

# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # **366-2016**

## LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: September 2, 2016

SUBJECT: **The City's Efforts to End Homelessness**

The purpose of this LTC is to provide the Mayor and Commission an update on the City's efforts to end homelessness. It has come to my attention that there are members of the community, including internal staff, who have raised concerns with the efforts of our homeless outreach services.

### Our Services

Our community leads the County in its municipal efforts to address homelessness and curb its impacts. As one of only two municipal teams in the County, our City is the only municipality that staffs a Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) and operates a walk-in center. Our multi-cultural team manages 52 shelter beds funded fully by the City. These beds are located at four different shelters to ensure that the City can offer placements appropriate to the homeless person seeking help:

Emergency Shelter	Population Served
Camillus House	Single Men
Lotus House	Single Women, Women with Minor Children
Miami Rescue Mission	Single Men
The Salvation Army	Single Men, Single Women, Families w/Children

In addition to the beds purchased by the City, the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust provides the City an additional 55 beds, when available, at the following shelters:

Emergency Shelter	Population Served
Miami Rescue Mission	Single Men
The Salvation Army	Single Men, Single Women

Emergency shelter beds provide a congregate setting for homeless people transitioning from the street to alternate, permanent housing. The shelters provide meals, beds and a variety of services to support a homeless person's successful transition including:

- Case management (providing navigational support to community-based resources and services to help the person become self-reliant, i.e. counseling, job training, etc.);
- Employment placement assistance (a source of income will be crucial to living independently); and
- Entitlements application assistance (i.e. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, retirement, veteran and disability benefits).

The City offers shelter placement services when beds are available to those homeless people who meet the following criteria:

- Homeless in our City (as verified by Police or HOT as having no habitable place to live);
- Identification must be verified (to ensure that the person is not a sexual predator);
- Must not be banned by the shelter where a bed is available; and
- Must be prepared to end their homelessness by addressing the factors that contribute to their homelessness.

Our City purchases overflow beds to house homeless families and vulnerable, special needs populations when our contracted beds are filled.

### Our Success

Last calendar year (January 1 – December 31), 2,007 homeless people passed through our City. These people were encountered by HOT on our streets, walked into our offices or were encountered by Police. The City relocated 74 of these people to family and friends in other parts of the contiguous United States who agreed to provide them housing and supports. The City placed 540 of these people in shelter. Of those placed in shelter, 91 people transitioned to permanent housing, meaning they ended their personal homelessness. To place these numbers in perspective and fully grasp the efficacy of the City's efforts, below is a comparison of our efforts with those of the State of Florida. *The City placed in shelter five times the State average by population.*

Measure	Florida	Our City <sup>1</sup>
The average number of homeless persons per 100,000 populace	100	156 <sup>2</sup>
The average number of shelter placements per 100,000 populace	109	540

<sup>1</sup> – The City's population is 91,026 (2013)

<sup>2</sup> – 156 is the City's homeless census as of January 2016. The August 2016 unofficial count is 208; County has not released official results

While the City of Miami struggles to deal with its burgeoning population of homeless families (it has 57 homeless families in hotel at last report because it does not have room in shelters), our City has worked to establish a safety net system that provides rent and utility assistance as a prevention tool to homelessness. Our City stations staff at our feeder pattern schools to enable the early identification and intervention of families at risk of homelessness and maintains a policy that prioritizes help to families ensuring that no child lives in our streets. Our City is currently housing six (6) families in shelter.

Our community is leading local efforts to move away from the traditional case management model that centralizes services through a third party (not the client) to a care coordination model that empowers clients to take charge of their lives and creates the culture and skill-set to discourage the return to homelessness. This process emphasizes personal responsibility and provides the tools for independence while moving away from a traditional welfare-dependent model that fails to address the factors that led to homelessness.

We are the only outreach team in the County that employs the homeless it places in shelter to serve as ambassadors to engage the homeless that remain on the streets. Through this program piloted over the summer, the homeless are able to strengthen their engagement skills and transition back into an employment culture while looking for full-time employment and earning much-needed money to buy interview clothes and personal items. In turn, the City obtains the insight and knowledge base familiar with living in the streets and identifies the places and mindsets of those who remain for us to engage. This win/win model has also succeeded in shortening the length of time between placement in shelter and the securing of permanent employment. In the short time this program has been in effect, 10 of the 22 clients served have obtained other employment within the program's four-week cycle. One of the program's participants passed away during her tenure.

