

KEY FINDINGS

LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY

How Do We Address Homelessness In Our Communities?

Homelessness Deliberative Dialogues

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BACKGROUND

GOALS OF LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY

In the fall of 2023, the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) launched the Let's Talk, Marathon County project.¹ Like much of America, Central Wisconsin is beset by political division, magnified by digital media, which often portrays citizens in a constant state of disagreement around public issues with a shrinking middle ground. Social and popular media offer podiums to the loudest, most persistent voices, which typically represent the opposite poles of the political spectrum. However, research shows that most Americans do not fall neatly into one political party or ideology.²

Let's Talk, Marathon County is aimed at fostering constructive conversations among residents on a variety of public issues. It aims to give a voice to those whose thoughts and ideas have been overshadowed by dominant and polarizing narratives. By bringing together individuals from different backgrounds and viewpoints, this program seeks to create an inclusive space where all voices are heard, valued, and respected. The broader goals of Let's Talk, Marathon County are:

- 1. Create spaces for residents of central Wisconsin to address issues that matter in a civil and constructive manner.**
- 2. Build and sustain a community culture of civil dialogue around important issues.**
- 3. Improve feelings of trust among fellow residents despite differences in viewpoints.**
- 4. Train local facilitators with capacity to moderate future deliberative dialogues.**

Let's Talk, Marathon County was selected as one of 32 grantees for the Healing Starts Here initiative, a nationwide effort to address and understand divisive forces in communities and promote healing. This initiative is fully funded by New Pluralists, an organization committed to helping Americans recognize our shared humanity, embrace our differences, and solve challenges together.³ WIPPS was chosen from a pool of almost 800 applicants, and no taxpayer dollars were used for this project.

WHAT ARE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES?

The Let's Talk conversations use a deliberative dialogue process to facilitate conversations among community members. Deliberation—sometimes called “choice work”—is a way for the public to weigh together various approaches to solving problems and find courses of action consistent with what communities and individuals hold valuable. Deliberation is more than simply raising and discussing important issues in a public setting. Genuine public deliberation is a thoughtful public process by which communities and stakeholders learn from one another and strive to come to judgment together about real policy matters.⁴

This form of public dialogue is not far removed from what citizens, including elected officials, routinely do every day. However, constructive dialogue is frequently drowned out by incivility and hyper-politicization of issues in public spaces. Advocates of deliberation seek to grow the practice so that public deliberation becomes a healthy and realistic way to create spaces for individuals and communities to work through complex issues and come to common ground on difficult policy choices. Deliberation is, therefore, public work—that is, work by the public, for public purposes.

¹ <https://wipps.org/lets-talk/>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2/>

³ <https://newpluralists.org/>

⁴ See, for example, Yankelovich, Daniel, and Will Friedman, eds. *Toward Wiser Public Judgment*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17vf70s>.

While public deliberation will not address or solve all community problems (nor erase fundamental conflicts in values), it remains an important component of healthy democratic practice and an avenue for residents to become involved in public policy. It also offers a vehicle for individuals to learn more about complex issues and the real tradeoffs that different approaches to community problems entail.

SELECTING THE LET’S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY PANEL

The Let’s Talk, Marathon County team assembled a participant panel of 94 community members from across Marathon County to meet in small groups of approximately 10 people over the course of two years and to engage in conversations about public issues. The conversations will focus on several topics or issues. The goal was to select a panel of community members who reflected a range of political affiliations and ensured geographic representation of residents from rural and urban areas of the county, as well as a cross-section of demographic characteristics. The following process was used to populate the Let’s Talk panel:

- A community-wide public marketing campaign was launched in the spring of 2023. Interested individuals were asked to sign up via an online application. In addition to collecting the individual’s name, the application also asked standard demographic questions, including the individual’s political leaning. Following this campaign, we received 259 unique applications.⁵
- Following the initial recruitment, a random selection process (weighted by political leaning to ensure balance) was used to whittle down the list to 127 candidates. A follow-up survey was sent via email to the 127 remaining candidates to verify that they were residents of Marathon County. We received valid and affirmative responses from 91 of the 127 candidates. Additional recruitment was also used to help increase the diversity in the panel which resulted in the addition of four more panelists. Prior to the dialogues on homelessness, one of the initial panelists no longer wished to serve in that capacity. These 94 individuals comprise the Let’s Talk panel (and is close to the initial goal of 100 panelists).

The table on the following page shows the political affiliation, geographic residence, and demographic characteristics of the Let’s Talk panel, along with the characteristics of the panelists who participated in homelessness deliberative dialogues. The self-reported political affiliation of the 94 Let’s Talk panelists reflected a distribution of approximately 30% liberal, 40% moderate, and 30% conservative. In creating these categories, we aggregated responses as follows:

Table 1. Let’s Talk Panel Political Affiliation Categories

| Aggregation of Self-Reported Leaning | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Liberal | | Moderate | | | | Conservative | |
| Very liberal | Moderately liberal | Slightly liberal | Middle of the road | Neither liberal nor conservative | Slightly conservative | Moderately conservative | Very conservative |

The panel reflected a geographic distribution of approximately 70% urban and 30% rural.⁶ Slightly more than half (52%) of the panelists selected “woman” as their gender; 43% selected “man,” with 5% selecting “other” or “prefer not to respond.”⁷ About 35% of the panelists were age 60 and up (20% of the county population is age 65 and up). The vast majority of the panelists were white (85%), which is similar to the county population (87%).⁸ Four percent (4%) were Asian and nine percent (9%) reported Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, generally comparable to county-level population data (4%). Overall, the Let’s Talk panelists reflected higher educational attainment in comparison to the county as a whole, with about 24% of the panelists having a master’s degree or professional degree compared to about 8% in the county’s population.

⁵ This number reflects the total individuals after the registration data were cleaned to remove possible spam.

⁶ This distribution reflects approximate population density in Marathon County by Census Tract.

⁷ The percentage is rounded to the nearest whole number.

⁸ <https://www.marathoncountypulse.org/index.php?module=DemographicData&controller=index&action=index>

Table 2. Let’s Talk Panel Characteristics Compared to Deliberative Dialogue Participants

| | Let's Talk Panel | Let's Talk Panel | Dialogue Participants | Dialogue Participants |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | N | % | N | % |
| | 94 | 100 | 53 | 100 |
| Political Affiliation | | | | |
| Liberal | 27 | 29 | 17 | 32 |
| Moderate | 40 | 43 | 23 | 43 |
| Conservative | 27 | 29 | 13 | 25 |
| Geography | | | | |
| Urban | 68 | 72 | 36 | 68 |
| Rural | 26 | 28 | 17 | 32 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Age | | | | |
| 16-20 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 21-29 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 6 |
| 30-39 | 20 | 21 | 9 | 17 |
| 40-49 | 16 | 17 | 8 | 15 |
| 50-59 | 14 | 15 | 9 | 17 |
| 60-69 | 17 | 18 | 10 | 19 |
| 70+ | 16 | 17 | 12 | 23 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Woman | 49 | 52 | 25 | 47 |
| Man | 40 | 43 | 24 | 45 |
| Other | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Race (Select all that apply) | | | | |
| Alaskan, American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Asian | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Black or African American | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White | 80 | 85 | 47 | 89 |
| One or more not listed | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 8 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| Not Hispanic/Latino | 85 | 90 | 51 | 96 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Highest Level of Education | | | | |
| Some high school | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| High school graduate/GED | 9 | 10 | 5 | 9 |
| Nontraditional education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Trade school | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Some college, no degree | 15 | 16 | 9 | 17 |
| Associate degree | 14 | 15 | 5 | 9 |
| Bachelor’s degree | 27 | 29 | 16 | 30 |
| Master’s degree | 18 | 19 | 11 | 21 |
| Professional degree | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 4 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

* Percentages might not add up to exactly 100% because of rounding. For race, numbers can add up to more than the group sample size because respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

HOMELESSNESS DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES

Seven deliberative dialogues were conducted on the topic of *How Do We Address Homelessness in Our Communities?* These dialogues were held in three locations in Wausau, as well as in the villages of Marathon City and Mosinee; one dialogue was held virtually. Within each dialogue, the goal was to include approximately 10 Let’s Talk panelists (or 60 total participants). In addition, each dialogue was structured to reflect a distribution of approximately 30% liberal, 40% moderate, and 30% conservative participants. With 10 participants for each dialogue, therefore, the goal was to include 3 liberal, 4 moderate, and 3 conservative-leaning individuals. To accomplish this, the 94 Let’s Talk panelists were divided into three groups according to the panelists’ self-reported political affiliation. Each of the three groups was sent a unique dialogue sign up link with the dates of the various sessions. This allowed participants to choose a date and location convenient to them while allowing the project team to manage political affiliation representation within each dialogue.

