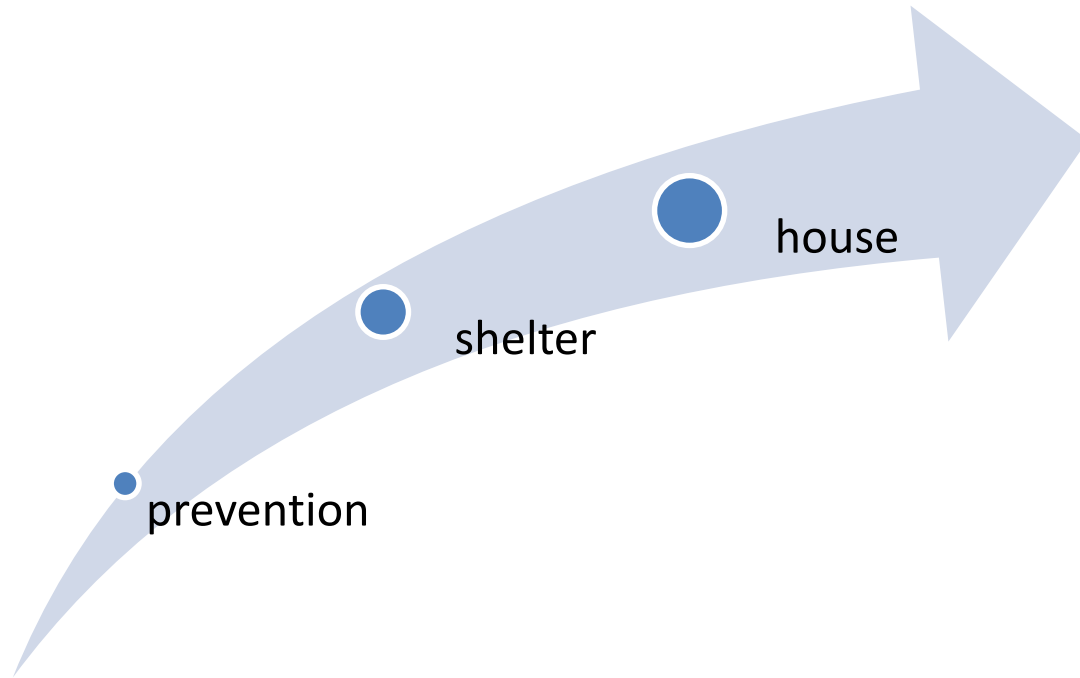


Homelessness: Post-Recession Strategies and Outcomes



Introduction

The great recession of 2008-2011 took its toll on the American people. As reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment peaked nationally at 9.6% in 2010, the highest rate since 1982. For those ages 16-19 unemployment rates in 2010 reached as high as 24.1%. African American men suffered disproportionately with unemployment rates as high as 17.5% during the peak of the recession in 2010.

Virginians too felt the effects of the recession but not so dearly as those residing in other states such as Michigan (13.3%), Nevada (13.4%), California (12.2%) or Illinois (11%). Unemployment rates in the Commonwealth topped out in 2010 at 7.4%.

Here in the Roanoke Valley unemployment reached its height of 7.5% in 2010, slightly higher than that of the Commonwealth as a whole. In the City of Roanoke unemployment in 2010 was 8.8%, considerably higher than that of the state. Median household incomes in 2010 were and still are considerably lower when comparing the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area's median of \$45,569 to that of Virginia at \$61,210.

**3,896,000 homes
were repossessed.**

Without jobs, or with fewer hours of employment per week, many were unable to stay in their homes. Nationally, the Federal Reserve reports that between 2008 and 2011 there 14,241,091 foreclosures¹; an astounding 3,896,000 homes were repossessed².

**14,241,091
foreclosures
occurred
between the
beginning of
2008 and the
end of 2011.**

As unemployment and home foreclosures increased during the great recession so too did the number of people who found themselves in a homeless condition. The Council of Community Services tracks trends in homelessness in the Roanoke Valley for the Blue Ridge Continuum of Care. Data from their most recent Point in Time Count shows that numbers peaked in 2009 with 597 homeless people living in places not meant for human habitation, emergency and transitional shelters in the region.