## Our Population

While the City has a shelter placement rate almost five times the State average, it also shows that our homeless rate is greater by 50 percent. What is unique and significant about this is that almost 90 percent of all homeless people in our City became homeless somewhere else and then migrated to our community. Unlike other areas of the country, **our homeless are not homegrown.**

Our primarily single male homeless population is more resistant to engagement. Unlike other communities, our homeless population is more prone to refuse services because our community's unique attributes (tourists with discretionary income, beautiful clean beaches, year-round fair weather) serve to encourage a mindset that accepts homelessness as a rational choice. In addition, a significant amount of our homeless population does not settle here but rather "pass through town" as demonstrated by our homeless census.

Our homeless population experiences a high incidence of mental health (including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression, among others) and addiction issues. For those homeless with these issues, the cycle of panhandling and the purchase of single-serve alcohol form the nexus of their existence. Our community is the most attractive in the County for panhandling, sleeping in the streets and accessing alcohol because of the concentration of alcohol sales locations within a relatively small geographic area (as most homeless have limited means of transportation).

People become homeless because something undermines their ability to live independently, i.e. they lose their job, fall under the grips of addiction and/or mental illness, suffer a debilitating personal loss, etc. The only way to end their homelessness is to address the factors that led to their homelessness. A place to sleep only solves one of their problems and falls way short of allowing them the dignity and opportunity to maximize their potential as members of our community.

## Historical City Goal

**Historically, the City's goal has been to end homelessness.** To achieve this, the homeless must transition into permanent housing and not return to our streets to panhandle or engage in illicit activity. The mere provision of a place to sleep does not end homelessness. Individuals and families must find suitable, sustainable housing that they can afford regardless of their income source. For those homeless who are younger than 62 and do not present a disabling condition, this means securing employment and finding housing that, at a minimum, does not consume more than 70 percent of their income to cover housing costs (rent/mortgage, utilities). For those of retirement age or with a disabling condition that warrants disability benefits, the challenge becomes finding housing they can afford when the typical disability and retirement benefit ranges from \$743 to \$1,166 per month.

Rather than following, our community has chosen to take the lead in ending homelessness. We have created a comprehensive homeless strategy that emphasizes personal accountability, intradepartmental collaboration and innovation that responds to our community's unique needs and assets while firmly founded upon compassion, integrity and efficacy. We have:

- Increased the number of shelter beds bought by the City and engaged more shelters (from two to four) to ensure that we can offer the appropriate, culturally-competent support to any homeless person seeking to end their homelessness.
- Expanded our outreach team from seven (7) staff members to 10 and rolled back our starting time to 7:30am to shorten the service time for those wishing to leave the streets behind.
- Created the Client Management Information System (CIMS) to document and track our engagement and service efforts with the homeless so that we build on our efforts without duplicating services while simultaneously ensuring integrity and accountability in the use of City resources and expecting integrity and accountability in return from those who benefit from our services.

- Engaged members of the faith community to join our outreach team because sometimes what led to a person's homelessness cannot be fixed solely with the provision of a bed and food.
- Trained our emergency shelter partners on care coordination services so that clients take ownership of their personal success while having the supports and knowledge at their disposal to leave homelessness with an expectation – and the skills – not to return to the streets.
- Launched our homeless employment program so that we can harness the street knowledge of those who have accepted shelter to engage those who remain while providing them an immediate job and the skills, tools and opportunity to seek and obtain permanent employment.
- Encouraged intradepartmental collaboration between Police and HOT so that the first approach to those who are breaking our laws because they see themselves as homeless is to offer them shelter and the opportunity to end their homelessness -- rather than encourage a passive acceptance of their circumstances as an intractable fate.