During this round of deliberative dialogues, a total of 65 of the 94 Let’s Talk panelists registered to participate; after accounting for cancelations and no-shows, a total of 53 individuals participated in one of the homelessness dialogues. As shown in Table 2, the demographics of the 53 participants were not materially different from the Let’s Talk panel as whole. Panelists who were unable to participate will have a chance to do so in the next round of deliberative dialogues. As a recruitment incentive and as a token of appreciation for their time, each participant received a \$100 gift card.

Table 3. Homelessness Deliberative Dialogue Participants

| Community Member Deliberative Dialogues | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Political Affiliation | Let’s Talk Panelists | Percent (%) | Registered for Dialogue | Percent (%) | Participated in Dialogue | Percent (%) |
| Liberal | 27 | 29 | 20 | 31 | 17 | 32 |
| Moderate | 40 | 43 | 27 | 42 | 23 | 43 |
| Conservative | 27 | 29 | 18 | 28 | 13 | 25 |
| Total | 94⁹ | 100 | 65 | 100 | 53 | 100 |

Of the 53 Let’s Talk panel members who participated in the homelessness dialogues, 43 (81%) had participated in a prior Let’s Talk dialogue on the topic of youth mental health; 10 (19%) were first-time dialogue participants.

THE ISSUE GUIDE

In order to structure the dialogues, the project partners created a detailed issue guide that “named and framed” this topic (see Appendix B). The issue guide was provided to the participants at each dialogue and consisted of background information on the topic, including a curated page of national, state, and county statistics on homelessness. In addition, the issue guide outlined three potential approaches to addressing homelessness: (1) prioritize housing and basic needs; (2) invest in rehabilitation; and (3) encourage opportunity and accountability.

For each of the three approaches, the issue guide provided possible actions as well as possible drawbacks or tradeoffs. Trained moderators facilitated the dialogues by carefully examining each approach, including weighing trade-offs among the action items and identifying areas of tension as well as common ground. A public note-taker assisted in recording the results of the dialogues. At least one formal observer was present at each dialogue to capture key themes and takeaways as well. The dialogues were conducted in person and were scheduled for approximately 120 minutes (one session was held virtually).

⁹ Of the 94 Let’s Talk panel members, 43 (46%) participated in both the youth mental health and homelessness Let’s Talk dialogues. Nineteen panel members (20%) participated in one or the other and 32 (34%) participated in neither.

EVALUATION APPROACH

There were three components to the evaluation of the initial round of dialogues: (1) a post-dialogue survey was administered to all of the participants at the conclusion of each dialogue in order to get feedback on the dialogue process from the participants' perspective; (2) detailed summaries were prepared of each individual dialogue in order to document the content and nature of each group's discussion and to identify key themes across dialogues; and (3) a focus group was conducted with members of the Let's Talk project team in order to identify areas to improve in future rounds of deliberations. This report, *Let's Talk Key Findings–Homelessness Deliberative Dialogues*, includes the findings from the post-dialogue survey and the key themes across dialogues.

A supplemental report, *Let's Talk Supplemental Report–Homelessness Deliberative Dialogue Summaries*, includes the individual dialogue summaries. An internal report of the focus group discussion, *Let's Talk Focus Group Findings–Lessons Learned from Homelessness Deliberative Dialogues*, was prepared for the Let's Talk project team for the purposes of process evaluation and improvement.

TERMINOLOGY

Readers will note that throughout this report, for the sake of consistency, the terms “homeless” or “homelessness” are used when describing this topic. We recognize that other terms such as “unhoused,” or more precise terms such as “unsheltered” or “sheltered” homeless may apply in certain contexts. See the Glossary for a range of definitions.

RESOURCES

As a courtesy to readers interested in more information, we have provided below information about local organizations assisting those experiencing homelessness. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list or representative of all community resources.

Bridge Street Mission – www.bridgestreetmission.org

Catholic Charities – www.cclse.org/ausau/

CW Solutions - www.changewithin.net/

Gospel TLC – www.gospeltlc.org/

Hagar House – www.thehagarhouse.org/

North Central CAP Services – www.northcentralcap.org/

Salvation Army – <https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/ausau/>

Wausau Community Development Authority – www.wausauwi.gov/your-government/community-development

Wausau Free Clinic - www.wausaufreeclinic.com/

The Women's Community – www.womenscommunity.org/

PANELISTS' VIEWS OF THE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES

At the conclusion of each deliberative dialogue, participants were asked to complete a brief, 20-question survey about their experiences engaging in the deliberative dialogue. The questions were designed to gather information about whether the dialogues expanded participants' views on the issue; helped them consider tradeoffs and solutions; increased appreciation for diverse viewpoints; and increased interest in engaging in community issues. A QR code was available at the dialogue to allow participants to scan and complete the survey on their devices, and paper copies were also available. Participants in the virtual dialogue were provided with a survey link.

In this section of the report, we summarize the key findings from the post-dialogue surveys for the Let's Talk dialogues on homelessness. For reference, participants' responses were further separated into rural versus urban respondents. Although the data in the tables can be used to observe the general patterns of responses, given the relatively small sample sizes, we often combined response categories when discussing results. In addition, tests of the statistical significance of the differences between groups were not conducted. Therefore, we do not make direct comparisons of the differences between the urban versus rural respondents. It is unlikely that the results in any one cell are significantly different from the results for that same cell for another group. As such, the data should not be used to draw conclusions about the magnitude of differences between urban versus rural respondents. Responses to two open-ended survey questions are included in Appendix A.

SURVEY RESPONSE RATES

Table 4 below shows the survey response rates. Overall, 100% of dialogue participants completed the survey.

Table 4. Homelessness Deliberative Dialogues – Participant Survey Response Rates

| Community Member Deliberative Dialogues | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Political Affiliation | Dialogue Participants | Completed Post-Dialogue Surveys | Response Rate (%) |
| Liberal | 17 | 17 | 100 |
| Moderate | 23 | 23 | 100 |
| Conservative | 13 | 13 | 100 |
| Total | 53 | 53 | 100 |
| Urban | 36 | 36 | 94 |
| Rural | 17 | 17 | 100 |
| Total | 53 | 53 | 100 |

SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 5 shows the demographic characteristics of the dialogue participants in comparison to the survey respondents. Since all of the participants completed the survey, there are no differences between the respondents and the panelists. The table also provides the characteristics of the rural and urban respondents. However, because of the small group sizes (17 rural and 36 urban respondents) we do not make direct comparisons between the two groups.

Table 5. Let’s Talk Deliberative Dialogue Participant versus Survey Respondent Characteristics

| | Dialogue Participants | Dialogue Participants | Survey Respondents | Survey Respondents | Urban Survey Respondents | Urban Survey Respondents | Rural Survey Respondents | Rural Survey Respondents |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| | 53 | 100 | 53 | 100 | 36 | 100 | 17 | 100 |
| Political Affiliation | | | | | | | | |
| Liberal | 17 | 32 | 17 | 32 | 6 | 17 | 11 | 65 |
| Moderate | 23 | 43 | 23 | 43 | 20 | 56 | 3 | 18 |
| Conservative | 13 | 25 | 13 | 25 | 10 | 28 | 3 | 18 |
| Geography | | | | | | | | |
| Urban | 36 | 68 | 36 | 68 | 36 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Rural | 17 | 32 | 17 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 100 |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| 16-20 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 21-29 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 6 |
| 30-39 | 9 | 17 | 9 | 17 | 8 | 22 | 1 | 6 |
| 40-49 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 15 | 4 | 11 | 4 | 23 |
| 50-59 | 9 | 17 | 9 | 17 | 6 | 17 | 3 | 18 |
| 60-69 | 10 | 19 | 10 | 19 | 8 | 22 | 2 | 12 |
| 70+ | 12 | 23 | 12 | 23 | 6 | 17 | 6 | 35 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Woman | 25 | 47 | 25 | 47 | 14 | 39 | 11 | 65 |
| Man | 24 | 45 | 24 | 45 | 18 | 50 | 6 | 35 |
| Other | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Race (Select all that apply) | | | | | | | | |
| Alaskan, American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or African American | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White | 47 | 89 | 47 | 89 | 30 | 83 | 17 | 100 |
| One or more not listed | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | 51 | 96 | 51 | 96 | 34 | 94 | 17 | 100 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Highest Level of Education | | | | | | | | |
| Some high school | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| High school graduate/GED | 5 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| Nontraditional education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Trade school | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Some college, no degree | 9 | 17 | 9 | 17 | 7 | 19 | 2 | 12 |
| Associate degree | 5 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| Bachelor’s degree | 16 | 30 | 16 | 30 | 11 | 31 | 5 | 29 |
| Master’s degree | 11 | 21 | 11 | 21 | 4 | 11 | 7 | 41 |
| Professional degree | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12 |
| Prefer not to answer/no response | 4 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 6 |

* Percentages might not add up to exactly 100% because of rounding. For race, numbers can add up to more than the group sample size because respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

CONSIDER TRADEOFFS AND SOLUTIONS

The dialogues helped participants consider trade-offs and solutions to the issue of how to address issues of homelessness, as well as to evaluate the pros and cons of potential actions and solutions.