By 2012, the recession had run its course. As the economy strengthened, unemployment dropped and home foreclosures slowed. By 2013, unemployment in the Commonwealth was down to 5.5% and in the Roanoke Region unemployment stood at 6%.

¹ RealtyTrac, Federal Reserve, Equifax, 7.8.2014

² Ibid

As more people returned to the workforce, the number of homeless people in the region began to trend downward and by 2015, the Annual Point in Time Count indicated the number of homeless in the Roanoke region had dropped 34.7% from its high in 2009 down to 390. Seeing this reduction in numbers, it is important to note that the primary reasons for homelessness, as reported in the Point in Time Surveys conducted over the past ten years, are lack of employment and an inability to find affordable housing.

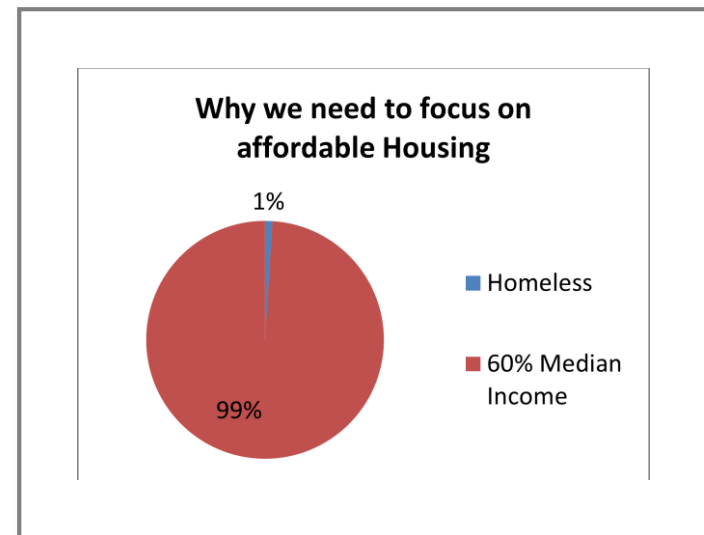
Affordable Housing

39,189 families in the Roanoke MSA have family income that is 60% below the median.

While the link between unemployment and homelessness is evident too little attention is given to the issue of affordable housing. Because the goal is not only to end but to prevent homelessness in the future the issue to discuss and address is affordable housing. Housing affordability is tied to income with housing cost generally considered excessive if a household is required to spend more than 30% of their income for their housing unit.³

The most recent American Community Survey data on median family income in the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was \$49,264. Using the

30% rule a family could spend up to \$14,779 per year or \$1,232 per month for rent or mortgage payment. That is reasonable if your family is at the median income level. The problem of affordability comes into focus when one considers what happens to those families below the median. Housing Virginia reports that in 2014, there were 39,189 families at or below 60% of median in the Roanoke MSA. Median family income for these 39,189 families was \$29,558 which means finding housing for \$8,867 per year or \$739 per month. The average sale price of a three bedroom house in the MSA is \$167,750 which requires \$992 per month for principal, taxes and interest. The median monthly cost of a rental unit is \$765. This means that these 39,000 families spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing...a situation which is not sustainable over time.



³ Housing Virginia Source Book, Housing Quick Facts, 2015

The fact that we have reduced the number of homeless in the Region to 390 is laudable but more than 39,000 families are burdened by housing costs placing them in jeopardy of becoming homeless. Simply put, the Region needs to develop strategies to address the disparity between income and housing affordability if we are to sustain a long term reduction in homelessness.

