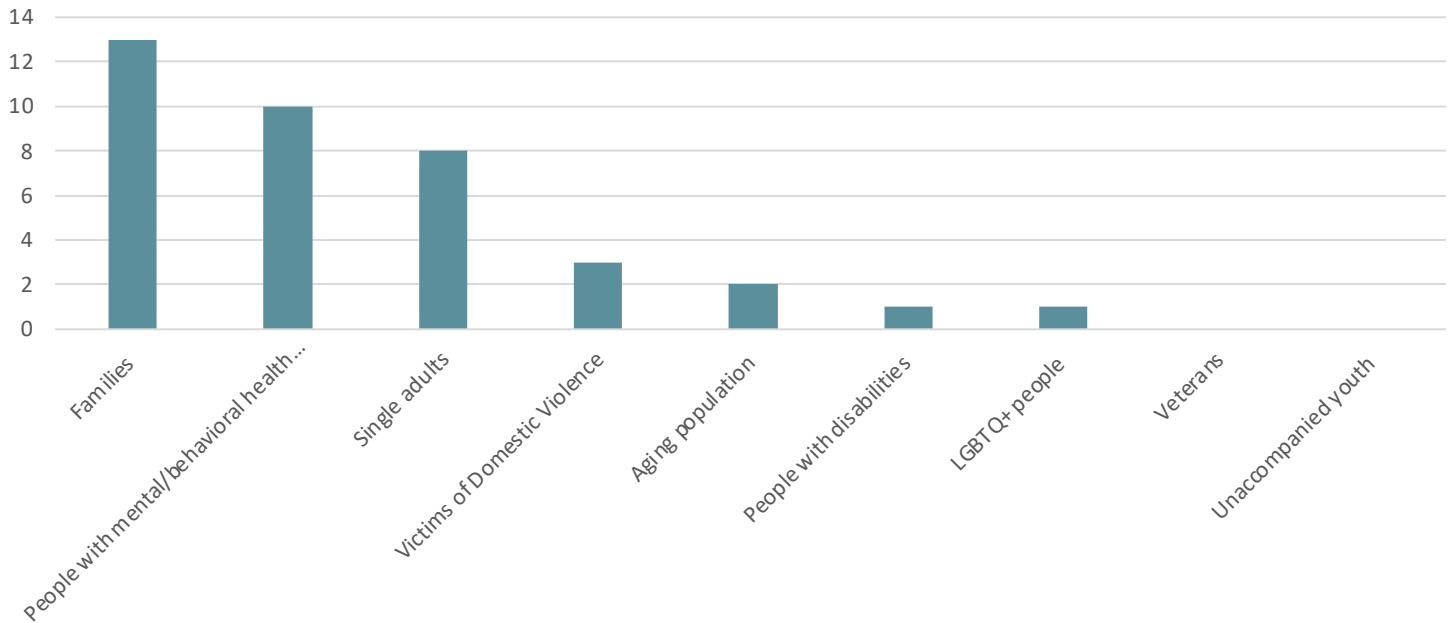
The Collaborator survey was distributed to people with professional ties to homelessness services in Aurora. It sought to identify broad support, or lack thereof, for the recommendations in this plan while suggesting which areas of the plan should be prioritized to best meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in Aurora. Broadly speaking, from the 45 respondents there was support for the different organizational strategies discussed above. This broad support is essential to creating a suite of services available to people experiencing homelessness that is coordinated across the city. An analysis of the survey results can be found below.

Respondents began the survey by identifying the organization they work for. Then they were prompted to identify the priority populations that need support, and the supports that they need to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and one time. These first five questions were designed to understand where the coalition of people working in homelessness services in Aurora are, and to check that Aurora@Home’s understanding of the landscape of homelessness in Aurora is correct.

What is the name of the organization you work for?