It is worth noting that, since implementing our current strategies, we have eliminated the running shelter waitlist the Administration inherited. Since eliminating the running waitlist in 2015, the City has been tracking bed availability at the beginning and close of each day. While the City did fill all of its beds 14 days in the past nine months, as noted in the attached matrix, we typically experienced a daily shelter vacancy rate that reached as many as 25 beds on April 7, 2016 (peak of Spring Break). **We are serving those people who want shelter and have room to serve those who remain.**

Several people in the community have suggested that we are criminalizing homelessness. To be clear, if a person is arrested in the City it is because the Police believes they have committed a crime. Trespassing, destruction of sea dunes, and drinking in public, as examples, **are** crimes. A person committing these crimes is subject to arrest regardless of housing status. Repeatedly and resoundingly, our residents have reiterated their belief that our rules and laws must be enforced in order to maintain our quality of life. We agree.

### Other Local Jurisdictions

Miami-Dade County has only two municipal outreach teams: the City of Miami and ours. The City of Miami provides outreach services for 33 municipalities in the County excluding our City. Please note that, other than Miami, the other cities (and unincorporated areas of the County) have not offered outreach teams with service plans to respond to homelessness in their jurisdictions. Here is a comparison between the two cities:

Measure	Miami	Miami Beach
Outreach teams engage the homeless in the streets	Yes	Yes
Walk-In Center for homeless to seek/obtain services	No	Yes
Outreach team works in conjunction with police	Yes	Yes
Outreach team works in conjunction with faith community	No	Yes
Outreach team utilizes volunteers for street engagement	No	Yes
Outreach team employs homeless to conduct outreach	No	Yes
Team applies assessment and care coordination strategies to placements	No	Yes
Provide relocation/family reunification services	No	Yes
Provides sheltered clients w/ Commercial Drivers Licenses/Work Permit replacement	No	Yes
Conduct daily homeless census prior to team deployment	No	Yes
Number of street outreach workers	20	4
Number of walk-in center staff	N/A	3
Number of administrative positions	22	2
Number of homeless (January 2016 census excluding sheltered people)	826	156
Number of shelter placements in 2015	5,066	540

## **Other Approaches**

Others have suggested that we should provide shelter to anyone at all times. Other communities, including New York City and San Francisco, have approached the provision of shelter without structured, personal accountability and have subsequently grown their homeless populations. After an investment of \$1.5 billion over the past decade, San Francisco's latest homeless census shows the City gained more than 200 homeless people. New York City has almost 60,000 people in shelter, a record that exceeds the number during the Great Depression. Our community could have – and still can – opt to provide beds without expectations as other communities have done. We can follow other cities that have chosen to follow a path of least resistance – and little positive change.

Our community can revisit these actions and move away from these best practices. We can provide City resources (including shelter) without an expectation of personal accountability in return. In doing so, we risk mirroring the experiences of other communities that have grown their homeless population, their budgets (as it costs more to serve more people without an expectation of transition to independence), and panhandling (since there will be no incentive to stop such behavior and shelter clients must vacate shelter during the day). Individuals with issues such as alcoholism will likely prefer a facility where they can continue these behaviors and return to Miami Beach each day without consequence instead of entering programs that may restrict their behavior but have greater potential to end their homeless condition.

The City could purchase more shelter beds but will subsequently increase the number of people seeking services as we would be purchasing these beds from the finite inventory that exists in the County. County shelters are already overtaxed as demonstrated by the number of families Miami has in hotel. People will go where they can get help. If they cannot get it in Miami, they will come to us.

During the budget process, the Commission was presented with a plan to create an overnight shelter for the homeless in our City. The proposed enhancement was not approved for funding – in large measure because of its \$ \$600,000 annual recurring cost. If the City would like to purchase more shelter beds, we would need to anticipate the backlash that may come from other communities that may be adversely impacted by the reduction in available beds.

In short, we have many options for action. We encourage you to stay the course with our current efforts that have balanced accountability, compassion and efficacy while expecting the same from those we serve. We cannot - and will not end -- homelessness in our community unless those who are homeless choose to do their part. We remain committed and prepared to help those who wish to help themselves.

Should you have any questions, please contact me.