- A majority of Let’s Talk panelists who participated in the dialogues reported that the dialogue helped them better understand the issue they discussed and also helped them to evaluate the pros and cons of potential solutions to the issue of homelessness. Seventy-one percent (71%) of community members reported that participating in the dialogue helped them better understand the issue “quite a bit” or a “great deal” and 68% reported that the dialogue helped them evaluate the pros and cons of potential solutions “quite a bit” or “a great deal.”

Table 6. Understanding Issues and Considering Tradeoffs

| How much did today’s dialogue... | Not at all ↓ | A little ↓ | Some ↓ | Quite a bit ↓ | A great deal ↓ |
|---|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| ...help you better understand the issue that you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 4 | 25 | 48 | 23 |
| Rural | 0 | 6 | 35 | 47 | 12 |
| Urban | 0 | 3 | 20 | 49 | 29 |
| ...help you evaluate the pros and cons of various potential solutions to the issue that you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 2 | 8 | 23 | 42 | 26 |
| Rural | 0 | 12 | 18 | 53 | 18 |
| Urban | 3 | 6 | 25 | 36 | 31 |

The dialogues were characterized by low levels of disagreement and considerable common ground.

- Participants generally reported little disagreement among the participants and high levels of common ground. Seventy-three percent (73%) of community members in the Let’s Talk dialogues reported “none” to “a little” disagreement and 94% reported “quite a bit” or “a great deal” of common ground; about one-fourth (27%) reported “some” disagreement among the dialogue participants.

Table 7. Levels of Disagreement and Common Ground

| Thinking overall about today’s dialogue... | None ↓ | A little ↓ | Some ↓ | Quite a bit ↓ | A great deal ↓ |
|--|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| ...how much disagreement was there among the participants? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 8 | 65 | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Rural | 0 | 75 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Urban | 11 | 60 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| Thinking overall about today’s dialogue... | None ↓ | A little ↓ | Some ↓ | Quite a bit ↓ | A great deal ↓ |
| ...how much common ground was there among the participants? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 6 | 60 | 34 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 6 | 59 | 35 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 6 | 61 | 33 |

EXPAND VIEWS ON AN ISSUE

The dialogues helped community members expand their views on the issue of how to address homelessness in their communities.

- When asked to think about the dialogue in which they participated, 56% of community members reported that they considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "quite a bit" or "a great deal." About half (49%) thought that the other participants had considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "quite a bit" or "a great deal." Nearly one-third (32%) reported that they considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "some"; 43% reported they felt their fellow participants considered these "some."
- Ninety-one percent (91%) responded that they valued the input provided by the other participants "quite a bit" or "a great deal"; 47% felt that their input was valued "quite a bit" or "a great deal" by the other participants.

Table 8. Considering New Perspectives

| Thinking overall about today's dialogue... | Not at all ↓ | A little ↓ | Some ↓ | Quite a bit ↓ | A great deal ↓ |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| ...how much did you personally consider perspectives or viewpoints that you hadn't considered before? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 2 | 9 | 32 | 43 | 13 |
| Rural | 0 | 12 | 24 | 53 | 12 |
| Urban | 3 | 8 | 36 | 39 | 14 |
| ...how much do you think the other participants considered perspectives or viewpoints that they hadn't considered before? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 53 | 41 | 6 |
| Urban | 0 | 11 | 39 | 39 | 11 |
| ...how much did you value the input provided by the other participants? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 9 | 55 | 36 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 12 | 59 | 29 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 8 | 53 | 39 |
| ...how much do you think the other participants valued the input you provided? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 13 | 40 | 32 | 15 |
| Rural | 0 | 12 | 41 | 41 | 6 |
| Urban | 0 | 14 | 39 | 28 | 19 |

The dialogues were characterized by high levels of respect, including for those with differing views.

- A majority of dialogue participants reported that those with differing views acted "very respectfully" (94%). Respondents also noted that participants treated those with similar views "very respectfully" (96%, respectively).

Table 9. Understanding Issues and Considering Tradeoffs

| During today's dialogue... | Very disrespectfully ↓ | Somewhat disrespectfully ↓ | Neutral ↓ | Somewhat respectfully ↓ | Very respectfully ↓ |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ...how did participants with differing views act toward one another? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 2 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 82 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 82 |
| Urban | 3 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 82 |
| ...how did participants with similar views act toward one another? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 4 | 13 | 83 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 76 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 86 |

APPRECIATE DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS AND DECREASE “DEMONIZATION” OF THOSE WITH DIFFERING VIEWS

➤ **The dialogues helped participants appreciate diverse viewpoints and develop greater comfort with and trust in fellow community members with differing views.**

- About one in four (73%) of the community members reported that participating in the dialogues made them value viewpoints on the issue that differ from theirs “somewhat more” or “much more” than before the dialogue.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the community members reported being “somewhat more” or “much more” comfortable interacting with members of their community who hold different viewpoints from theirs than before the dialogue.
- When asked about how trusting they feel towards community members who hold viewpoints that differ from theirs, about two-thirds (65%) reported that they were “somewhat more” or “much more” trusting than before the dialogue. About 33% reported no change.
- Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the community members reported being “somewhat more” or “much more” connected to community members who hold viewpoints that differ from their own than before the dialogue.

➤ **The dialogues increased participants’ confidence that their community can engage in civil conversations.**

- A large majority (83%) of community members reported that participating in the dialogue made them “somewhat more” or “much more” confident that their community can engage in civil conversations about the issue they discussed.

Table 10. Trust, Comfort, and Connectivity as a Result of Participation

| Coming out of today’s dialogue... | Much less than before ↓ | Somewhat less than before ↓ | No change ↓ | Somewhat more than before ↓ | Much more than before ↓ |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ...how much do you value viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 27 | 46 | 27 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 29 | 53 | 18 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 26 | 43 | 31 |
| ...how comfortable do you feel interacting with members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 23 | 44 | 33 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 18 | 59 | 24 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 26 | 37 | 37 |
| ...how trusting do you feel toward members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 2 | 33 | 48 | 17 |
| Rural | 0 | 6 | 35 | 59 | 0 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 31 | 43 | 26 |
| ...how connected do you feel to members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 0 | 0 | 31 | 50 | 19 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 18 | 77 | 6 |
| Urban | 0 | 0 | 37 | 37 | 26 |
| ...how confident are you that your community can engage in civil conversations about the issue you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let’s Talk Panelists | 2 | 2 | 14 | 59 | 24 |
| Rural | 0 | 6 | 18 | 53 | 24 |
| Urban | 3 | 0 | 12 | 62 | 24 |

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY ISSUES AND INTEREST IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In general, participants reported an increased interest in learning more about what makes a healthy community and an increased interest in engaging with fellow community members about the issue of homelessness.

- When considering the percentage of community members who selected “quite a bit” or “a great deal,” a large majority reported that participating in the dialogues made them want to learn more about the issue they discussed (81%); talk more with fellow community members about the issue (75%); collaborate more with fellow community members (79%); and be more involved in decision-making in their community about the issue (71%).

Table 11. Interest and Engagement in Community Issues

| Did participating in today's dialogue make you want to... | Not at all ↓ | A little ↓ | Some ↓ | Quite a bit ↓ | A great deal ↓ |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| ...learn more about the issue you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 10 | 10 | 50 | 31 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 12 | 71 | 18 |
| Urban | 0 | 14 | 9 | 40 | 37 |
| ...talk more with your fellow community members about the issue you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 2 | 4 | 19 | 46 | 29 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 24 | 53 | 24 |
| Urban | 3 | 6 | 17 | 43 | 31 |
| ...collaborate with your fellow community members to address the issue you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 2 | 2 | 17 | 45 | 34 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 24 | 59 | 18 |
| Urban | 3 | 3 | 14 | 39 | 42 |
| ...be more involved with decision-making in your community about the issue you discussed? (%) | | | | | |
| Let's Talk Panelists | 0 | 6 | 23 | 42 | 29 |
| Rural | 0 | 0 | 29 | 47 | 24 |
| Urban | 0 | 9 | 20 | 40 | 31 |

PANELISTS' INSIGHTS ON HOMELESSNESS

This section of this report summarizes key themes and insights from the seven Let's Talk dialogues with community members. Table 12 on the next page provides a general overview of the approaches and action items discussed in each dialogue and how the participants generally felt about the actions they discussed. In this table, the action items within each approach are ordered based on the general level of support for that action item, taking into consideration all of the dialogues. Readers who desire summaries of each individual dialogue can refer to the *Let's Talk Supplemental Report—Homelessness Deliberative Dialogue Summaries*.