Housing Authority Gateway Domestic Violence Gateway Mile High Behavioral
Colfax Community Collective Ready Work **Colorado**
 City Aurora **Aurora** Salvation Army **East Colfax Community**
 High Behavioral Healthcare UCHHealth Domestic Violence Services Health

Please identify the population with the highest need based on your agency’s experience:

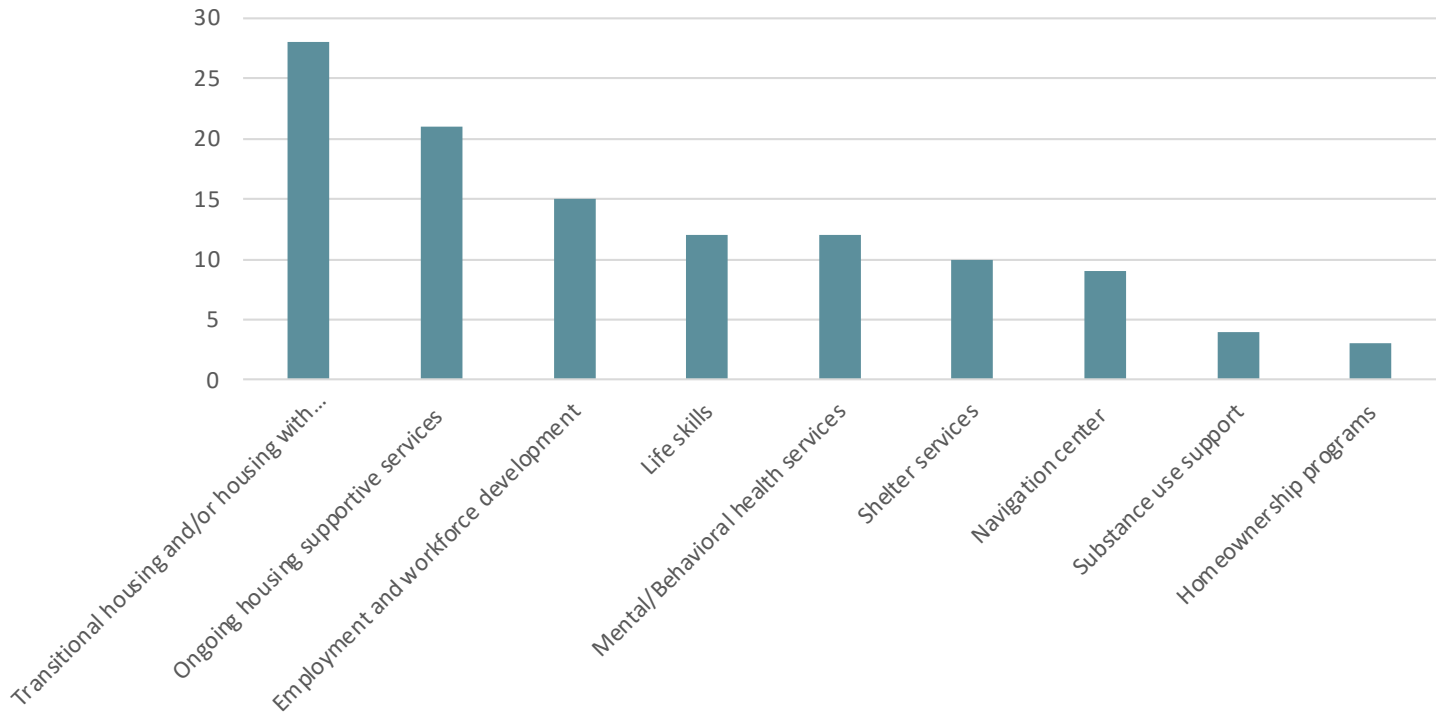




Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

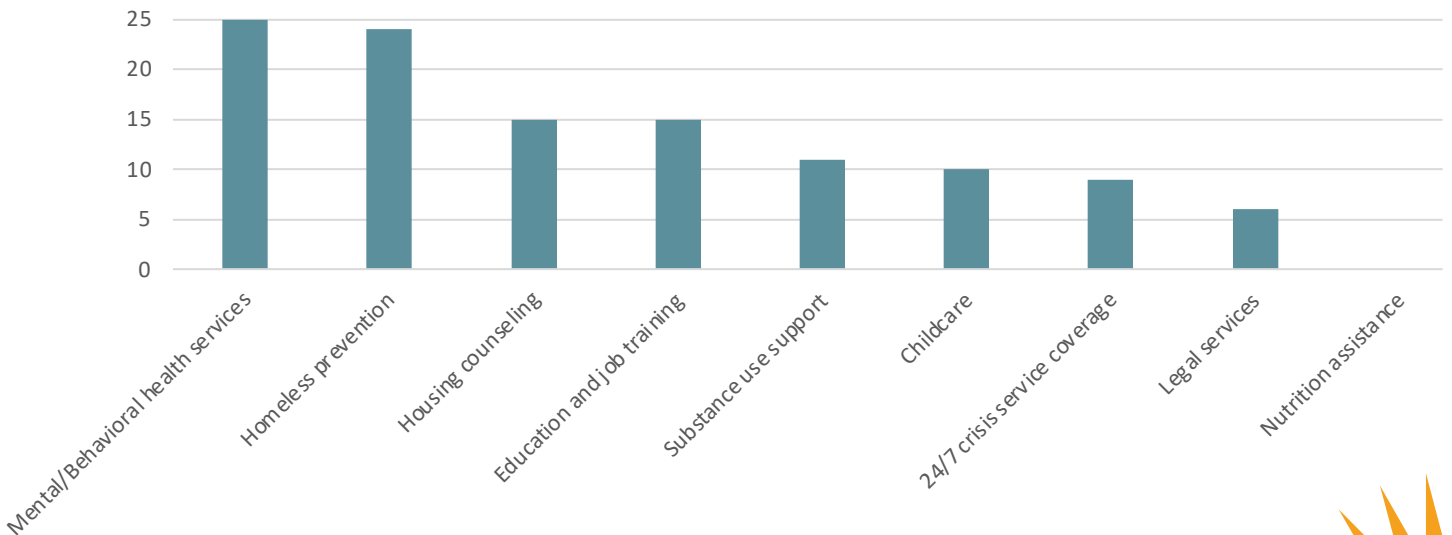
What is the most needed service for people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness? Please check the top three most important below:



When considering the following which is most critical to achieving the development of affordable housing?

- Most critical: increase the number of affordable housing units in the city.
- Second most critical: development incentives to build more affordable housing.
- Third most critical: Expansion of community-wide affordable housing services.

What is the most needed supportive service to support people experiencing homelessness?





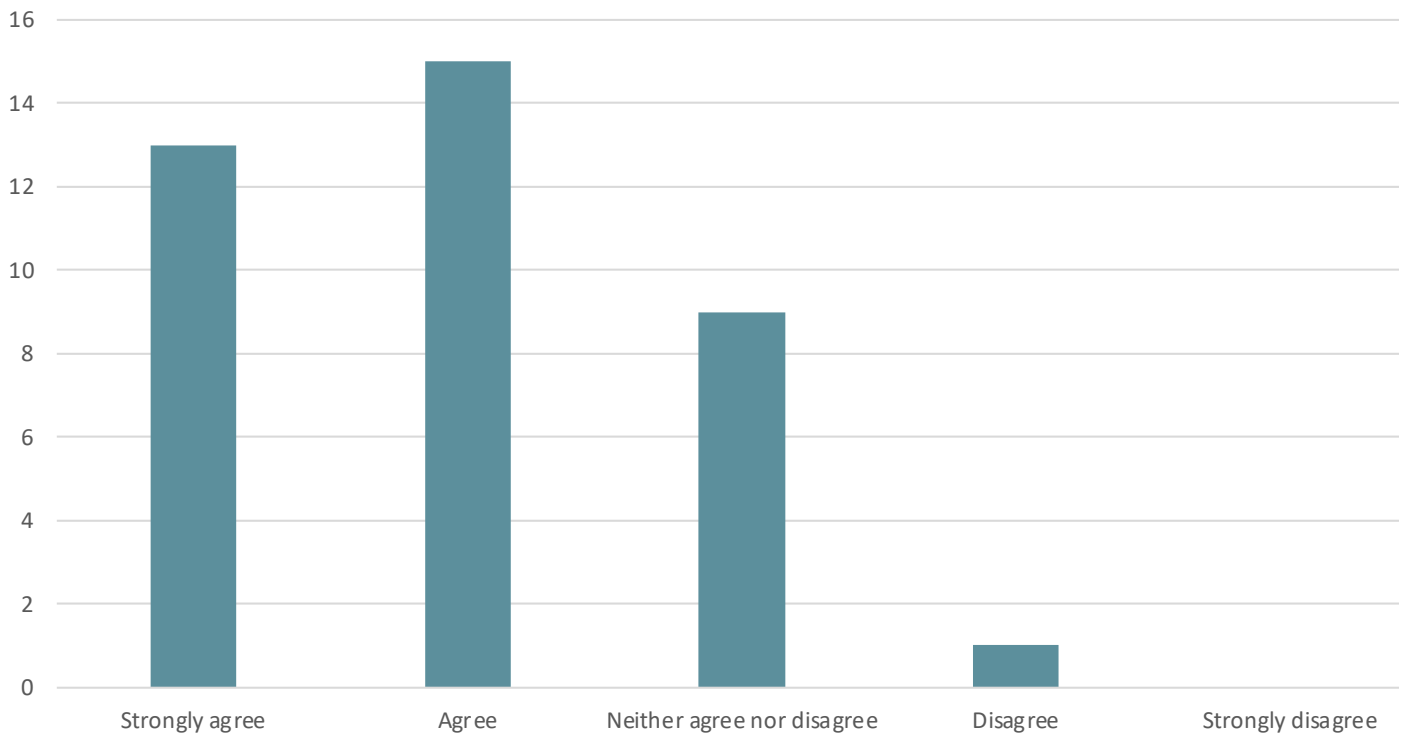
Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