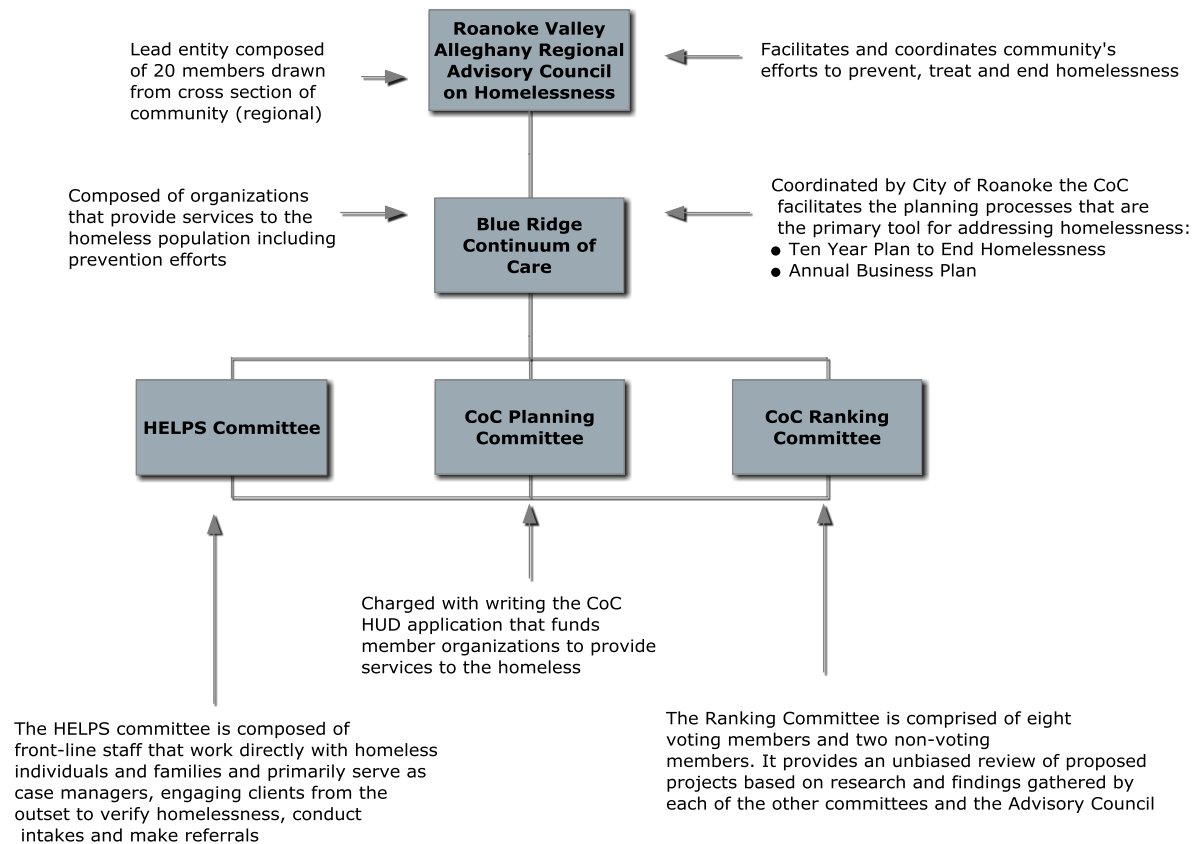
The report on the following pages focuses mainly on progress made over the past five years to reduce and end homelessness. But the report is also intended as a bridge to begin expanding the discussion of homelessness into a discussion of affordable housing.