A NOTE ABOUT METHODS

In addition to demonstrating how deliberative dialogues can be used to foster civil discussion and communication among community residents, we can also use the content of the dialogues to identify community members' views. Much like a focus group, it is important to remember that deliberative dialogues are not intended to yield results or insights that are generalizable to a larger population (in this case, the population of Marathon County as a whole). Rather, they can help better understand the reasons underlying individuals' perspectives or the range of perspectives on a given topic, and to provide insights about how a situation is perceived and experienced. The information shared in this report *only* reflects the insights, feedback, and experiences of the individuals who participated in each dialogue.

Given the nature of the topics discussed and differences in individuals' experiences, there may be different voices and multiple views that need to be presented. Our goal is to accurately represent the range of views expressed by the participants. For each individual dialogue, multiple sets of notes were taken by a notetaker and at least one observer (in many cases there were two observers). All notes for a given dialogue were shared with a member of the WIPPS Research Partners team whose responsibility was to combine and synthesize the notes into a single summary.

With the exception of specifying when a comment was made by "one individual," this report does not specify the exact frequency or quantity with which comments or opinions are expressed. The use of specific numeric references in a qualitative report can sometimes lead readers to inadvertently think about responses in terms of percentages (X percent of participants think this; Y percent think that), which can then lead to false generalizations. Those kinds of specific characterizations are better suited for a methodology where a larger number of individuals are sampled.

Instead, we use terminology to convey the general pervasiveness of a theme such as "many" or "most"; "some" or "several"; or "a few." How these characterizations are applied is largely at the discretion of the analyst/observer when they were preparing their notes, as they can depend on the context of the question being analyzed; whether comments or themes related to a question come up at other points in the discussion; and other cues such as body language of the participants (e.g., head nodding). Because different individuals may have had different perceptions or definitions of what characterizations like "many" versus "some" mean, it is important to recognize that there is some inherent subjectivity in the use of these terms. One of the lessons from this round of dialogues is the need to introduce some standardization in how the range of views should be captured when taking notes.

To minimize some of the inherent subjectivity and to introduce a level of inter-rater reliability, the individual summaries in this document and characterizations of comments were shared back with all of the moderators, notetakers, and observers assigned to a given dialogue. This additional review served as a "check" on the balance and completeness of the summary of the comments and to ensure agreement that the report accurately reflected the dialogues they observed.

For readability, convenience, and to improve the flow of the narrative, throughout the report we sometimes use terminology such as "Participants reported..." or "Participants noted..." These are all shorthand references to the individuals who participated in the dialogues and should not be interpreted as reflective of, or generalized to, all county residents. At the same time, these perspectives can yield powerful insights that are valuable to understanding a broad and diverse group of individuals' views on the topics discussed.

Table 12. Dialogue Participants’ Views about Actions to Address Homelessness

| Issue Approach and Action Items | Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | 3/6/2024 | 3/12/2024 | 3/14/2024 | 3/18/2024 | 3/23/2024 | 3/25/2024 | 3/28/2024 |
| APPROACH 1: PRIORITIZE HOUSING AND BASIC NEEDS | | | | | | | |
| Increase housing search and navigation assistance | Support | | Support | Oppose | Support | Support | |
| Increase emergency rental assistance | | Mixed | Mixed | Support | Mixed | | Support |
| Increase eviction prevention initiatives | Mixed | Oppose | Support | Mixed | Mixed | | Mixed |
| Experiment with publicly-funded monthly stipends | | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | |
| Limit zoning and land use policies to increase affordable housing | | | Oppose | Mixed | Oppose | Support | |
| APPROACH 2: INVEST IN REHABILITATION | | | | | | | |
| Educate the public about the struggles faced by the homeless | Support | Mixed | Support | Mixed | Support | Support | Support |
| Establish and grow mentorship programs | Support | Support | Mixed | Support | Support | Support | |
| Increase vocational training programs; help develop skills | | Mixed | Mixed | Support | Support | | Support |
| Train and hire more mental health and addiction professionals | Support | Mixed | | Oppose | Support | Support | |
| Maintain and expand supportive home settings | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Support | | Mixed |
| APPROACH 3: ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY | | | | | | | |
| Expand bus routes and hours to access jobs and services | Support | Mixed | Support | Mixed | Mixed | Support | Support |
| Incentivize employers to hire unhoused individuals | Oppose | Support | Support | Oppose | Support | | |
| Expand police training/operations with mental health experts | Mixed | | Support | Mixed | Mixed | | |
| Protect public places; enforce laws for urination, loitering | Mixed | | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Oppose | Oppose |
| Promote free financial literacy courses | | | Support | | Oppose | | |

If a cell is blank, the action item was not discussed by the group or was only raised by one person without affirmation for or against by other participants.

There were additional action items which had support during the discussion of Approach 1, including: work with landlords to consider creative lease options; create layers of more affordable housing options; refurbish abandoned buildings, including old hotels (proposed in 2 groups); consider tiny houses; increase community engagement and establish a housing coalition; create a resource center or “clearinghouse”; and provide wrap-around services with case management (proposed in 2 groups). An additional action item was raised by one group during the discussion of Approach 2. This action item was decentralize services and implement mobile services. No additional action items were proposed for Approach 3.

HOMELESSNESS: A MULTIFACETED PROBLEM REQUIRING MULTIFACETED SOLUTIONS

Participants generally agreed that addressing issues of homelessness in their communities requires a combination of action items drawing from multiple approaches and perspectives. The complex nature of the issue requires a multi-faceted approach that includes elements of meeting basic needs and prioritizing stable and affordable housing; addressing the underlying causes of homelessness, including substance use and mental health disorders; and encouraging opportunity and taking personal accountability among those experiencing homelessness.

- Homeless individuals have unique backgrounds, situations, and needs. Because of this, participants generally believed that there is not a single, “one-size-fits all” solution to the problem of homelessness or the challenges faced by homeless individuals. It is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, with no “quick-fix” solutions. Instead, multiple strategies and an array of services are needed. Participants also recognized that individuals experiencing homelessness may have varying interests in terms of the extent to which they want help or assistance and that efforts to address homelessness need to consider the perspectives of those experiencing (or who have experienced) homelessness.

➤ **Participants recognized that resource limitations and financial constraints pose barriers to addressing homelessness in communities, yet many noted that government entities, organizations, and communities could do a better job of collaborating and sharing resources. Leadership, collaboration, and public engagement are needed in order to take action on issues of homelessness, including at the county, city, and community levels.**

- Some groups recognized that for many of the actions they discussed, regulation may be needed and the willingness of governmental entities to tackle solutions would depend on a variety of factors, including political dynamics, resources, tax implications, and public sentiment. In some groups, participants noted that government can take more of a leadership role in addressing homelessness, especially at the county level since problems can extend outside of the City of Wausau. It was mentioned that governmental agencies and community-based organizations are not often aware of what the other is doing and combining efforts and collaborating may help.
- Engaging community members was also mentioned as an important component of efforts to address homelessness. Having people who want change and are willing to lead, speak out, and take action was viewed by some as necessary in order to make progress.
- In some cases it was noted that the various approaches and action items require money and an upfront investment in order to implement solutions and that municipalities could work together to implement solutions.

APPROACH 1 – PRIORITIZE HOUSING AND BASIC NEEDS

This approach prioritizes providing stable long-term housing and basic needs such as food, clothing, and other immediate needs to people experiencing homelessness. This approach assumes that housing and basic needs are the foundation for a productive life. Access to housing without prerequisites or conditions (such as sobriety), serves as a platform from which the unhoused can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Some programs use a “Housing First” approach which provides emergency assistance such as food and shelter combined with help to transition to long-term housing. Under this approach, supportive services, including case management, are encouraged to help individuals maintain a stable base from which they can access resources and begin their journey towards overall well-being. A primary drawback of this approach is that without targeted interventions to tackle underlying issues such as mental illness and drug addictions, individuals may find themselves in a cycle of dependency, potentially leading to repeated instances of homelessness.

➤ **When considering this approach in general, participants recognized that some homeless individuals may not want assistance or they may not be ready to receive help. Others questioned if there is a larger issue of homeless individuals not necessarily knowing where to go in order to obtain help.**

- Participants recognized that some may individuals not be ready for help due to mental health or substance use concerns. It is also important to recognize that homeless individuals have rights and “we can’t make anyone become ‘housed’ [who does not want to.]”