Looking at these first five questions, it can be seen that the survey received a broad range of respondents from organizations across Aurora supporting people experiencing homelessness. Further, these organizations are already broadly aligned with the direction that Aurora@Home is moving towards in this plan. The identification of families, people with mental/behavioral health issues, and single adults aligns with the identification of priority populations that Aurora@Home based strategic discussions off of. The need for services, and supportive services, that support those populations was also identified by respondents. Respondents also identified the need for additional affordable housing units, and for incentives to support the development of those units. This acknowledgement of the need for additional housing stock ties into the Aurora Housing Strategy, which seeks to support the development of additional affordable housing.

Respondents then were asked to look at the areas of the Aurora@Home strategic plan. This was to ensure that peers of Aurora@Home thought that the recommendations proposed in this plan were helpful to people experiencing homelessness, and to establish broad buy-in for the strategic plan. A significant focus of Aurora@Home in the coming years is city-wide collaboration, which requires other organizations engage in a collaborative spirit.

How strongly do you agree that the mission statement of Aurora@Home aligns with the needs of the community?

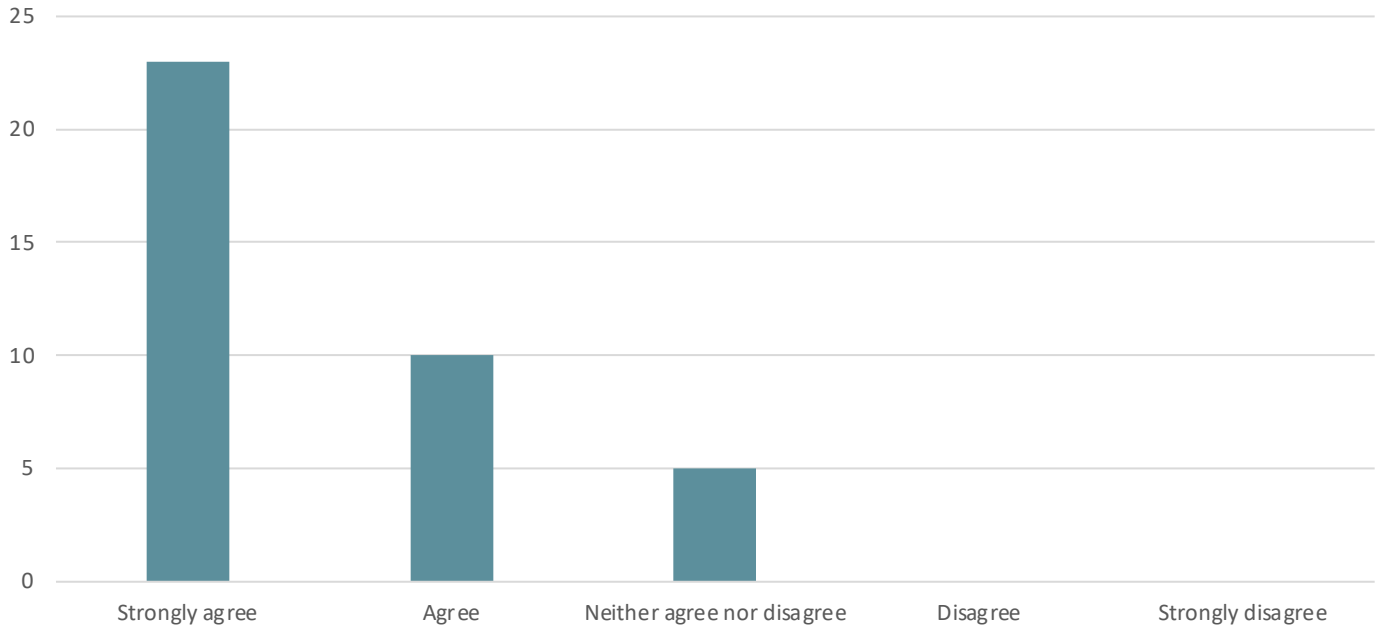




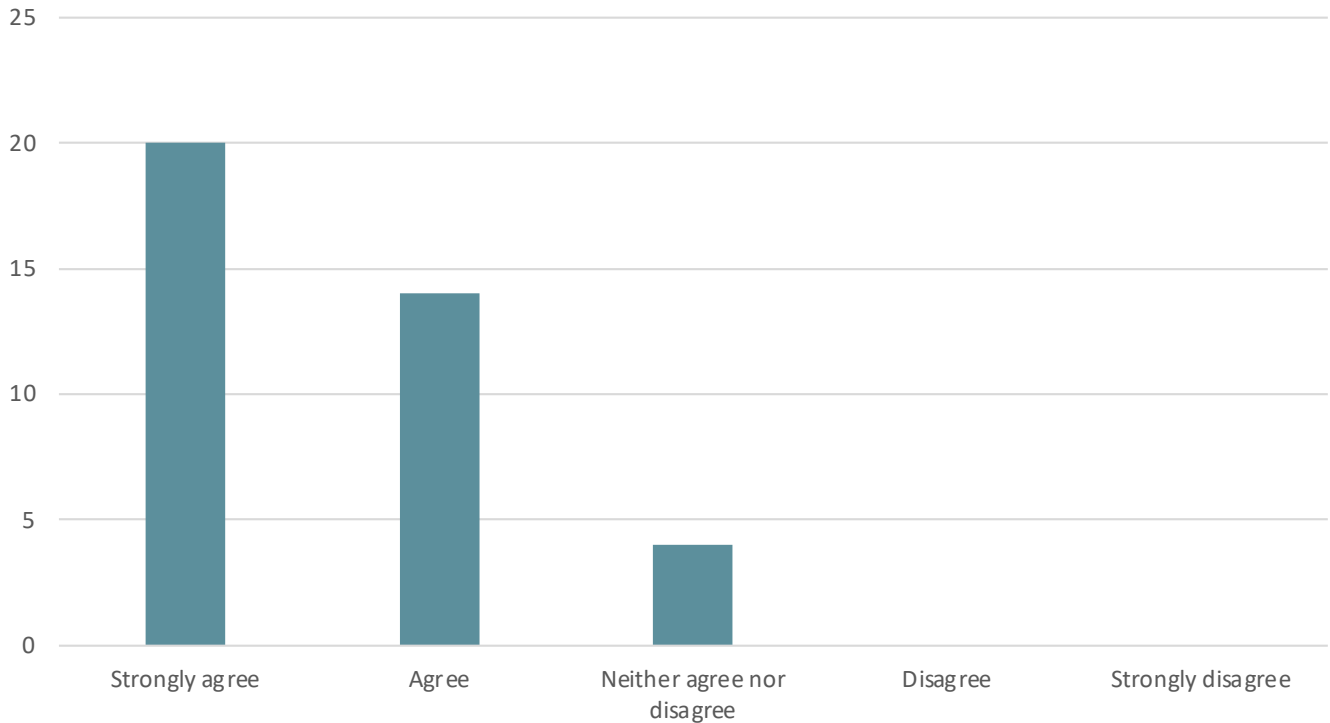
Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

How strongly do you agree that the vision statement of Aurora@Home aligns with the needs of the community?



How strongly do you agree that the values statement of Aurora@Home aligns with the needs of the community?