Daniel W. Merenda
President
Council of Community Services

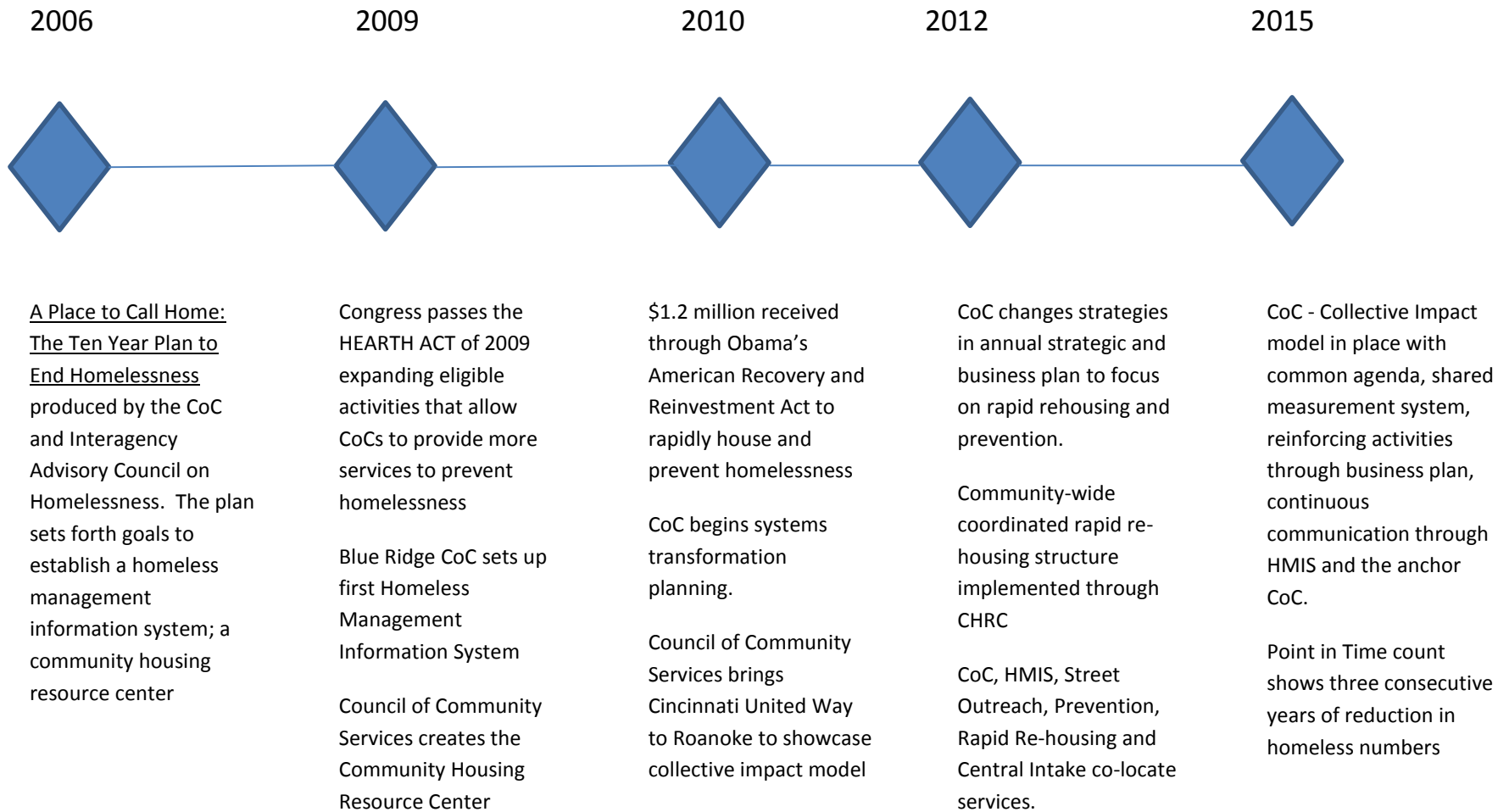
Coordinated Community System of Care

The Blue Ridge Continuum of Care has a service area with a population of 311,814. The area includes the cities of Roanoke, Salem and Covington as well as the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig and Roanoke. This system of care for those in danger of or experiencing homelessness is headed by the Blue Ridge Interagency Council on Homelessness (BRICH) which sets policy, to facilitate and coordinate the region's efforts to prevent, treat, and end homelessness. It serves as the governance group for the Blue Ridge CoC. The Interagency Council is composed of members from the general public, the homeless population, local governments, mental health programs, state and federal programs, nonprofits, businesses, and colleges and universities throughout the Roanoke region. The lead agency for the BRICH, is the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, which helps local governments address regionally significant issues with planning designed to enhance the region's infrastructure, promote economic growth, and improve and sustain citizens' quality of life.