➤ **The lack of affordable housing in local communities was consistently raised by participants as a problem. However, there were mixed views on how to address it, including the need to consider landlords’ rights and perspectives when dealing with renters who may not make payments or keep up their properties; how to sustain rental assistance programs given funding limitations; and the tax implications and the tradeoffs of supporting housing for individuals and families.**

- Across all dialogues, participants expressed concerns about the lack of affordable housing and the need to create more affordable, varied, and layered housing options, including Section 8 housing.¹⁰ Some participants expressed concerns about high rents making it difficult to afford housing and the need to limit how much landlords can increase rents. Other disagreed and felt that landlords should not be penalized.

¹⁰ https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

➤ **In multiple dialogues, there was general support for investments in housing search and navigation assistance in order to connect those looking for housing with available opportunities. However, some expressed concern about whether this action item would be impactful given the lack of affordable housing options in the community.**

- Without an inventory of available housing that is affordable, developing a more centralized program to connect people to housing will not be productive and would not be a smart use of limited resources.

➤ **Eviction prevention initiatives, such as placing limits or caps on penalties for not making rental payments on time, had mixed support. Participants, including several who had experience with tenants, noted that some landlords have very difficult tenants and they should be able to evict delinquent tenants, when appropriate. Landlords need rights to ensure that people are being responsible and are keeping up the places they are renting out. There needs to be a balance between the rights and protections for renters, as well as for landlords.**

- Some participants felt that there are “no teeth” behind rights for renters and “all the cards are in the landlord’s hands.” Other recognized that, in some cases, landlords may be taken advantage of and need recourse.

➤ **Participants expressed mixed support for programs to increase emergency rental assistance in order to keep families and individuals housed during difficult times, noting the need to ensure that there are mechanisms in place to ensure an individual’s longer-term stability. Case management should be considered along with temporary help.**

- Participants noted that individuals and families can come onto hard times and may need some help. Some had concerns that emergency assistance is only a temporary solution. Individuals may need longer-term support, including training, education, and case management, to ensure that those who receive assistance are able to remain in a stable situation. Since there are many different programs, individuals may need help following through with applications and navigating the process or system, underscoring the need for case management services. Participants expressed concerns about the sustainability of emergency funding programs.

➤ **Participants had mixed views about the idea of experimenting with providing homeless community members with publicly-funded monthly stipends to be used for housing and other basic needs. There were concerns about how such a program would be regulated to ensure that funds were being used as intended and the potential to create a dependency on government assistance. Others noted that investing in such a program in the short-term might generate long-term savings by keeping people out of jail.**

- There was some support for providing assistance on an emergency basis, but also concerns about whether individuals would become dependent on a stipend, especially since some have lifelong mental health challenges.
- While a few participants liked the idea of providing a basic monthly income, others raised concerns about whether funds would be used for housing, or for other things like tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. Participants expressed concerns about the need to regulate this kind of program to be sure that funds were being used for housing, as well as the need to implement duration limits. Some framed their thinking about this idea from the perspective of the tax implications and that providing the stipend might be less costly to tax-payers than other alternatives, like jail.

➤ **Reducing or eliminating residential zoning and land use policies as a way to increase affordable housing options was generally not supported, with some expressing concerns that such policies could be used to isolate homeless individuals in geographic areas. Instead, some preferred other approaches like refurbishing abandoned buildings.**

- Some participants wondered whether new using units were really needed or if modifying or refurbishing existing buildings, including vacant buildings, would be a better alternative. For some, this action item sounds like a city project that would force people into one area and create “projects” and would create “not in my back yard” dynamics among residents. The lack of public transportation in many areas would create challenges for those living in new housing units outside of Wausau, thereby limiting the impact of any new housing developments.

APPROACH 2 – INVEST IN REHABILITATION

This approach prioritizes addressing the underlying conditions that lead to individuals and families being unhoused so that they have the building blocks to acquire and retain permanent housing and have a stable foundation to meet other long-term needs. Most often, this begins with addressing mental illness and substance addictions. Organizations and programs that address these needs can also provide temporary and transitional shelter in a group setting, which often require residents be drug and alcohol free or participate in a treatment program. Once an individual has been treated for their underlying issues, they can become eligible for long-term housing opportunities and are better prepared to move forward. During this process, clients will still require assistance from other supporting community-based organizations such as United Way, the Neighbor’s Place, and the Women’s Community, among others. A primary drawback of this approach is that even if people experiencing homelessness can find a suitable treatment program, they are likely to struggle afterwards to find affordable housing due to a competitive real estate market and limited public housing options.

➤ **Addressing the root causes of homelessness, especially mental health issues, was recognized by many participants as being an essential component of efforts to tackle the broader problem. The relationships between mental health needs and homelessness, and in some cases, substance use and addiction, were woven throughout the dialogues. While there was some support for training and hiring more social workers, case managers, and mental health professionals to help address these underlying causes, there was a wide range of views of how resources should be focused given the complexities of mental health needs.**

- There was general recognition of the need for more mental health providers and more funding for mental health services. Mental health issues can be very challenging to treat and services are often not covered. Homeless individual may face particular challenges in accessing needed services.
- In addition to training and hiring more social workers and mental health professionals, participants stressed the importance of case management and wrap-around services that can be tailored to meet individual circumstances and needs. Homeless individuals need dedicated case managers and mentors with the right life experience. There is a benefit to having dedicated case workers and eliminating the need for the homeless to have to explain their situation to multiple people in order to acquire services. There is a need for friendship and mentorship. More wrap-around, supportive services (like case management) to individuals and families can help them thrive in their transition to long-term sustainability (address life skills, job skills, mental health, and substance abuse).

➤ **Participants generally expressed support for efforts to educate the public about the difficulties and struggles that those experiencing homelessness face and to encourage residents to treat homeless individuals with dignity. Educating the public to counteract stereotypes is important.**

- Participants recognized the value of educating the community about the issue of homelessness, with a goal of overcoming “dualistic thinking” about the homeless and the rest of the community. Public education, awareness and open discussions are important, including starting at younger ages (high school). Educational opportunities are key, since education and awareness allow residents to meet different people with different experiences and to change the narrative about homeless people. Community decision makers also need education. The community needs to build dignity and worth of the homeless, including meeting basic needs of a place to sleep, eat, shower and use a restroom, and feel safe.

➤ **Participants expressed support for mentorship programs that match individuals overcoming addiction with someone who will check on them and help them with tasks, like job searches. However, concerns were raised about the qualifications of mentors and whether this should be a paid or volunteer-based role.**

- Getting volunteers and mentors involved in supporting homeless individuals is important, but there was debate about whether mentors should be volunteers or paid staff. There was some tension between the ideas of mentors being professionals vs. volunteers (trained professionals vs. those with life experience).

Increasing vocational training programs can help the homeless develop skills for jobs in industries facing workforce shortages such as retail, food service, production, and assembly, but there may be challenges in implementing effective training programs among a population that does not have stability and transportation.

- Job opportunities and education are important for gaining financial independence, although issues like an individual’s work ethic and mindset need to be considered in order to retain employees. Participants recognized the need for a certain amount of stability in order to be able to focus on vocational training and it may be difficult to learn new skills or focus on education if mental health or substance abuse issues are not addressed. Others mentioned the need for an affordable child care component for this action item to work.

Participants had a range of views and perspectives on the benefits of maintaining and expanding supportive home settings (like community-based residential group homes) to help individuals thrive in a community setting. For some, they sounded like the creation of “camps”, which seemed isolating. Others recognized that some may benefit from the support and sense of community that could be provided.

- There was some support for this general idea from the perspective that community-based group homes can provide housing situations that offer dignity; provide support for those recovering from addiction; offer the opportunity to learn skills from others they live with; and build personal connections.
- But concerns were expressed about who qualifies for these kinds of programs; how they will be funded; potential pushback in neighborhoods where they would be located; safety of those living in these settings, especially if others experience mental health issues or have needs that are not being met; and whether such settings increase the possibility for relapse among those with addiction issues. Some noted the need to make investments in long-term, sustained rehabilitation combined with a place to live. For some, this action item sounded like forming “camps” and group homes from the 80s, which they found could be isolating. Instead, some participants raised the idea of tiny homes or providing housing in smaller settings.

APPROACH 3 – ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This approach encourages people experiencing homelessness to seek opportunities to improve their situation and to be accountable for their choices. Because there is no uniform solution to address life’s many challenges, it is up to each person to manage and overcome their struggles. There are multiple community resources available, such as food pantries, temporary shelters, church programs, job centers and more to meet the temporary needs of people until they can get back on their feet. Even law enforcement routinely helps the homeless by connecting them to community resources. However, resources are limited and at some point, those experiencing homelessness need to take responsibility for their choices. This approach also includes an element of drawing a line against behaviors that harm the community such as loitering, panhandling, public urination, and camping in public spaces. In addition, policies that unintentionally incentivize and attract more homelessness should be avoided. A primary drawback of this approach is that mental illness and substance use disorders within the homeless population can severely impair a person’s ability to engage with available resources and take the necessary steps towards self-improvement.