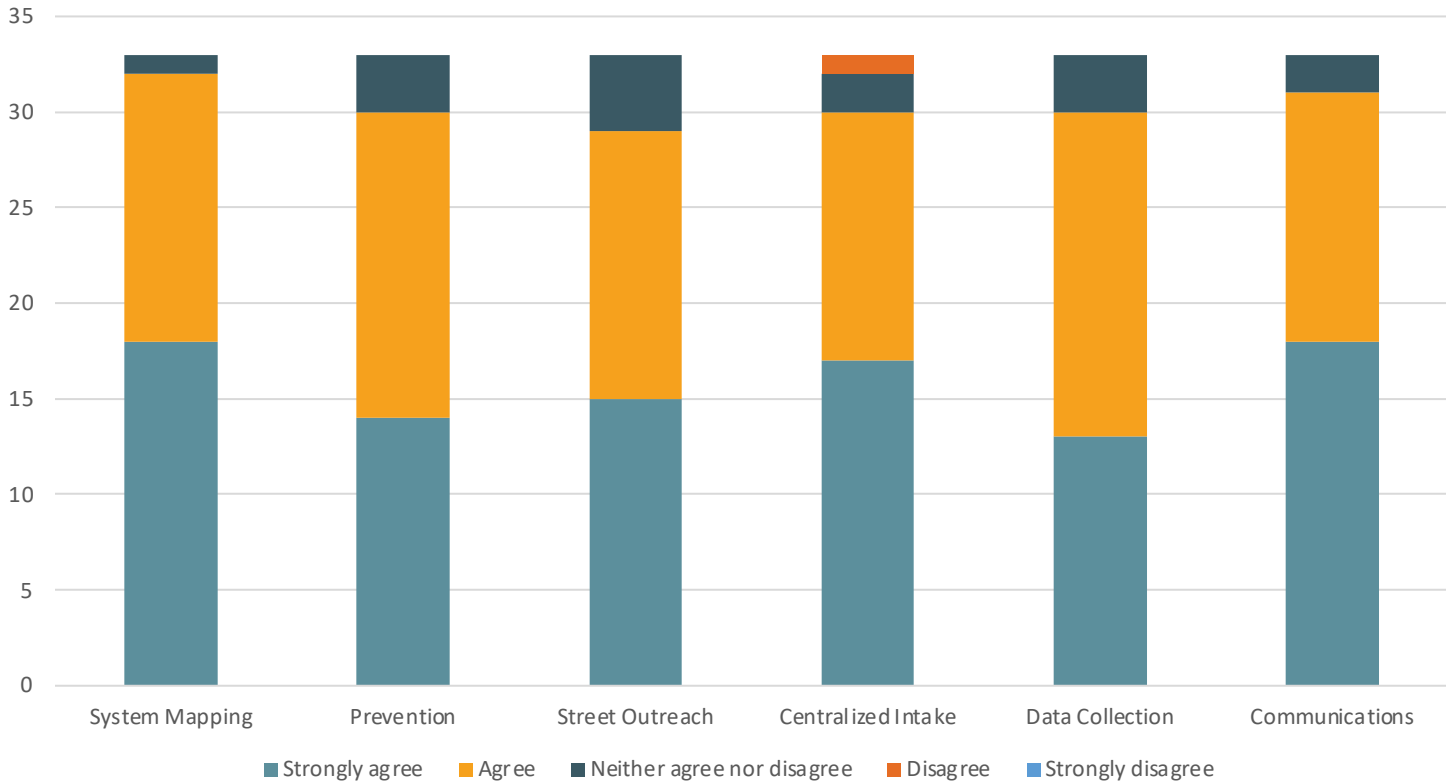




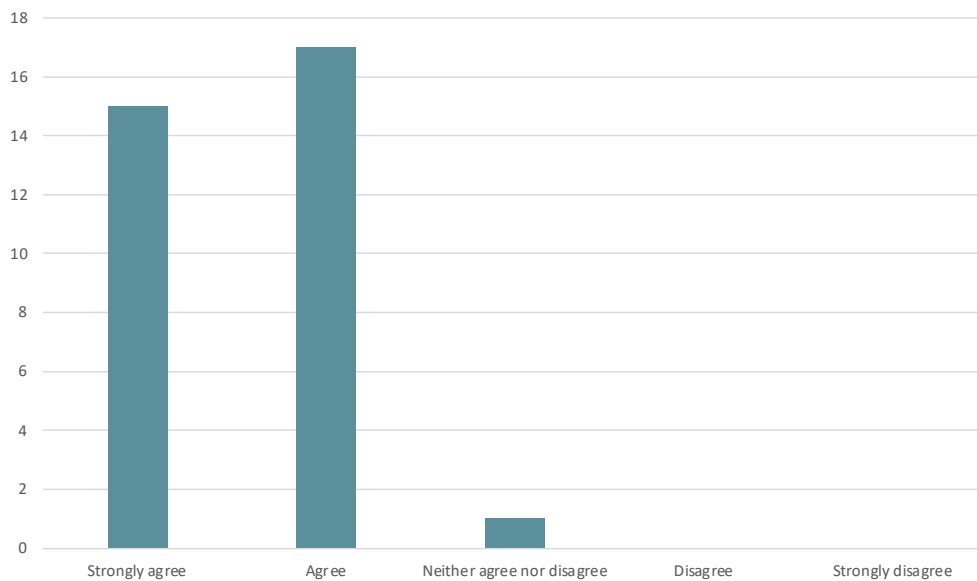
Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

For the following six areas of the strategic plan, how strongly do you agree that each area of the plan will meet the needs of the community?



Considering the six strategic areas above, how strongly do you agree that the strategic plan, when fully implemented, would positively impact the lives of people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness in Aurora?