City of Roanoke's Homeless Services System Development Strategy

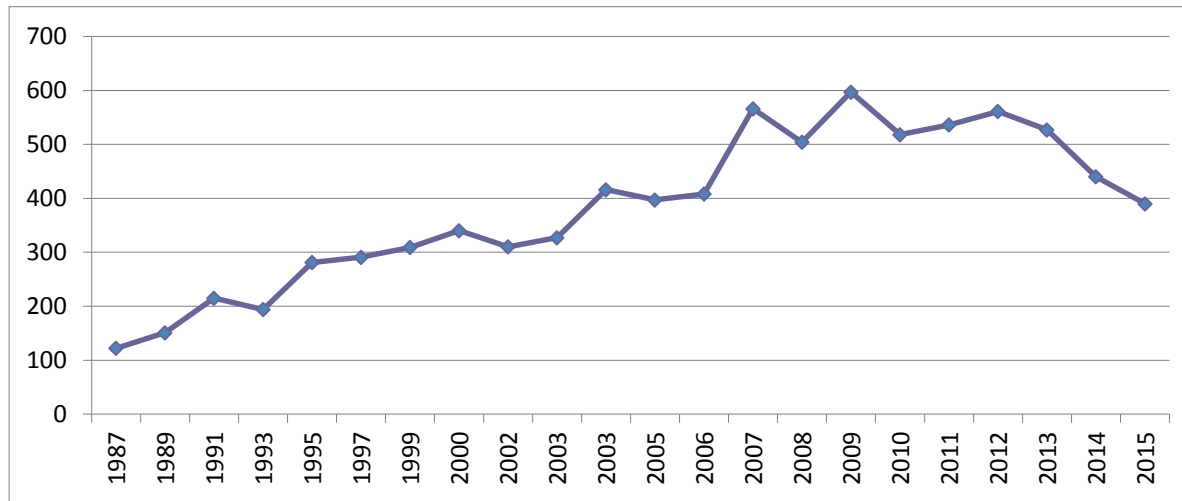


Milestones of Progress to End Homelessness



Annual Point in Time and Shelter Survey of Homeless in the Roanoke Valley


Every year each jurisdiction in Virginia participates in a point in time count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. In the Commonwealth, the annual point in time count is conducted in January. The Blue Ridge Continuum of Care conducts the annual point in time count in its service area. The Council of Community Services analyzes the survey results and publishes the report on behalf of the Blue Ridge CoC. A person is considered homeless if on the night of the count they either slept in a place not meant for human habitation or were a resident of an emergency shelter. The first Point in Time Report was published in 1987. The graph below shows the trend in numbers of homeless counted since 1987 with peak numbers 597 counted in 2009. Since 2012 there has been a downward trend in the number of homeless people in the region.



Year	1987	1995	2005	2009	2012	2015
Number	122	281	397	597	561	390

History of the Homeless Management Information System

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a computerized data collection tool specifically designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women and children experiencing homelessness. The HMIS is used to capture data on services provided to the homeless in the Blue Ridge Continuum of Care service area. The HMIS knits together homeless assistance providers within the region to create a more coordinated and effective housing service delivery system. In the Blue Ridge CoC the Council of Community Services is the lead agency responsible for managing the system and implementing standards and privacy compliance as well as HUD and other funder required aggregate reporting.