Limitations with transportation were viewed as a considerable challenge and barrier to addressing homelessness. Participants recognized the need to improve and expand transportation, especially bus service, so that community members, including homeless individuals, can access training, jobs, and health services.

- Improving transportation was recognized as a community need and access to transportation is important for encouraging self-sufficiency. While expanding bus routes and hours, including extending into neighboring communities was supported as a solution by some, others expressed concerns that buses are underutilized and that other alternatives to improving transportation should be considered. Alternatives mentioned include vans, ride-shares, taxis, and on-demand services. Some felt that the bus service is so underutilized that communities would be better off hiring and paying for taxis.

Participants expressed support for involving employers in discussions about housing and transportation challenges, but incentivizing employers to hire or providing housing for homeless individuals had mixed support.

- Many participants recognized the need to engage employers in policy discussions about transportation and housing given the need to meet workforce demands. Some participants agreed that bus service needs to expand to the industrial park, Weston and Rib Mountain, and that employers in those areas should contribute to the cost of that expansion. In addition to hiring homeless community members, companies could model what the agricultural industry does by providing or helping with housing, and creating a community for their workers.
- Some expressed concerns that employees in employer-owned housing are very vulnerable and may have fewer workplace protections if they can be evicted for not meeting their employer's expectations. Other concerns noted were that mainstream employers struggle with paperwork for employees without an address.

Participants value community safety and the rights of individuals to feel safe, but had mixed views on the role of expanding police officer training and operations with mental health professionals [such as Crisis Assessment Response Teams (CART)]. They also felt that promoting policies and enforcing laws for offenses such as destruction of property, public urination, and loitering would have mixed success since this would not address the causes of homelessness.

- Access to toilet and garbage cans is important, but homeless need accountability to keep facilities clean. Most thought that port-o-potties or some type of space should be available, but there was some sentiment that the "rest of the community" deserves safe, clean, public spaces that they can access without fear. Some participants recognized that homeless people are not safe in public and being homeless can be dangerous.
- Some participants expressed that, from their perspective, it is wrong for homelessness to be a crime. If homelessness is illegal, homeless people are being denied a place to exist and using the word "loitering" to describe homeless means that it is illegal to exist. Instead of sending police to deal with issues involving a homeless person, send someone without a gun. Some felt strongly that police should not be working with the homeless and criminalizing homelessness is based on fear.
- Others recognized that there should be consequences for being disruptive, disrespectful, and violating laws, but legal enforcement approaches to addressing homelessness may have minimal impact since it is not focused on the root causes. Some were not familiar with CART but were generally pleased to know of its existence (yet concerned about funding it). Others noted that the "enforce, diagnose, and refer" steps were agreed to be very useful. CART is only available on weekdays, basically, suggesting that homeless individuals should only need help or have a crisis during working hours. Funding is limited, and nighttime is when a lot of people might need help.

While there was relatively little discussion of promoting free financial literacy courses as way to provide skills to achieve financial independence, those who did support it mentioned the need to offer it community-wide.

- In the one group where this issue was discussed, it was viewed as a proactive action. Young people, especially those of high school age, could benefit from this and then potentially avoid becoming homeless. This would benefit not only the current homeless population, but all community members, thereby potentially lower homeless population in the future. One participant mentioned that financial literacy could tied to other programs offering housing assistance or vocational training. Concerns were noted that the topic may be difficult depending on the the education levels. There also might be generational gaps on financial literacy as well. A second group mentioned the idea should accompany vocational training, but would likely not have much impact.

APPENDIX A: OPEN-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES

➤ **Do you think it was valuable to engage in this dialogue with other members of your community? Please explain.¹¹**

- ABSOLUTELY! I wish more individuals were willing to engage in respectful conversation. I appreciate and value everyone's opinion and their life experiences that led them there.
- Absolutely! There is no progress unless people can discuss the topic and try to find common ground. We need more of these with a larger portion of the community. Filling an auditorium would be a start.
- Absolutely. Everyone is concerned with homelessness, but no one wants to actually do anything about it. We need to get at the root of the problems.
- Awesome thing about this is that I was able to communicate with people that I would normally not be able to have input from.
- Definitely. I respect the diversity of experiences and knowledge.
- Great perspectives from those working in this area
- Important topic with divisive views
- It is important to gather multiple viewpoints to arrive at solutions. It is necessary to continue these meetings.
- It was a great dialog this evening.
- Love discussion such as this - relevant topics re: the community
- Person to person very productive
- Yes (x 2)
- Yes - Great diversity
- Yes - very important to engage all community members to aid in solving the problem.
- Yes! This group brought a surprisingly diverse set of experiences and knowledge together. Fascinating and productive.
- Yes, as it fosters an overall sense of community that I think is valuable.
- Yes, due to the fact that it's about my community
- Yes, I believe it's almost always valuable to discuss things with others, even if it's difficult
- Yes, I learned things and like discussing this issue.
- Yes, it is good to hear what others have to say and what they believe. It can change your own ideas.
- Yes, it was an opportunity to share my viewpoints that others might not have thought about and it was a chance to hear other people's opinions.
- Yes, it was very valuable to engage with people who think differently and have different viewpoints.
- Yes, it was! I enjoyed the discussion and learning about various perspectives.
- Yes, it's always valuable to hear what others know or experience.
- Yes, more educated about the depth of the issue.
- Yes, very valuable
- Yes. Solutions are dependent on the entire community participating
- Yes. There are many different perspectives that all need to be considered. There is no single solution, but rather one with many facets.
- Yes. Appreciated hearing other's views. They were so thoughtful.
- Yes. It brings awareness to an issue that does not generally receive a great deal of attention along with generating ideas and perspective.
- Yes. The discussions about the topic provided context that many residents in the community view homelessness as a major issue and want to see it addressed.
- Yes; it was a great opportunity to listen and share.

¹¹ The open-ended responses in this appendix were not edited.



Is there anything else you would like to share with us about today's session? Please explain.

- Bus system!!
- Complex issue!
- Definitions in advance were helpful.
- Excellent facilitation (x 3)
- Feel strongly that more private donations need to be accessed.
- I appreciate the willingness to explore the intersectional nature of homelessness.
- I feel like we need to hear more from the people that are experiencing this firsthand
- I just think this is such a valuable exercise, and I wish everyone had a chance to participate.
- I learned a lot and have engaged in conversation with my friends about it. I've asked for their opinions and ideas about solutions.
- I purposely chose discussion site that is a place with what I thought might have a culture different then I normally discuss. I found very conscientious and thoughtful people here.
- I really appreciated the different opinions and the discussion, as well as educational pieces of the all the discussion.
- I really enjoyed it
- I think social media and churches SHOULD get more in involved in helping to support the cause and effect of community issues and take action.
- I think we all were on a very similar page. I was very surprised by that.
- I very much enjoyed and appreciate the opportunity to participate in this worthy project. Thank you.
- I would like to offer basic financial classes. I'm not certified in anything financial. I just have personal experience of paying off debt.
- Include more topics things a younger generation could connect to more.
- Informative, staff kept the meeting moving and on point. Went to great extents to have all participants share opinions.
- It was a huge eye opener to hear more about homelessness in Wausau as you really don't think it's a problem here.
- Should not include county board or committee member in these groups. Did not feel comfortable expressing some points with them in the room
- Thank you for doing this.
- Thank you for tackling today's issue and bringing diverse community members together.
- Thank you. Let's hope this discussion ignites the desire and activity to make significant change or even a little step in the right direction.
- The presenters were tip top!
- To solve problems, a strategic plan must be established. The problem lies in the components therein, and how to prioritize, then enact them.
- Too short. At final meeting some policy makers to discuss
- Topic too broad of a range.
- Very good dialogue! It's refreshing to take complete strangers and come together to discuss a common issue. Thank you!
- Very well moderated!
- Was a little skeptical about the process but it has been very enlightening.
- Yes - PLEASE. The moderator is so excellent. But don't read the same passages over TWICE. I feel that is wasting time - Each on the Approach summary was read TWICE. I was bored and frustrated with that. No need for that. Tell people to read and think about it before they come.
- Yes, if we can have a pilot community located on the outskirts of the city of Wausau and also have a bus line to transport people to jobs, people will have a secure roof over their head.

APPENDIX B: ISSUE GUIDE

ISSUE GUIDE

How Do We Address Homelessness in Our Community?



Let's Talk, Marathon County

In 2023, the number of homeless people in America hit an all-time high at over 650,000. In Marathon County, homelessness mirrors the national crisis.

