

ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN THE DISTRICT

A Plan to Close DC General

Here in the District of Columbia, more than 7,000 men, women, and families with children experience homelessness on any given night -- sleeping outside, in a shelter or in transitional housing. Unlike other cities, people who experience homelessness in the District have a right to shelter during the coldest months. In the past five years, our city has seen a 12 percent increase in homelessness.

Our city has a plan to end homelessness. The Interagency Council on Homelessness developed the plan based on what is working in other cities. Mayor Bowser supported the plan and called for historic investments in proven strategies – including affordable housing, permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing. And the DC Council signaled their support by passing legislation to move it forward.

As part of our plan to end homelessness, we will close DC General - a former hospital that has served as the District's largest family shelter for seven years. Each day, DC General houses approximately 250 families who are experiencing homelessness. Experts, community leaders, and current and former residents agree that DC General is not a good place for families. It's too big, too old and geographically removed from the services that individuals experiencing homelessness need to exit shelter and get back on their feet.

Replacing DC General with Short-Term Family Housing

In order to close DC General, we need an alternative, safe and dignified place for families to stay. The District has been working on a blueprint to create short-term family housing sites across the city.

- After a thorough search, the District identified sites in every single ward - including locations for six short-term family housing facilities, one apartment-style transitional housing facility for families, and one shelter specifically for single women.
- Each short-term family housing site will accommodate up to 50 families. They will be small, safe and clean with private rooms, and will give families a dignified place to stay until they get back to a place they can call home.
- Unlike DC General, these facilities will have places for children of all ages to play and do homework. They will also include the kind of services that help families exit shelter as soon as possible.
- Developing the short-term family housing facilities is more cost effective than keeping DC General open. We will make the best possible use of taxpayer dollars - by more quickly and effectively lifting families out of homelessness.

Turning the Plan Into Action

In 2015, the DC Council passed legislation that provides the framework for replacing DC General with short-term family housing. As a next step, the Council must approve the sites that have been identified by the District. At that time, we will begin to implement the plan.

The buildings for the short-term family housing will need to be renovated or built from the ground up. The new sites will be open and able to accommodate families starting in 2017. Once they are all in place, the District will close the DC General Family Shelter.

How You Can Get Involved

- Encourage your councilmember to take the final step to close DC General by approving the designated sites for short-term family housing
- Learn more at dc.gov/homewarddc, where you can also take the pledge to end homelessness in DC
- Enlist the support of family, friends, and neighbors to join this important effort