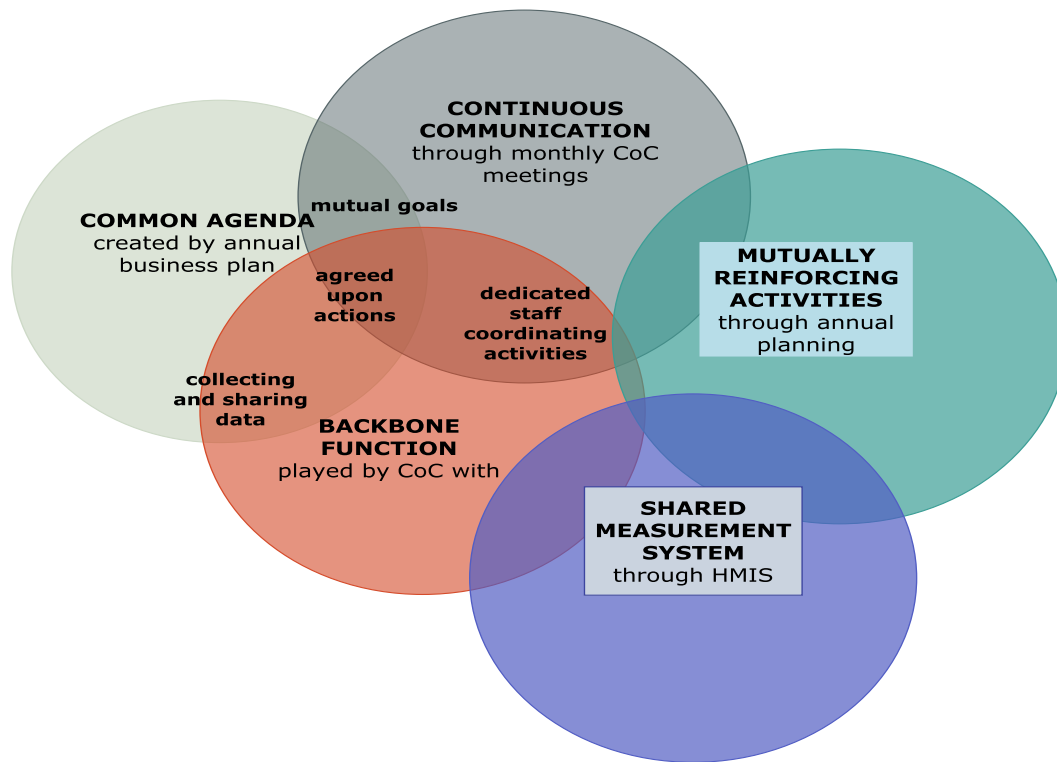


2001	2004	2006	2009	2011	2013-14	2015
<p>Congress directs HUD to develop an unduplicated count of persons who are homeless;</p> <p>HUD requires all McKinney-Vento funded homeless grantees to implement HMIS.</p>	<p>HUD publishes first HMIS Data and Technical Standards</p>	<p>Blue Ridge CoC publishes A Place to Call Home: the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness with a goal to implement HMIS</p>	<p>The Council of Community Services purchases software, hires a coordinator and begins the HMIS with HUD funded agencies entering 2,370 clients into the system</p>	<p>Blue Ridge CoC changes name of HMIS to Blue Ridge Community Assistance Network in attempt to expand data collection to other health and human service agencies</p>	<p>Blue Ridge CoC and Interagency Advisory Council on Homelessness align federal, state and local performance standards using HMIS as the shared system to collect, report and share data</p> <p>100% of publicly and privately funded emergency shelters are using HMIS</p>	<p>19,882 client records are now in the system with a total of 82,669 service transactions recorded.</p>

In the Blue Ridge CoC collective impact model, the Annual Strategic and Business Plan sets standards aligned with federal and state goals. The Homeless Management Information System is the shared measurement system.

The Blue Ridge Continuum of Care: Collective Impact Model

Continuum of Care Collective Impact Model



Spurred by the passage of the Hearth Act and growing numbers of homeless reported in the 2009 Point in Time count, the Continuum of Care and the Interagency Advisory Council on Homelessness came together in May of 2010 to begin discussing needed changes in the current system of homeless services delivery. During the meeting it was determined that a system-wide transformation was needed to improve how homeless service providers interacted and partnered to provide needed care for the homeless. The shared vision of change that emerged from the meeting focused on a move away from temporary and emergency shelter and movement toward permanent housing through rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing and homelessness prevention interventions. Between 2010 and 2015, the CoC strengthened its role in coordinating participating organization. It called on the Council of Community Services to facilitate development of an annual business plan by all service providers, laying out a joint approach to rapid re-housing and prevention. Rapid rehousing would be coordinated through the newly formed Community Housing Resource Center; a common assessment instrument would be used by all with coordination through a newly formed Central Intake office. The plan set forth how the HMIS would be used to collect data and measure results consistently across all

participants. Because all service providers participated in developing the plan, it provided for mutually reinforcing activities that differentiated by agency thus eliminating duplication. Continuous and open communication would be provided through monthly CoC meetings and regular business plan committee meetings. The transformation was successful, a collective impact model was in place and it produced significant results. The 2015 Point in Time count showed that homeless had been reduced by 34.7% since 2009. The number of homeless had been reduced by 207 individuals moving from 597 in 2009 to 390 in 2015.

Strategic Goals

In June of 2010 the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness published *OPENING DOORS*, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. The plan serves as a roadmap for joint action by the Federal government and its partners at the State and local levels. The plan sets forth four goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015
- Preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans by 2015
- Preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and
- Setting a path to ending all types of homelessness

The Blue Ridge Continuum of Care has aligned its strategic and business plan goals with those of the Interagency Council as well as the goals of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Aligning local goals with federal and state efforts ensures a continuity of federal and state funding streams to support the Blue Ridge CoC's efforts to prevent and end homelessness in the Roanoke Region.