It is estimated that over 400 people live without permanent housing in the Wausau area.¹ Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Shelter (formerly known as the Wausau Warming Shelter) recorded over 9,000 shelter stays by 363 unique individuals in 2023, which underscores the pressing demand to address services for these individuals and families. It is not known how many additional homeless individuals live in Marathon County beyond Wausau because there are no means to count them.

There have been many efforts over the years across the United States and here in Marathon County to address the causes of homelessness as well as reduce the impact both among the individual lives and the communities it affects.

Numerous nonprofit organizations serve the homeless in Wausau, and the City recently created the position of Community Outreach Specialist with an explicit responsibility to address the needs of the homeless. While these efforts certainly make a difference, the growing lack of affordable housing makes it even more difficult to help those who lack a permanent residence. The challenge is affected by high rates of mental illness and substance use disorders among this population, which complicates the task of providing effective and lasting support. It also should be noted there are a small number of people who choose to remain homeless and reject help.

In addition to the wellbeing of homeless individuals, there are broader concerns about the impact on our community. Addressing resident fears about public safety; causing distraction from the primary mission of law enforcement; and a concern about the attractiveness of our public spaces are a few of the issues we are grappling with.

This issue guide looks at three approaches to addressing homelessness. While the options may have some overlap, they exemplify different ways of thinking about how to address this issue. Each approach offers advantages as well as downsides.

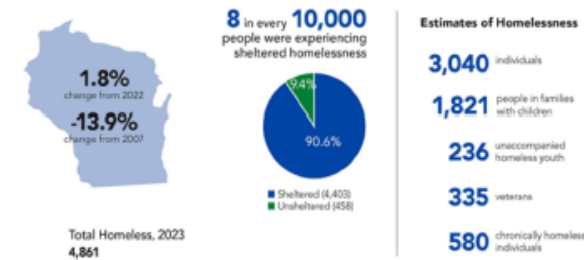
What can our communities, organizations, local government, and residents do to address the challenge of homelessness in constructive ways in Marathon County?

- *Over 650,000 people experienced homelessness in the U.S. in 2023. That number represents a record-high tally and a 12 percent increase over 2022.*²
- *The national rise in homelessness has affected nearly every cross-section of society. The numbers have risen across genders, ethnicities, and age groups. Notably, 111,620 children were without homes in America in 2023.*³
- *On a given night in 2023, 31 percent of the homeless population reported having a serious mental illness, 24 percent conditions related to chronic substance abuse, and nearly 11,000 HIV/AIDS.*⁴
- *Veterans who seek medical treatment for opioid use disorders are ten times more likely to experience homelessness than other veteran populations. Homeless individuals who overdose on opioids are nine times more likely to die than those who are stably housed.*⁵
- *One in three Marathon County Residents do not have enough savings to cover expenses in case of crisis, and 43.9% of Marathon County adults feel overwhelmed by financial burdens.*⁶

- Which strategies do we prioritize to help homeless individuals and families meet their shelter needs?
- How do we provide appropriate support services, including mental health and substance addiction support to the homeless?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the needs of the homeless population and the community are appropriately considered?

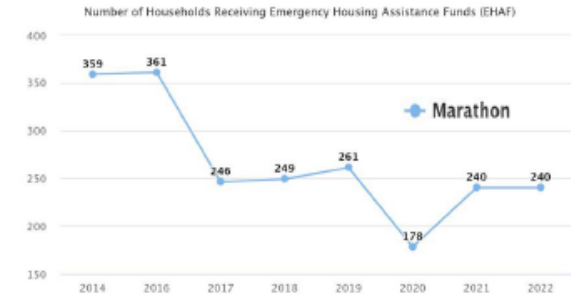
ISSUE GUIDE

Overview of Homelessness in Wisconsin



Source: Tanya Souza, et al. "The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) To ..." HUD User. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Dec. 2023.

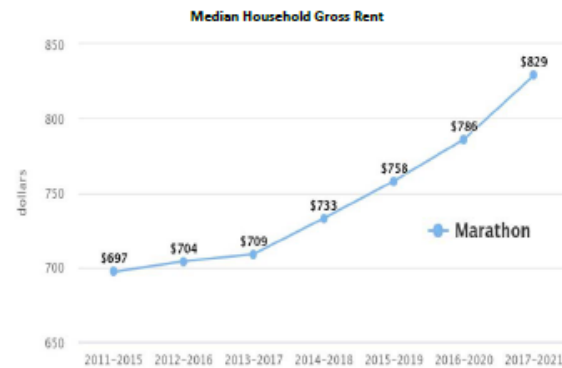
Marathon County Households Receiving Emergency Funds*



*The decline in households served reflects the fact that funding for EHAF remained steady while rent costs increased dramatically. 2020 saw a greater decline due to COVID funding from the federal government.

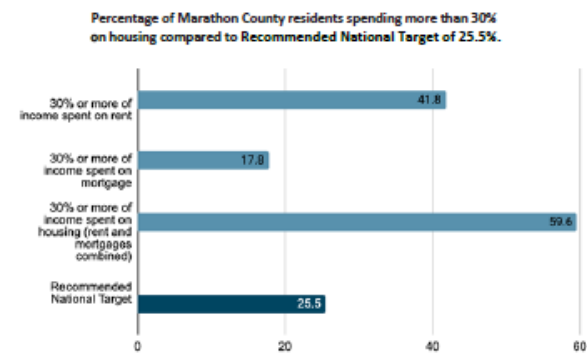
Source: North Central Community Action Program, 2014-2022

Marathon Co. Median Household Rent



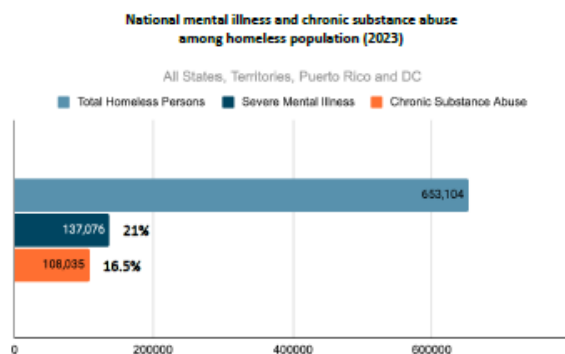
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year (2011-2015 to 2-17-22). Accessed online at Marathon County Pulse as part of the Marathon County Life Report 2023.

Marathon Co. Overspending on Housing



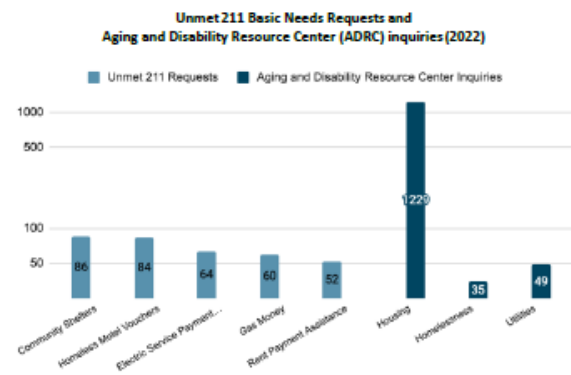
Source: Accessed online at Marathon County Pulse as part of the Marathon County Life Report 2023.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Data



Source: HUD 2023 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations (https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_NatlTerrDC_2023.pdf)

Marathon Co. Top 211 Needs Requests



Source: United Way Marathon County 211 (2018 to 2022) and the ADRC. Accessed online at Marathon County Pulse as part of the Marathon County Life Report 2023.

Approach One: Prioritize Housing and Basic Needs

This approach prioritizes providing stable long-term housing and basic needs such as food, clothing, and other immediate needs to people experiencing homelessness. Housing and basic needs are the foundation for a productive life. Access to housing without prerequisites or conditions (such as sobriety), serves as a platform from which the unhoused can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Some programs use a “Housing First” approach which provides emergency assistance such as food and shelter combined with help to transition to long-term housing. Under this approach, supportive services, including case management, are encouraged to help individuals maintain a stable base from which they can access resources and begin their journey towards overall well-being.

A Primary Drawback

Without targeted interventions to tackle underlying issues such as mental illness and drug addictions, individuals may find themselves in a cycle of dependency, potentially leading to repeated instances of homelessness.

| Actions | Drawbacks |
|--|--|
| Limit restrictive residential zoning and land use policies (e.g., parking space requirements and tenant occupancy rules) to increase affordable housing options. | Local homeowners often strongly resist zoning changes which drive property values down or change the make-up of the neighborhood. |
| Experiment with publicly-funded monthly stipends for the homeless to be used for housing and other basic needs. | This would require increased taxation or a shift in spending priorities and might incentivize long-term dependency on government assistance. |
| Increase housing search and navigation assistance such as Rapid Rehousing to assist people looking for rental housing in the private market. | While helpful for some residents, most homeless individuals cannot afford the cost of even low rent housing at private market rates. |
| Increase eviction prevention initiatives like limits on fee penalties and evictions for not making rent payments on time. | This would limit property owners' ability to remove non paying tenants and might lead to a loss of income and time. |
| Increase emergency rental assistance to keep families and individuals housed during difficult times. | Without financial planning and assistance, renters may be face long-term challenges when they are required to pay rent all on their own. |

Other actions to consider . . .