JLM/KGB/MLR

c:       Kathie G. Brooks, Assistant City Manager  
          Maria L Ruiz, Department Director

### Shelter Bed Availability at Close of Day

Day	Dec-15			Jan-16			Feb-16			Mar-16			Apr-16			May-16			Jun-16			Jul-16			Aug-16		
	Male	Female	Flexible <sup>1</sup>																								
1	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	6	5	7	10	5	1	0	2	0	3	0	4	0	0	1	2	2	1
2	10	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	5	1	6	10	5	1	5	0	2	9	0	0	0	3	0	1	2	1
3	8	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	6	0	6	10	5	1	7	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	1
4	7	1	0	8	0	0	5	0	1	7	1	6	16	6	5	12	2	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1
5	7	1	0	4	0	0	6	0	1	7	1	6	15	6	5	3	2	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
6	7	1	0	8	1	0	6	0	1	7	1	6	13	7	5	5	0	2	10	0	3	10	4	1	1	2	2
7	8	1	0	3	1	0	6	0	1	8	2	7	13	7	5	5	0	2	7	1	3	3	5	2	1	1	2
8	5	1	0	3	1	0	11	1	4	8	5	7	13	5	5	5	0	2	6	0	2	7	5	2	2	1	1
9	3	1	0	3	1	0	8	0	4	10	5	7	13	5	5	13	1	0	5	0	3	7	5	2	1	1	5
10	6	1	0	3	1	0	6	0	9	6	3	7	13	5	5	14	0	0	0	0	3	7	5	2	0	0	5
11	6	0	0	4	1	0	5	1	9	6	4	7	13	1	3	12	1	0	0	0	0	6	5	0	0	1	4
12	6	0	0	3	0	0	4	1	9	6	4	7	11	6	5	9	1	0	0	0	3	6	5	0	0	1	4
13	6	0	0	5	0	0	4	1	9	6	6	4	7	7	3	3	1	0	4	0	4	8	4	0	0	1	4
14	0	0	0	5	0	0	4	1	9	5	7	7	11	2	3	3	1	0	9	0	5	8	4	0	0	1	4
15	3	0	0	4	0	0	4	1	9	5	2	7	11	2	1	3	1	0	9	1	1	4	3	0	0	1	1
16	2	0	0	4	0	0	7	1	9	10	3	7	11	2	1	0	2	8	1	1	4	7	3	0	0	1	1
17	2	0	1	4	0	1	8	2	9	13	1	7	11	2	1	5	2	4	4	0	3	7	3	0	0	1	3
18	3	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	9	12	7	7	11	3	1	3	0	2	4	0	3	3	3	0	0	1	3
19	3	0	1	7	1	1	6	1	9	12	7	7	11	6	2	2	0	4	4	0	3	4	2	2	0	0	3
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21	2	0	0	5	0	0	6	1	9	10	0	5	1	4	2	4	0	2	7	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	3
22	2	0	0	5	1	1	7	1	9	9	5	5	1	4	2	4	0	2	5	2	3	4	1	1	1	7	7
23	2	0	0	5	1	1	5	4	9	10	1	5	1	4	2	8	0	2	4	0	3	4	1	1	1	4	4
24	2	0	0	5	1	1	7	4	9	11	2	7	1	4	2	7	0	2	5	0	3	4	1	0	1	1	4
25	2	0	0	3	1	0	9	2	9	11	0	7	2	0	2	0	0	6	5	0	3	0	3	0	1	2	2
26	2	0	0	2	1	0	9	2	8	11	0	7	2	3	2	1	0	4	5	0	3	2	3	0	0	3	0
27	2	0	0	3	0	0	9	2	8	11	0	7	3	2	2	0	0	2	3	0	5	0	3	0	0	3	0
28	5	0	0	3	0	0	9	2	8	11	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	0	5	0	0	0	0	3	0
29	7	0	0	2	0	0	6	5	8	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	0
30	3	0	0	2	0	0	9	5	7	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
31	3	0	0	2	0	0	8	3	8	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0