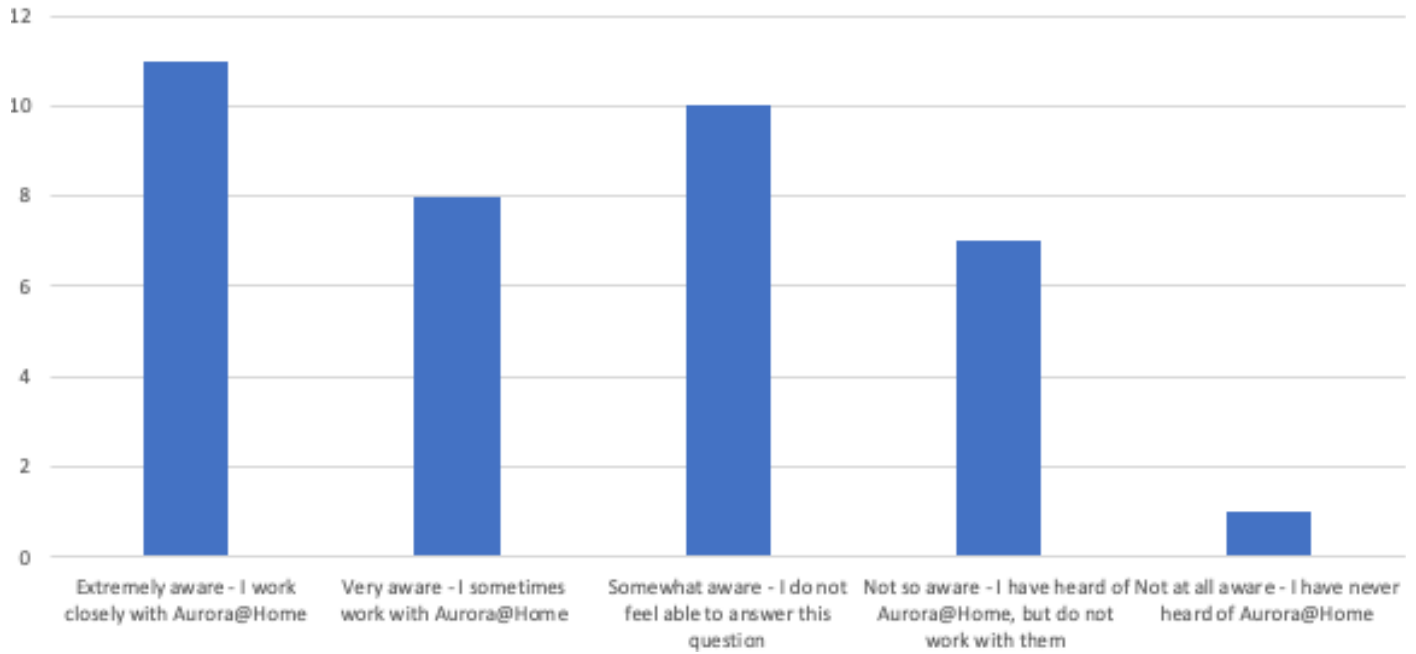




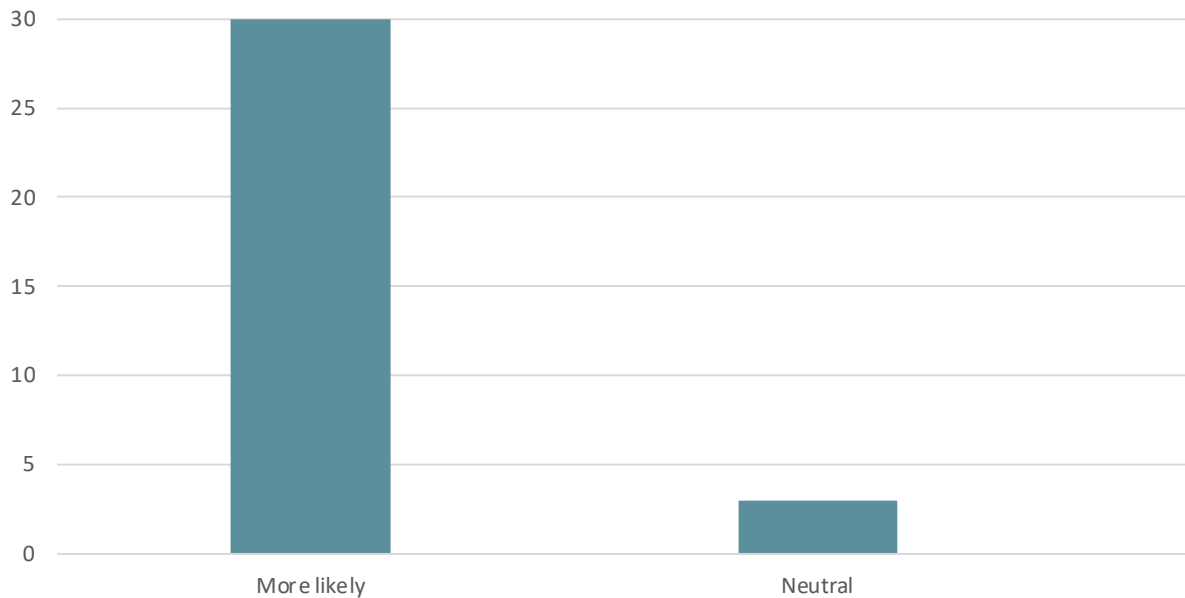
Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

How aware are you of Aurora@Home?



Based on your understanding of the strategic plan, are you more or less likely to become engaged with Aurora@Home?



Appendix (cont.)

B. Provider Survey Data (cont.)

Looking at the six charts above, it becomes clear that respondents think that Aurora@Home is conceptually aligned with the direction the Aurora@Home strategic plan is heading in. There is broad support for the individual areas of the plan, and taking the survey has increased respondents awareness of, and interest in engaging with, Aurora@Home. This broad conceptual support is essential to supporting the collaborative approach that Aurora@Home is implementing, and the understanding that the willingness to engage and collaborate is there in Aurora is extremely valuable.





Appendix (cont.)

C. State Legislative Policy Landscape

In the 2022 Colorado Legislative Session, a number of bills were passed that impact the provision of housing and homelessness services. While the impact of these bills hasn't been seen yet, the funding allocations both serve as an acknowledgement by the State that homelessness is an issue that needs direct, long-lasting attention and as a step towards achieving the goal of homelessness being rare, brief, and one time. A list of bills that pertain to homelessness services that have been passed by the Colorado legislature in 2022 can be found below with synopses of the funding made available by them.

\$50M for Denver Metro Regional Navigation Campus (HB22-1378)

Eligible activities include behavioral health/recovery services, medical/dental, shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing, vocational rehab/employment services, benefits enrollment, services for people exiting residential facilities or at risk of homelessness.

\$105M grant program for homelessness response (HB22-1377)

(shelter, bridge, housing, including supportive housing, recovery care, data, educational and vocational programs, etc.)

\$323 in additional housing funding (Grants and revolving loans for affordable housing)

\$138M grant program for affordable housing investments (HB22-1304)

\$150M in a revolving loan fund for affordable housing investments (SB22-159)

\$35M revolving loan fund for mobile home parks (SB22-160)

\$45M to repurpose the Ridgeview Campus into a recovery community (SB22-211)