Other drawbacks to consider . . .

Approach Two: Invest in Rehabilitation

This approach prioritizes addressing the underlying conditions that lead to individuals and families being unhoused so that they have the building blocks to acquire and retain permanent housing and have a stable foundation to meet other long-term needs. Most often, this begins with addressing mental illness and substance addictions. Organizations and programs that address these needs can also provide temporary and transitional shelter in a group setting, which often require residents be drug and alcohol free or participate in a treatment program. Once an individual has been treated for their underlying issues, they can become eligible for long-term housing opportunities and are better prepared to move forward. During this process, clients will still require assistance from other supporting community-based organizations such as United Way, the Neighbor’s Place, and the Women’s Community, among others.

A Primary Drawback

Even if people experiencing homelessness can find a suitable treatment program, they are likely to struggle afterwards to find affordable housing due to a competitive real estate market and limited public housing options.

| Actions | Drawbacks |
|---|---|
| Train and hire more social workers, case managers and mental health professionals who can work with the homeless to address mental health and substance addictions. | Not only do we face a mental health worker shortage, but social workers are underpaid, making it even more difficult to recruit qualified workers to meet the need. |
| Increase vocational training programs that help the homeless develop skills for in-demand jobs, such as retail, food service or production and assembly. | This is a resource-intensive action with no guarantee that a trainee will see the program through or have long-term employment success. |
| Establish and grow mentorship programs that match a person overcoming addiction with someone who will check in on them and help them with tasks like job searches. | Current programs and positions like this are few and far between. This would mean building new capacity from the ground up. |
| Educate the public about the difficulties and struggles that those experiencing homelessness face and encourage residents to treat them with dignity. | This might risk normalizing homelessness and lead to a cycle of greater acceptance and attraction of homeless people to our community, while ignoring accountability. |
| Maintain and expand supportive home settings (e.g., community based residential group homes) to help individuals thrive living in a community setting. | There are some unhoused individuals who are unwilling or unable to meet expectations when living in a structured group setting. |

Other actions to consider . . .

Other actions to consider . . .

Approach Three: Encourage Opportunity and Accountability

This approach encourages people experiencing homelessness to seek opportunities to improve their situation and to be accountable for their choices. Because there is no uniform solution to address life’s many challenges, it is up to each person to manage and overcome their struggles. Fortunately, there are multiple resources available in our community such as food pantries, temporary shelters, church programs, job centers and more to meet the temporary needs of people until they can get back on their feet. Even law enforcement routinely helps the homeless by connecting them to community resources. However, resources are limited and at some point, those experiencing homelessness need to take responsibility for their choices. We must also draw the line against behaviors that harm the community such as loitering, panhandling, public urination, and camping in public spaces. In addition, we should avoid policies that unintentionally incentivize and attract more homelessness. This approach recognizes that while people do sometimes need a hand out, we must encourage them to accept a hand up to improve their long-term prospects.

A Primary Drawback

Mental illness and substance use disorders within the homeless population can severely impair a person’s ability to engage with available resources and take the necessary steps towards self-improvement.

| Actions | Drawbacks |
|---|--|
| Protect public places and hold individuals accountable by promoting policies and enforcing laws for offenses such as destruction of property, public urination and loitering. | Such actions do not address the root causes of homelessness and merely remove a temporary nuisance which is likely to return. |
| Expand police officer training and operations with mental health professionals (e.g., CART: Crisis Assessment Response Team) to redirect unhoused individuals to appropriate resources. | CART teams are designed for short-term emergency and crisis situations and do not address long-term needs of people with complex challenges like the unhoused. |
| Expand routes and hours of the greater Wausau area bus system so that people can access training, jobs, and health services and improve overall independence and mobility. | There is a very low likelihood of cost recovery for the necessary expansion of bus routes and hours needed. |
| Promote free financial literacy courses in the community to provide people with the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve financial independence. | Many in need of these courses will not take advantage of them—and without additional support, they are unlikely to change behavior. |
| Incentivize and encourage employers to hire unhoused individuals, solving shortages in staffing while providing them hands-on training, skill-building, and work history. | This would require a leap of faith by employers who would sacrifice time, resources and trust in new employees with an uncertain return on investment. |
| Other actions to consider . . . | Other drawbacks to consider . . . |

Using the issue guide

This issue guide presents three approaches or alternatives to encourage constructive dialogue and avoid the polarizing talk which is so common today. Each approach is based on shared concerns and poses different strategies for addressing the problem. The approaches offer potential drawbacks or trade-offs inherent in each action.

You are not required to accept any one approach. You might find that you support parts of each approach while disagreeing with other parts. You are also not bound by what is in this guide. In other words, if you believe there is a relevant action that could be taken to address the problem, you are encouraged to share it with the group.

Ground Rules

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere
- Listening is just as important as speaking
- No one or two individuals should dominate
- Consider all options and ideas fairly
- Focus on the actions we can take in our communities

Citations

¹Reilly Coombs Interview. Let's Talk Homelessness Project. Medical College of Wisconsin. 13 Feb. 2024. See also Marathon County Life Report 2023. Accessed online at Marathon County Pulse, 28 Feb.. 2024: www.marathoncountypulse.org/stories/index/view?alias=BasicNeeds&pid=60950339036.

² US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. December 2023.

³ See above citation.

⁴ US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Accessed online February 28, 2023: https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_NatlTerrDC_2023.pdf.

⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness. Accessed online 28 Feb. 2024: www.marathoncountypulse.org/stories/index/view?alias=BasicNeeds&pid=61999185872.

⁶ Marathon County Life Report 2023. Accessed online at Marathon County Pulse.

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Dialogue Agenda

1. Introduction

Review ground rules.
Introduce the issue.

2. Connect to Issue

Think about how the issue affects you, your family, friends, and community.

3. Consider Each Option

Consider each approach one at a time.
Allow equal time for each.

- What is attractive?
- What about the drawbacks?

4. Review and Reflect

Review the conversation as a group.

- What areas of common ground were apparent?
- What tensions and trade-offs were most difficult?
- From whom else do we need to hear?

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

Homeless: A condition in which an individual or family lacks a fixed, regular, nighttime residence; resides in a public or private residence that is not designed or intended to be a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; lives in a supervised shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements; and/or is at imminent risk of losing their housing and has no subsequent residence identified or resources to obtain other permanent housing.

Unhoused: Another term for homelessness, emphasizing that those lacking permanent roofs over their heads may still have communities or physical spaces they consider home.

Chronic Homelessness: Refers to an individual—or a family where the head of household— has a disability and who has been continuously experiencing homelessness for one year or more, or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time experiencing homelessness on those occasions is at least 12 months.

Couch-surfers: People who have no permanent housing and stay with friends, family, or acquaintances, often moving between them. Most homeless teens and children fall into this category. People in this category are almost never included in any official homeless counts.

Crisis Assessment Response Team: In Marathon County, the team is composed of two law enforcement officers trained in Crisis Intervention working with two crisis professionals from Northcentral Health Care. The CART team works Monday through Friday in coordination with patrol officers responding to calls for service for those in crisis.

Emergency Shelter: A facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Eviction moratorium: Refers to the federal (or state or local) ban on evicting certain tenants from a residential rental property due to non-payment of rent.

Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8): A federal program that assists low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled in affording decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market.

Housing First: Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.

Permanent Supportive Housing: A housing model designed to provide housing assistance (project- and tenant-based) and supportive services on a long-term basis to people who were experiencing homelessness when they entered the program and are now considered formerly experiencing homelessness. PSH is federally funded and requires that the client have a disability for eligibility.

Point-in-Time Counts: Unduplicated one-night estimates of both sheltered and unsheltered populations experiencing homelessness. The one-night counts are conducted by a nationwide network of homelessness service providers in a geographic area, and occur during the last week in January of each year. In Wausau, the count is also done in July.

Rapid Rehousing: Rapid Re-housing provides short-term rental assistance and services. The goals are to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. It is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the needs of the person.

Safe Havens: Projects that provide private or semi-private temporary shelter and services to people experiencing severe mental illness and are limited to serving no more than 25 people within a facility.

Sheltered Homelessness: People who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens.

Transitional Housing Programs: Programs that provide people experiencing homelessness a place to stay combined with supportive services for up to 24 months (about 2 years).

Unsheltered Homelessness: Refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks).

Sources for the above definitions:

https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>

<https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/rapid-re-housing/>

US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. December 2023.