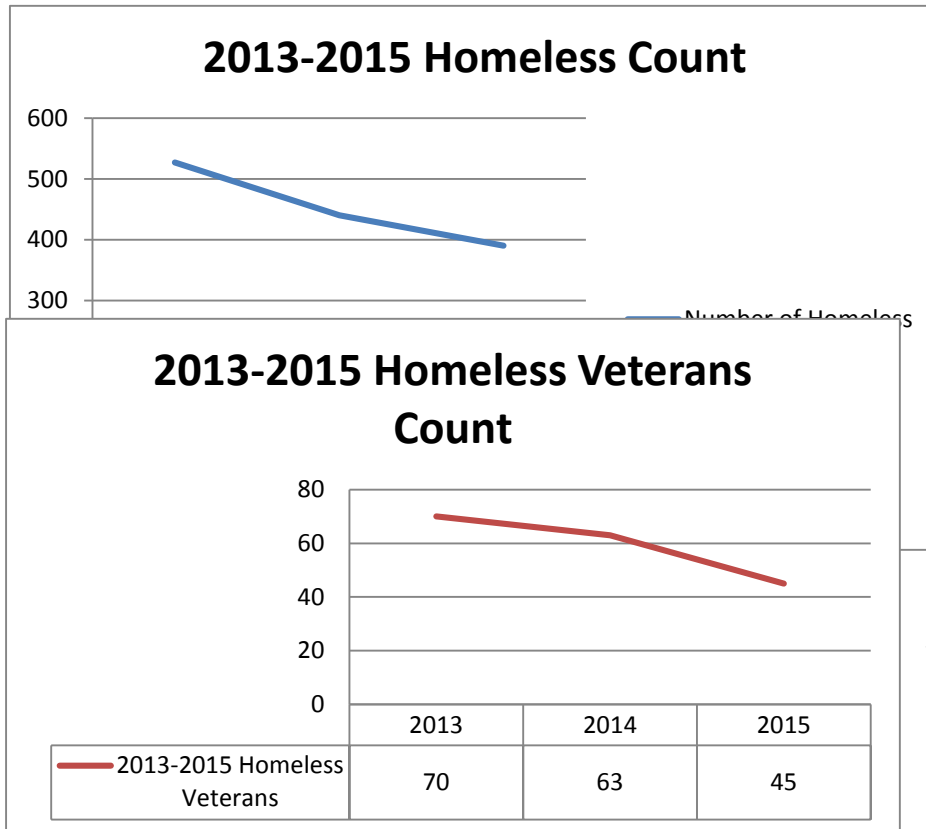
Blue Ridge CoC 2014-2015 Goals

- Demonstrate a 15% reduction in the number of homeless people and the number who become homeless for the first time over a three year period as measured through the Point-in-Time.
- Demonstrate an annual 10 % reduction in the average and median length of time persons spend in emergency shelter and; a 15% reduction in time for those transitioning into supportive housing.
- Demonstrate an increased success rate of 80% in permanent housing placement and retention for homeless people
- Demonstrate an increase in the percent of homeless adults that increase their earned income and/or other income upon entering system and their exit.

Strategies

- Prevention: Identify and help people before they become homeless
- Rapid Rehousing: Focus systems on permanent housing not temporary shelter
- Planning and Data systems: Increase collaboration, eliminate duplication and increase efficiency of services