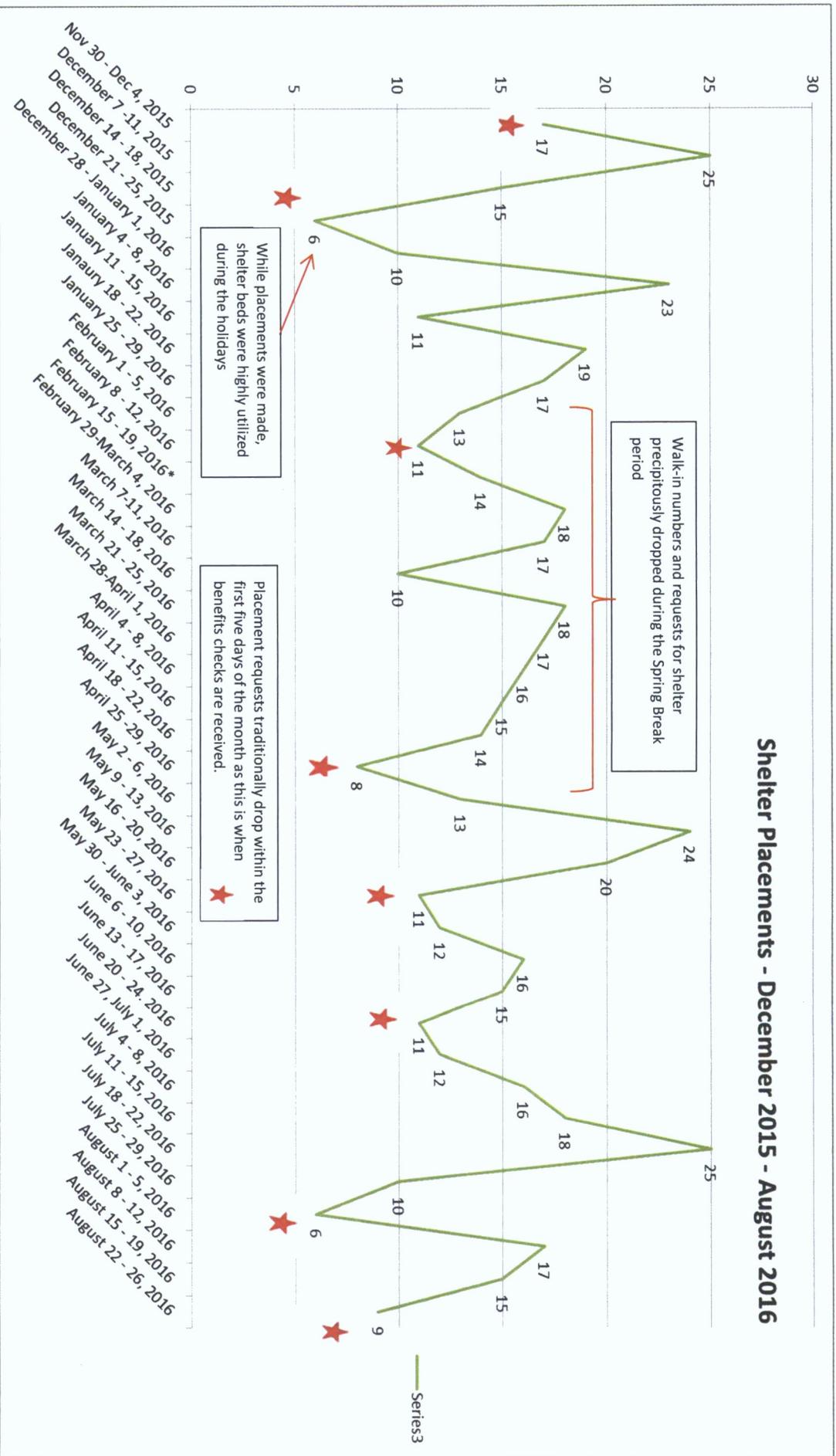
<sup>1</sup> - Flexible beds may be used for men or women as needed

Yellow No Beds Remaining  
 Green No Female Beds Remaining  
 Blue No Male Beds Remaining

SHELTER BED DISTRIBUTION BY LOCATION					
Camillus House		Lotus House		MRM	
Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
12	0	0	5	50	0

Fast Fact  
 The City has completed 637 shelter placements this fiscal year.  
 In the same time frame last fiscal year, we completed 501.

## Shelter Placements - December 2015 - August 2016



### Shelter/Placement Notes

- In FY 15/16, the City fully utilized its beds only 14 days or 5% of the time.
- The City is on pace to have a consecutive record year for shelter placements.