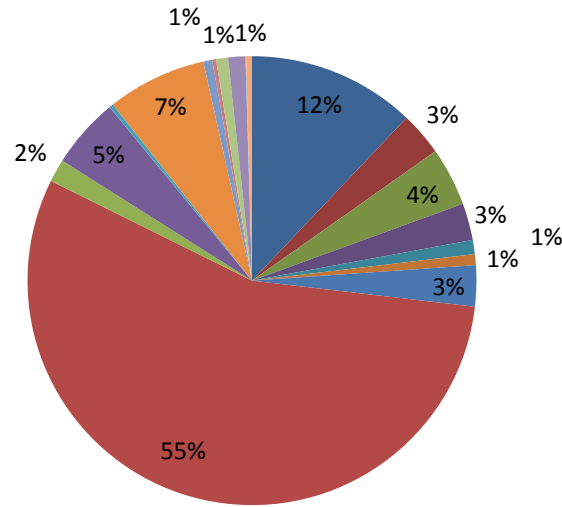
Outcomes 2012-2015



The Interagency Advisory Council on Homelessness and the Blue Ridge Continuum of Care have achieved significant outcomes in the effort to prevent and end homelessness in the region. The number of homeless people in the region is trending downward from 527 counted in the 2013 to 390 in 2015. That number represents a 26% reduction over the three year period.

The effort to end homelessness among veterans is also trending downward from 70 counted in 2013 to 45 in 2015, representing a 36% reduction over the three year period.

\$8.4 Million Budget to Homelessness



- CoC
- ESG
- HSG
- HPP
- CDBG
- EFSP
- US-DVA
- Private Sources
- HOPWA
- United Way
- Roanoke Area Ministries
- Roanoke Rescue Mission
- SafeHome Systems
- Salvation Army Red Shield Lodge
- Salvation Army Turning Point
- Tap-Homeless Prevention Program
- TAP-Permanent Supportive Housing
- TAP-Transitional Living Center (TLC)

Total Spending \$8,419,720	ESG	VHSP	HPP	CDBG	EFSP	US-DVA	Private Sources	HOPWA	United Way	Blue Ridge Behavioral Health	HUD	State/Local Government	Feeding America	SAMSHA	DCJS	Greater United Allegheny Fund	Victim Fund
\$8,419,720	\$138,744	\$357,471	\$225,000	\$85,729	\$67,006	\$307,614	\$4,698,570	\$140,000	\$430,400	\$25,550	\$1,642,917	\$59,795	\$23,621	\$72,878	\$104,928	\$4,000	\$35,497
	2%	4%	3%	1%	1%	4%	56%	2%	5%	< 1%	20%	1%	< 1%	1%	1%	< 1%	< 1%

Common Characteristics and Challenges Point to Affordable Housing

Of the following common characteristics and challenges faced by those without a home, please indicate which affect you. (Choose all that apply)	Response Count	Response Percent
Cannot find work	96	53.0%
Cannot find affordable housing	112	61.9%
Victim of domestic violence	36	19.9%
Dental Problems	57	31.5%
Legal problems/Problems with police	31	17.1%
Challenges with substance abuse	29	16.0%
I cannot afford my medications	35	19.3%
Previous foster care	9	5.0%
Divorce	39	21.5%
Physical disability	45	24.9%
Medical problems	64	35.4%
Past incarceration	47	26.0%
Child custody disputes	12	6.6%
Other (please specify)*	16	8.8%
Answered question	181	
Skipped question	10	

An important part of the Point in Time count and report is the survey of homeless people conducted for the purpose of detailing information and characteristics about those experiencing homelessness. The homeless population is not required to complete the survey but sufficient numbers that do complete the survey provide statistically reliable and valuable information. When asked about common characteristics and challenges facing those without a home, two areas emerge year after year. In 2015, 61.5% of those responding to the survey indicated they could not find affordable housing and 53% said they could not find work.

There are resources available for assisting individuals who are unable to find work. The Roanoke Valley Workforce Investment Board provides funding and coordinates the efforts of multiple agencies to provide job training, internships, apprenticeships and other job readiness skills. Goodwill Industries of the Valley, Total Action for Progress and Virginia Western Community

College also work with employers to provide work opportunities.

But there is not a designated agency or organization within the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area that focuses on affordable housing. The Roanoke Regional Housing Network is perhaps the only group dedicated specifically to affordable housing but it has no revenue stream to support its volunteer work. Yet, data tell us that people are homeless because they cannot find affordable housing. Data found in the introduction to this report also tell us that more than 39,000 people in our region are paying more than one third of their family income to support their housing needs...a condition which is not sustainable.

As we move forward to put an end to homelessness in the region, it makes sense to engage additional players and begin development of a comprehensive affordable housing strategy as a means to prevent homelessness in the future.